



Transplanting of young trumpeters to selected refuge areas began in 1938 when three cygnets were placed on the National Elk Refuge, Wyoming. A pair forming from this trio eventually reproduced. A small population of swans since has maintained itself on the limited marshes at the Elk Refuge and has served as a decoy flock attracting the increasing numbers of trumpeter swans wintering there in recent years.

In the fall of 1939, three cygnets, the first of a series, were also taken to the Malheur Refuge, Oregon. Nesting was slow to begin in this area, which was outside the original breeding range of the species. But finally, at the risk of losing some birds, several were released into the wild. Only a few of the swans were wing-clipped--to serve as decoys to keep the others from straying too far. Several years later, nesting by the liberated birds occurred and a total of 21 young swans have been produced on the Malheur area since 1957. Three pairs of trumpeters nested on the Malheur this past spring, the largest number to breed in any year since the introductions were carried out.

Newly hatched cygnets also resulting from transplanted stock were seen recently at the Ruby Lake Refuge, Nevada, and another nest was still being incubated when last observed. The several stockings of young swans on this area have also resulted in 19 young from 1957 to 1961.

Delta Waterfowl Research Station, Manitoba, Canada, previously reported nesting of captive trumpeters taken from Red Rock Lakes. Sizable numbers of trumpeter swans nest in Alaskan marshes each year, wintering in British Columbia. The isolation and inaccessibility of some of these nesting areas preclude an accurate count of the swans but estimates place this northern population at over a thousand birds.

The trumpeter's great size--an adult stands 4 feet high, weighs 20 to 30 pounds, and has a wingspread of 7 to 8 feet--its all-black bill, and sonorous voice distinguish it from the whistling swan. Adult trumpeters are snow white, the young trumpeters are grayish. They have been protected by Federal law since 1918. For many years, restrictions on hunting snow geese have been in effect in areas frequented by the trumpeters because of the danger of hunters confusing the two white birds.

The trumpeter swan was once an abundant and widespread species in North America, occurring regularly as far north as the Arctic Ocean and as far south as Missouri, and eastward to Indiana and Wisconsin. In early times, large numbers of trumpeters wintered in the Chesapeake Bay and Currituck Sound areas, in Texan coastal estuaries, and along the lower Columbia River in Washington and Oregon. But serious inroads were made by fur traders who trafficked in swan skins over wide areas for more than a century. The skins were plucked and feathers used in bedding. Colonists also killed the swans for meat and feathers, gradually exterminating flocks farther and farther westward until the last surviving numbers finally were to be found only in the most inaccessible areas of the West.

Threatened with extinction since the late 19th century, trumpeter swans were making their final stand in the high mountain country of the Yellowstone by the mid-1930's. Here, in the last major nesting area remaining to them in the continental United States, the Red Rock Lakes Refuge was established by the Federal Government in 1935 to protect the remnant flocks. With the protection of Federal and State Governments, the trumpeter has reestablished itself in its former nesting range throughout the entire Yellowstone Region. Wild trumpeters now nest in western Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, South Dakota, Alaska, and two Canadian Provinces.

Latest figures place the trumpeter population at about 600 birds in the continental United States. An additional 1,500 birds are thought to live in Alaska and Canada.

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Note to Editors: Photographs of the trumpeter swan are available from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C.