

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****INFORMATION SERVICE**

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TRUMPETER SWAN COUNT UP 60 IN 1946

The trumpeter swan, classed as America's rarest waterfowl, increased its United States population during the past year by 60 birds to reach a new total of 361 for the flock, Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

This population figure is based on the census made in August on the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana, the Yellowstone National Park, and adjacent nesting areas by personnel of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

Of the 361 birds, 170 were found on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and 57 in Yellowstone National Park. The others were scattered over adjacent territory and on the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming and the Malheur National Refuge in Oregon. Forty-six cygnets were found on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and 10 on Yellowstone Park.

During the count made on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge, Dr. Ward M. Sharp, refuge manager, thoroughly covered the refuge and neighboring areas in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming by plane. Twenty-four pairs nested on the refuge this year compared with 21 in 1945. Again, as in 1945, Dr. Sharp reported the finding of two nests containing seven eggs each.

Once an abundant bird, the trumpeter swan population declined so rapidly that during the early part of the century the species was thought to be extinct. Early destruction resulted primarily from the heavy trading in the bird's down

and breast skin. Later the population was further depleted when the breeding grounds of the swans were taken over for farms and ranches.

In 1907, when a small flock was discovered in the Red Rock Lakes and Yellowstone Park region, efforts were begun by the Federal Government to restore the species. In 1935 the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was established in southwestern Montana, mainly for the protection and perpetuation of these huge birds which have a wingspread of eight feet.

Each year a census is made in August, after the breeding season, and the following figures show the slow build-up which has occurred in trumpeter swan numbers in this country: 73 in 1935, 114 in 1936, 168 in 1937, 148 in 1938, 199 in 1939, 185 in 1940, 211 in 1941, 199 in 1942, 221 in 1943, 283 in 1944, and 301 in 1945.

According to Service officials, the winter care received by the birds on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and vicinity undoubtedly contributes much to the steady increases in their numbers. Winter feeding of the birds began on November 8, 1945, and continued until April 11, 1946. A total of 947 bushels of wheat and barley was fed during this time and the maximum number of swans seen on the feeding area on any one day was 150 birds.

Hunters frequently confuse the big white swan with the snow goose. With care these two species can readily be distinguished because the snow goose is much smaller and has black tips on the wings. To prevent the shooting of swans for snow geese by mistake, a closed season on snow geese in Wyoming, Idaho, and three counties in Montana was established this year.

Since 1924 trumpeter swans have been given complete protection in the United States so that none of the species could be taken for any purpose. Canada affords the same protection.

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