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RARE TRUMPETER SWAN SHOWS POPULATION INCREASE

Albert M. Day, Director of the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service, today announced that the rare trumpeter swan, once threatened with extinction in this country, now shows a United States population of 571 birds.

A census taken last month by Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service personnel revealed an increase of 36 trumpeters over last year's count of 535.

All United States areas where this graceful snow-white creature with the melodious call is known to exist were covered in the census. In nearly all cases the birds were found on or near Federal sanctuaries, the creation of which began in 1935 when the number of swans hit a precarious low of 73 birds and special conservation areas were seen to be called for. A breakdown of this year's census figures, exclusive of experimental area tabulations, reveals the following:

In Montana, 407 swans were counted. Fish and Wildlife Service's Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge accounted for 239 of these, while 168 birds were tallied in the surrounding non-Refuge area.

A total of 83 trumpeters was listed for Wyoming. Of these, 68 birds were located in Yellowstone National Park, 8 were residing in the Park's vicinity, while another 8 were counted at the near-by National Elk Refuge where a few adult swans were released several years ago.

In Idaho, 70 of the swans were found to be in residence, as against 64 at the time of last year's census.

Abundant in this country during the last century, the swan's numbers dwindled to such an extent that the bird became known as one of America's vanishing species. Since the average trumpeter weighs 30 pounds, has a wingspread of 8 feet, and flies close to the ground, the bird had made an easy target for gunners. Heavy trading in the bird's down and breast skin had thinned the trumpeter ranks. Destruction of the swan's breeding grounds by farm and ranch interests added to the trumpeter's depletion and in the early 1900's the species was believed actually to be extinct.

In 1907, when small flocks of the swans were discovered at Red Rock Lakes in Montana and at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, restoration efforts were begun by the Federal Government. Protection of the bird by law, whereby the taking of trumpeters or their eggs was banned, became effective in 1924. In 1935 the Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge was established by the Fish and Wildlife Service, primarily to assure the perpetuation of the species. Subsequently the Service transplanted a few swans to its Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon and to its Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada for the purpose of starting new nesting colonies.

This year's census, as in previous years, was conducted at the conclusion of the breeding season in order that all newcomers to the trumpeter ranks might be included in the count.