



# THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY

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24 March 1989

Marvin L. Plenert, Regional Director  
Region 1, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 1692  
Portland, Oregon 97232

Dear Mr. Plenert:

The Trumpeter Swan Society is deeply concerned about the status of the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeter Swans. Although we are pleased that the size of this population has increased from 939 in 1980 to 1,460 in 1984 and 1,710 in 1988, it has resulted in an increased number of Trumpeters being crowded into the same limited winter habitat in the Tristate Region. The unfortunate and unnecessary loss of Trumpeter Swans on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River in February reemphasizes the precarious nature of this population.

The North American Management Plan for Trumpeter Swans (1984) mentions inadequate winter habitat as a major threat to the Rocky Mountain Population. It states, "Expand the distribution of swans wintering and nesting in the Tristate Region by establishing a tradition of use of at least four new winter sites" as a major objective for management of this population. However, to date, only minimal efforts have been made on the part of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service or other state or Federal agencies to encourage Trumpeters to expand into new areas. Only the State of Wyoming has an active winter habitat range expansion program. One state can not be expected to shoulder the entire burden.

Many people have expressed concern that the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeters has lost the instinct to migrate. This is obviously not true for those swans nesting in Canada, and it is probably not true for the rest of the Population either. Experience with range expansion in Wyoming and with restoration efforts in the Midwest have demonstrated that this genetic line can and will migrate under the right conditions. Swan social behavior, which emphasizes migration only as a family unit rather than as a flock, and strong ties to traditional nesting and wintering sites make spontaneous range expansion unlikely or, at best, difficult to promote, especially when mortality suffered by migrating or pioneering swans remains high. Trumpeters need to be encouraged and protected by man if they are going to successfully colonize new territory in today's environment. We believe we know what to do. Now, we need to commit the time and resources to do it.

Marvin L. Plenert, Regional Director  
Region 1, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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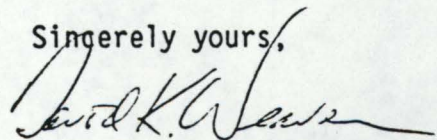
6. Everyone needs to recognize that the Trumpeter Swan is somewhat unique among North American waterfowl. Management techniques which are successful for other species may not be appropriate for Trumpeters. These birds will require special attention to achieve the stated objectives.

The Trumpeter Swan Society shares the concern of the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society for the plight of the Trumpeter Swans wintering on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River and elsewhere. The Idaho Chapter's petition to have the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeters classified as threatened is not a rash or impulsive response to a freak quirk of nature. It represents the continued frustrations with the Federal and state governments over their inability to manage this population sufficiently to assure continued range and population expansion.

While we commend the Idaho Chapter for bringing this situation into the spotlight, The Trumpeter Swan Society hopes these issues can be corrected without seeking threatened status for the Trumpeter Swan. We encourage you to do all that you can to implement the North American Management Plan for Trumpeter Swans and thereby address the concerns raised in this letter. We believe the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service responded adequately in 1984 when confronted with a similar situation regarding management at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. We trust you will do so again.

Our Society is willing to assist in any way it can.

Sincerely yours,



David K. Weaver  
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

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cc: Galen L. Buterbaugh, Regional Director, Region 6, USFWS  
Jerry M. Conley, Director, Idaho Fish and Game Department  
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