

Presentation to the Committee of the Whole
June 4
Re. Lasalle Park Wave Break

By Liz Benneian
On behalf of the Trumpeter Swan Coalition

(Start going through the slides stop on 6th one — Mom and boy in red jacket)

I would like to briefly address a couple of issues that were raised at the May 10th meeting.

Councillor Craven asked if I was aware that Trumpeter Swans are not endangered. They aren't any longer because the western North American population has made a comeback since the 1930s when U.S. conservation authorities started to protect and reintroduce them. The Ontario population, is a distinct population and still fragile. They are not on Ontario's endangered species list because, when it was created, Trumpeter Swans had been extirpated from the province with the last one being shot by a hunter in Long Point in 1886. By the time someone got around to saying "shouldn't we consider them for the list?" the reintroduction program in Ontario had started and there were too many for them to be considered "endangered". But are 1,000 Trumpeter really so many? If there were 1,000 people in Ontario, would that be considered as a robust population? More than 35 years have passed since their reintroduction. When you consider that, 1,000 Trumpeters doesn't seem like very many does it?

Why are there still so few? (Go to Slide 7)

Lead poisoning from lead sinkers and shot is a main reason.

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So is entanglement is fishing line.

(Go to slide 9)

You can see some of the other main reasons for mortality here.

(Go to Slide 10)

But the number one reason is loss of winter habitat.

This map shows the loss of wetlands in southern Ontario since settlement. The areas in red indicate between 85% and 100% habitat loss.

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Losses around the great lakes and throughout the Eastern seaboard of the U.S. are just as extensive as human populations continue to expand draining wetlands and disturbing virtually every inch of coastline. These areas were the winter habitat of Trumpeters. Today they have very few choices. That's why Lasalle Park is important.

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Protection of wintering habitat is the best thing we can do to ensure the survival of this species that has already been brought back from the dead once.

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To Mayor Goldring's question about would the use of aerators satisfy our concerns. I have sent this Council the results of my most recent enquiries. I talked to Wye Marsh who employs them and Canadian Pond who is a major supplier of aeration systems. Those conversations confirmed what I found and stated in the past, aerators are expensive, problem prone and present maintenance challenges. However, if they were properly researched and costed and if a maintenance plan and budget were also included, there are some applications that could potentially relieve our concerns about keeping water open for the swans to feed.

Alternatively, the plan could include a winter feeding program for the Trumpeters, should the harbour ice over for long periods. This has never been considered but I suggest it is a viable option.

The other option is to not anchor the floating wave break in place. Can it not be moved in the water so it doesn't impede the near-shore wave action or removed from the water for the winter as the current break wall is?

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I have never understood why this Council has not embraced the Trumpeter Swans. No other place in Ontario can boast of the number of Trumpeter Swans that Burlington has. Burlington has the largest congregation of Trumpeter Swans of any place in the Province. Why isn't this city celebrating that? The story of their reintroduction is a rare example of conservation success. Pig Pen, the Trumpeter that started the migration to Lasalle in 1993, is celebrated at Wye Marsh but is unacknowledged here.

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Burlington is home to the largest, and I would say, most beautiful swan in the world. It is Native only to North America. It belongs in this place. Other communities have built festivals around them and market them as a tourist attraction. Here are just a few examples. (Talk about the slide) If the marina brings life to the area in the summer, the Trumpeter Swans, properly marketed, could do the same in the winter.

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Lasalle Park is a special place and has become an important part of the training for young biologists.

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It's also an important place for people to gather to enjoy this natural phenomemon. The interests of these citizens need to be protected, too.

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The Trumpeter Swan have become an important part of the fabric of this community Please make plans for their protection part of your plans for Lasalle Park.

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Thank you.