

Back from the brink, the magnificent  
**Trumpeter Swan**



*The Trumpeter Swan Coalition*

*By Liz Benneian*

## Introduction To Trumpeter Swans



Trumpeter Swans are the world's largest swan with a wingspan of up to 2.1 to 2.4 m (7 to 8 ft). They are native only to North America. They are distinguished by their all-black beak and legs/feet.

# History

Settlers hunted Trumpeters for their meat, their feathers and even the leather of their feet that was used to make purses.



# History

Trumpeters were hunted out of existence in Ontario with the last one shot by a hunter in Long Point in 1886.

Flocks were decimated across North America until only 69 were thought to exist.

The discovery of a previously unknown small flock in Alaska began conservation efforts in the U.S. in the 1930's.



# Ontario Restoration Efforts

Conservation efforts in Ontario began by retired Ministry of Natural resources biologist Harry Lumsden in 1980s.

He got eggs from Alaskan Trumpeters and recruited landowners in the Trumpeter's traditional nesting range in Northern Ontario to raise the young birds.

As their numbers grew, they began to release the birds to the wild.

Harry Lumsden has been named a member of the Order of Canada and in 2012 he received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement for his efforts in restoring the Trumpeter Swans.



# Ontario Restoration Efforts



Today, thanks to more than 30 years of all-volunteer conservation efforts, there are now about 1,000 Trumpeter Swans in Ontario.

# Ontario Restoration Efforts



Two of Harry's early volunteers in raising the swans were Burlington residents Bev and Ray Kingdon. For more than three decades they continued volunteering with the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group.

## Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group



The TSRG bands and tags the swans, takes blood sample and keeps genealogical records. The data collected by these citizen scientists is sent to the University of Guelph.



# Ontario Restoration Efforts

The TSRG uses corn to lure the swans and make them comfortable with banding and tagging.

The swans are so used to the team members that swans will continue to mill around the TSRG members as banding and tagging is taking place.

This is in sharp contrast to high stress methods used elsewhere.



# Ontario Restoration Efforts



The TSRG works with scientists at the University of Guelph, graduate students and others to spread knowledge about Trumpeter Swans. Here they are training biologists how to band and tag birds.

# History of Trumpeters At LaSalle

First Trumpeter Swan to come to LaSalle Park was Pig Pen in 1993.

A captive raised bird, she started the Ontario migration.

A prolific breeder, she kept returning with her cygnets to LaSalle Park for 8 seasons until she was run over by a boat and killed in 2001.

80 of the 1,000 Trumpeters in Ontario can trace their lineage back to Pig Pen.



LaSalle Park is the largest over-wintering site for Trumpeter Swans in Ontario, hosting up to 200 birds, 1/5 of Ontario's population.

## Trumpeter Swan Appearance



As youngsters, Trumpeter Swans are more grey than white with bills that go from pink to black to all black.

Sometimes adult look like they are partly brown down their necks and chests but that's just staining from the minerals in the water.

# Trumpeter Swan Behaviour



From the end of March until the end of October Trumpeter Swans nest in isolated spots in Northern Ontario. Over the winter they congregate in more southerly parts of the Province in sheltered spots with an abundance of aquatic vegetation at shallow depths. Winter is when important social activities such as mate selection take place.

# Trumpeter Swan Behaviour



Trumpeter Swans mate for life. Pair bonding usually takes place when the swans are between 3 and 4 years of age although they may not mate for a few more years.



## Trumpeter Swan Behaviour



Trumpeter Swans are excellent parents. They have even been known to attack snapping turtles that are trying to steal the cygnets.

## Trumpeter Swan Behaviour



Usually Trumpeters have about lay about 4 to 6 eggs but a record was set in 2011 when this pair successfully raised 10 cygnets!

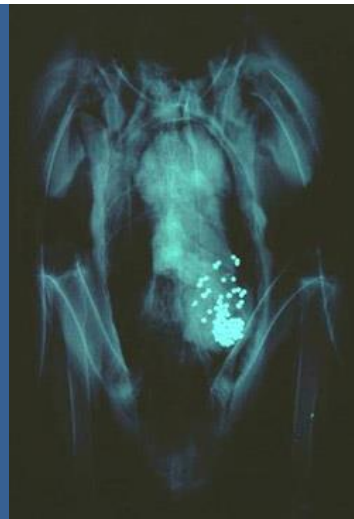


## After 35+ years of restoration effort, why are there still so few Trumpeter Swans?



## Causes of Death

- Lead poisoning from ingestion of lead shot and fishing sinkers.
- Collisions with unmarked power lines.



- Humans — hunting, harassment, dogs, personal watercraft.
- Disease and natural predation.

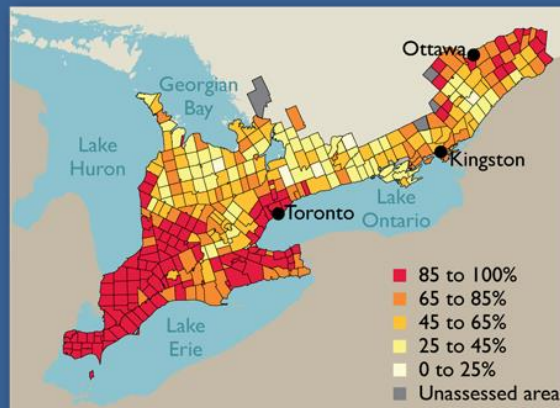
## Causes of Death



Entanglement with fishing lines



## Loss of Habitat



*An average of 3.5km<sup>2</sup> of southern Ontario wetlands continue to be lost each year (1982 to 2002). These estimates are conservative since Great Lakes Coastal wetlands and wetlands smaller than 10 ha were not included in the analyses.*

*From Biodiversity Canada*

<http://www.biodivcanada.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=F07D520A-1&offset=1&toc=show>

# Winter Habitat is Critical

“The most serious threat to Trumpeter Swans is the loss of undisturbed breeding and (especially) wintering habitat to expanding human populations. Urban expansion, rural residential development, and recreation often preferentially occur in and adjacent to environment preferred by swans; namely, large, clean, calm, and productive water bodies.



The long-term viability of all three populations likely depends primarily on enhancement of existing, restoration of former, and creation of new wintering grounds.”

Quoted on Page 105 of Appendix E in the ESR from the Species Assessment For The Trumpeter Swans In Wyoming (Pacific Flyway Council 1992, 2002).

# Protecting Existing Habitat, Like Lasalle Park Is Critical





## Lasalle Park is a Treasure



A place where people can enjoy nature up close

## A Showcase for the Resilience of Nature



## A Photographer's Paradise



## With Untapped Tourism Potential



# Tourism & Trumpeters

Wild Swan Day, Ogden Utah

Monticello, Minnesota  
Chamber of Commerce promotes  
Trumpeter Swan viewing as a  
winter tourism attraction. The city  
has also set up “Swan cams” so  
people all around the world can  
view the swans.

A Celebration of Swans at “Swan  
Haven” in the Yukon is a three-day  
festival that 10% of the Yukon’s  
entire population participates in.

Sandhill Wildlife Area, Wisconsin  
has a 14-mile long auto tour  
Trumpeter Trail.



Wild Wings Festival, Duncan, British Columbia  
A month-long festival of nature and arts featuring the  
Trumpeter Swan



## Meet The Trumpeters on Family Day



For the past several years, the Trumpeter  
Swan Coalition has hosted a “Meet the  
Trumpeter Swans” event at Lasalle Park  
on Family Day.





**We Invite You To Come Out**



**Trumpeter Swans Are An Amazing And Rare Story Of Conservation Success**





**Thanks  
So Much  
For Your  
Time**

**Questions?**

