

THE PACIFIC COAST TRUMPETER SWAN MANAGEMENT COUNCIL:  
A PROPOSAL

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It is now clear that the Congress of the United States cannot legislate the protection of any major portion of the Trumpeter Swan habitats in Alaska. It appears that about 85 percent of the Trumpeter Swan habitat as determined by the 1975 U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service census has or will be transferred from the public domain to the State of Alaska and to Alaska Native corporations under terms of the Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The d-2 legislation under even the most ambitious proposal will include only small portions of peripheral swan habitats.

It is also clear that what was known as "Seward's Folly" and "Walrussia" in 1867 has, by 1978, become a major destination for fortune hunters and settlers seeking new homes. Agriculture, strip mining, oil extraction, wilderness homesteads, wilderness recreation homes, hydro development, urban development, power lines, pipelines, roads, and railroads are all major probabilities in the next few years, within the Alaska Trumpeter Swan range. There is tremendous pressure from Alaskans to make land available to private citizens for personal uses. This pressure could overwhelm attempts for enlightened land classification and result in some sort of "land rush."

The Trumpeter Swan was thought to be on the verge of extinction in 1930. By 1968, the population had increased sufficiently that it could be removed from the "Endangered Species List." Some 80 percent of all Trumpeters nest in Alaska. About 60 percent of the total world breeding population will be on the non-Federal lands of Alaska. These non-Federal lands also include the major potential for future expansion of human activity in Alaska.

If poor land management should cause a serious decline of the Alaska Trumpeter, it is likely it would be returned to the Endangered Species List. The provisions of the Endangered Species Act would then have to be applied causing restrictions in the use of lands of any ownership and an increase of public expense for an effective restoration effort. Ugly and expensive controversy could erupt as with the unfortunate snail darter in Tennessee.

It is obviously in the best interest of everyone -- Federal organizations, State organizations, Native organizations, industry and private citizens -- in Alaska to keep the Trumpeter off the Endangered List. Every land managing agency with responsibilities for land-use decisions on Trumpeter Swan habitat will need to consider swan conservation if we are to succeed in efforts to perpetuate a healthy Trumpeter breeding population. Coordination of management plans will be necessary.

In other parts of North America, a council concept is functioning well to coordinate the enormously diverse interests in the management of the heavily hunted migratory waterfowl species. Each of the four flyways has such a council with attendant technical committees. The needs and desires of all are heard by the councils. Scientific information is evaluated, and a sound and fair management program results.

I would like to suggest the formation of a Pacific Coast Trumpeter Swan Management Council. The Council should include members from each State and Federal agency that has jurisdiction over Trumpeter habitat. Native corporations whose lands include Trumpeter habitat also must be included. Other members should be representatives of sportsmen's groups, conservation societies, and environmental societies in Alaska. It will be necessary to have similar representation from the Province of British Columbia, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the State of Washington so that the entire range of the Pacific Trumpeter is included. A Midcontinent Trumpeter Swan Management Council should also be considered.

The first duty of the Council might best be development of an overall swan conservation strategy. Needed next would be management plans for various areas, cooperative agreements between landholders, establishment of a technical committee of professionals and initiation of a research program. An annual report should be provided for keeping everyone informed on the progress of Trumpeter conservation. Council funding should be by participants. Expenses of the Council could be counted as an insurance cost against the greater social and financial cost of letting the Trumpeter slip back on the Endangered List for lack of attention.

It is fortuitous that a major portion of the organizations that should be on the Pacific Coast Council are represented here at this timely meeting of The Trumpeter Swan Society. There are several panel sessions yet on the agenda. It is my hope that the matter of Trumpeter Swan Management Councils can be discussed and a logical first step towards their creation be taken before this meeting adjourns. If we can do that, I think all of us here could feel we had participated in an exciting and important step toward insuring the future well-being of America's largest and most lordly bird.

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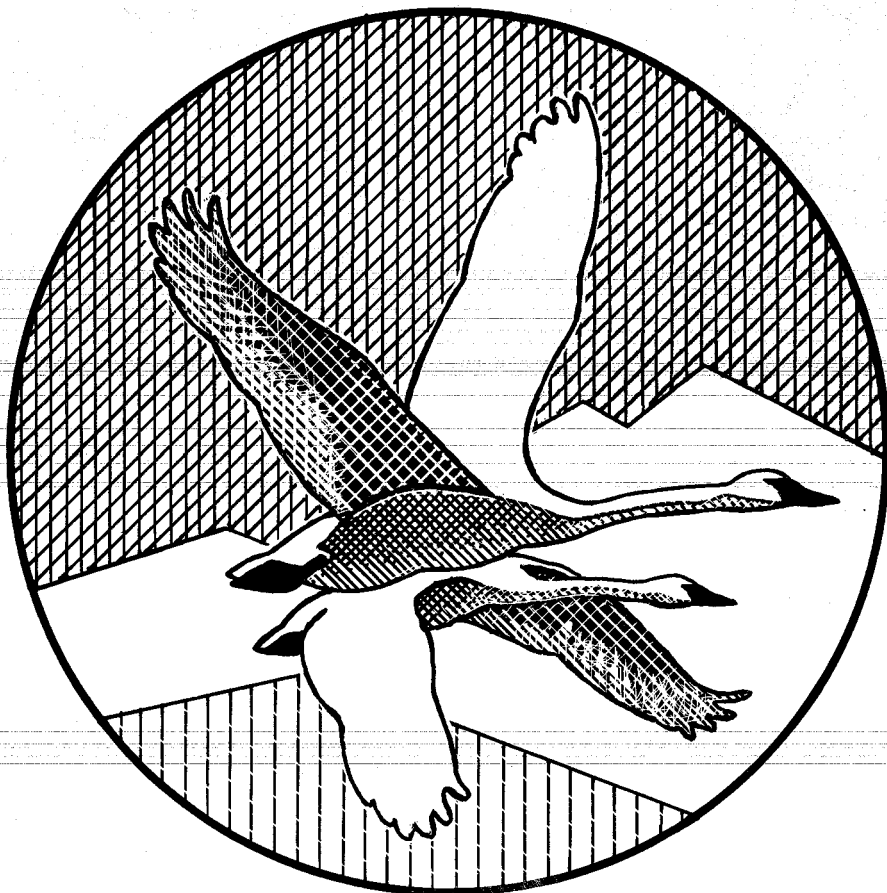
IMPACT OF HUNTING AND DISTURBANCE ON THE  
INTERIOR TRUMPETER SWAN POPULATION

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Abstract: Hunting has had very little, if any, adverse effect on Trumpeter Swans in interior Alaska, and disturbance has been minimal due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of most nesting and concentration areas. Future land use patterns in the Interior are not likely to conflict with Trumpeter Swan habitat because of the areas' low appeal for human use. The western and northern distribution limits of Trumpeter Swans coincide predominantly with the edge of the boreal forest with the overriding limiting factor, especially in the northern distribution, being the number of ice-free days in a year. There is some limited overlap in Whistling Swan and Trumpeter Swan distribution.

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