

**Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)**

**Status: NSS2; NatureServe G4 S2**

**Abundance:** Uncommon

**Introduction:** The Trumpeter Swan was once distributed across most of North America and currently occurs locally from Alaska south to Oregon and east to Michigan. Although it has been found in many parts of Wyoming, the most significant concentrations of resident birds are in western Wyoming along the Snake, Salt, and Green River drainages. Most of Wyoming's resident swans winter in Idaho, although their numbers increase during winter, when they are joined by swans that nest in Canada. The Trumpeter Swan was nearly exterminated by unregulated hunting and habitat loss, and by 1933 only 66 birds remained in the tri-state flocks inhabiting Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. The tri-state flocks increased to over 500 during the 1950s, but numbers have fluctuated since then. Currently the number of resident adults in western Wyoming averages around 100. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department classifies the Trumpeter Swan as a Species of Special Concern with a Native Species Status of 2 (NSS2) because breeding populations are restricted in numbers and distribution, there is ongoing significant loss of nesting habitat, and it is sensitive to human disturbance.

**Habitat:** The Trumpeter Swan inhabits shallow marshes, ponds, lakes, and river oxbows. It prefers stable, quiet, and shallow waters where small islands, muskrat houses, or dense emergent vegetation provide nesting and loafing sites. Nutrient-rich waters, with dense aquatic plant and invertebrate growth, provide the most suitable habitat. Adequate forage in the pre-nesting period (April to May) is critical for nesting success. Winter habitat must provide extensive beds of aquatic plants that remain ice-free. In Wyoming, cold temperatures and ice restrict trumpeters to sites where geothermal waters, springs, or outflow from dams maintain ice-free areas.

**Problems:**

- The rapidly increasing number of swans migrating from Canada and wintering in the Greater Yellowstone Area could out-compete the resident swans for the limited amount of winter and early spring forage. Early spring habitat is necessary for the reproductive success of swans nesting in Wyoming and is probably a primary limiting factor;
- The Wyoming nesting population appears stagnant and unable to expand into adjacent habitats;
- Collisions with power lines and fences and illegal shooting are responsible for nearly 60% of Trumpeter Swan deaths in Wyoming
- For as yet undetermined reasons, the number of Trumpeter Swans that successfully nest in Wyoming is extremely limited and recruitment of subadults into the population is low;
- Many of the historical nesting sites are not occupied by nesting pairs or are not productive; and
- Human activity in swan habitat, including housing developments, tourism, and recreation, is increasing dramatically.

**Conservation Actions:**

- Conduct habitat surveys of potential nesting and transitional habitat in the Green, Salt, and Snake River drainages, and work with private landowners and agencies to enhance and protect suitable habitat;

- Continue to coordinate with the Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Working Group, which includes Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and wildlife agencies in Montana and Idaho, to promote and conduct swan research and management;
- Continue to research and monitor early spring nesting and winter habitat use;
- Reduce swan mortality from illegal shooting and collisions with power lines and fences;
- Continue to reintroduce swans into suitable habitats that promote migration to new winter habitat;
- Continue to work closely with regional land trusts to identify potential habitat, obtain conservation easements, and develop wetland management plans; and
- Conduct educational programs, wetland seminars, and field trips with local schools in an effort to involve the public in swan conservation.

**References and Additional Reading:**

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## Trumpeter Swan Nesting Areas and Winter Distribution

