

As a result of intensive reintroduction efforts in the upper Midwest during the past several decades, pairs of Trumpeter Swans have been seen in Illinois as potential nesters within the past few years. In spring 2005, two trumpeters took up residence for a short time in late April at Cook County's McGinnis Slough. Wes Serafin (pers. comm.) said two unbanded Trumpeters were at McGinnis Slough 17 April 2005 and one was sitting on an old muskrat lodge. No nesting was confirmed and later in the



Four cygnets were produced in June 2007 at Savanna in Carroll County.

Photo by Anne Straight

summer only one bird was seen. Paul Dacko (via IBET, the Illinois birding list serve) also found a pair of Trumpeters in 2005 at Lake Katherine, Cook County. He saw them 11 March 2005 and photographed them 11 May 2005. Since these swans were not banded, it's impossible to be completely sure, but it's likely the pair at McGinnis and at Lake Katherine were the same.

In addition, in 2005, four swans were present at Spring Lake in northwestern Illinois along the backwaters of the Mississippi River in Carroll County into July. Another pair was spending time at Carson Slough, a small private wetland on the north side of Carroll County. None of these pairs was documented as breeding.

In 2006, several pairs of Trumpeter Swans were observed in Carroll County. The pair that raised young selected a roughly 35-acre marsh bordered on the north and south by an active railroad track and on the east by a busy road with homes less than 200 yards away. One of the many muskrat lodges, seemingly a feature in all the marshes being considered for nesting by these swans in the Midwest, was chosen as their home. On 29 May, Eric Walters observed the female turning and then sitting upon four eggs, which were laid on the rooftop of the lodge. The male, with neck-collar 1H9, was hatched and reared in 2004 at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, part of the zoo's breeding program that started in 1991. The female, with neck-

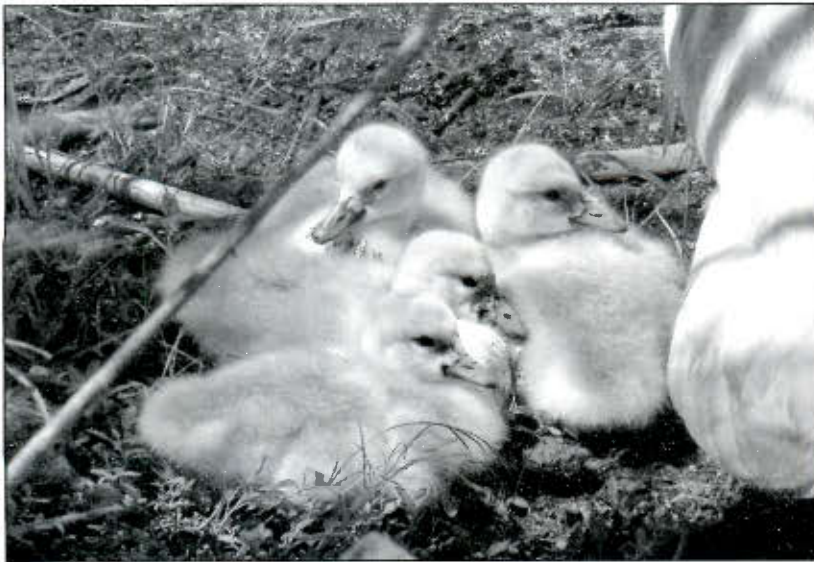
collar OC6, was born in 2003 and raised in captivity in Iowa. Both were released into the wild near the Mississippi River in Iowa.

On 6 June 2006, Lawrence Casey observed an American Crow dive bombing and attacking one of the cygnets, with repeated strong blows to the young bird. The adults watched with no reaction and made no attempt to defend their young. It is unclear if something was wrong with the young or whether the captive-rearing of the adults may have led to atypical behavior, in which they did not learn predatorial defense tactics (S. Bailey pers. comm.). Only one juvenile survived through at least early winter, being seen with its parents in middle November, a few miles south of the nesting site.

Illinois history

Trumpeter Swans once bred along the larger river valley regions of Illinois where sizeable backwater marshes and sloughs were formerly common. They may have also nested in the state's prairie potholes, but mention of this in the literature is scant.

Schorger (1964) writes of an expedition in 1673, when Father Marquette recounted flightless Trumpeter



Four cygnets rest near one of their parents at Savanna, Carroll County. June 2007. Photo by Lawrence and Barbara Casey.