

An American Crow attacks one of the cygnets in Carroll County. Photos by Lawrence and Barbara Casey taken in June 2006.



### National and Midwestern perspective

Historically, Trumpeter Swans occurred across much of the northern United States and Canada, breeding or wintering. (Matteson et al. 1995) Some controversy exists as to whether Trumpeter Swans ever bred in Ohio and the rest of the Northeastern United States (Whan 2000). Destruction of habitat along with market hunting caused a decline in the nesting populations during the 19th century. Swan skins, mostly from trumpeters, were used to decorate ladies' hats in England and the U.S., and by 1932 this species was thought to have been extinct in the Midwest (Banko 1960). Reports from early adventurers indicated that the swan eggs were easy to collect, and that could have led to the species' decline as well.

The discovery of a small nonmigratory population of Trumpeter Swans in remote Montana, Idaho and Wyoming in the early 1900s, including a nest at Yellowstone National Park in 1919 (Matteson et. al 1995), gave conservationists hope that this species could be helped.

Surprisingly, though Trumpeters were first identified in Alaska in 1850, it was not until 1954 that breeding trumpeters were discovered there.

Three cygnets were produced at the first nesting of Trumpeter Swans in modern time in Illinois in 2006.

Only one survived.

Photo by Lawrence and Barbara Casey. June 2007.

An extensive survey of known Alaska breeding habitat in 1968 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revealed that 2,844 trumpeters were living in the state. (Rosenberg and Rothe 1994). A 1990 census showed 13,000 trumpeters in Alaska, which is roughly 80 percent of the world's population.

Though most birders consider Trumpeter Swan reintroduction and protection efforts to have begun fairly recently, perhaps only as far back as two decades ago, much was being done even in the 1930s. For example, the federal government created the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana in 1935 to help protect a Trumpeter Swan population there. And in 1938, four Trumpeter Swan cygnets were placed at the National Elk Refuge in Jackson, Wyoming. "A total of 40 Trumpeters from Red Rock Lakes NWR formed the core of the Midwest's restoration

effort in the late 1960s," wrote Matteson et al. (1995).

Conservation efforts continued, helping the swans return to areas where they hadn't been found for decades. Matteson et. al (1995) state that Minnesota's Hennepin Parks pioneered the effort to re-establish Trumpeter Swans in 1966. Along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, individual states including Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio began reintroduction programs in the 1980s and Iowa soon followed in 1994. Cygnets are reared in captivity and then released after two years at select wetlands. The states manage these programs and some reintroduced birds were born at local zoos including Lincoln Park and Brookfield Zoos in northern Illinois.

