

Wyoming Wetland Society/ Trumpeter Swan Fund Annual Report

July 2006

The Wyoming Wetland Society, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, was established in 1986. The organization has been a Wyoming base organization for 20 years and a Teton County based organization for 16 of those years. It has demonstrated through perseverance and patience a solid track record of successful wetland restoration and species restoration efforts. The *Trumpeter Swan Fund* and the *Beaver Restoration Project* are dedicated funds earmarked within the Society for work on swans, the captive rearing/ re-introduction programs, Teton County wetland projects and a beaver restoration project. The Wyoming Wetland Society is primarily a volunteer program, and through collaborative efforts with other private citizens, State and Federal agencies and other non-profits many programs are becoming reality.

In the last few years the WWS participated in implementing the Pacific Flyway Trumpeter Swan Plan by beginning programs in the Blackfoot drainage in Montana and planning programs on National Wildlife Refuges in Idaho beginning in 2007. All these efforts and previous efforts were funded through the WWS/ *The Trumpeter Swan Fund*. Various other portions of the plan were implemented and or goals completed throughout the three state regions of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho in recent years. Board members continue to provide outreach to landowners and interested publics in the valley concerning ways to help minimize trumpeter swan losses and help protect wetlands. Members assisted in school programs and field trips, Land Trust and Teton Science School programs to explain wetland values, emphasizing protecting and enhancing wetland habitat.

In the past few years the Wyoming Wetland Society, through an umbrella fund *The Trumpeter Swan Fund*, accomplished several noteworthy projects. In 2006 The WWS/TSF completed a second swan restoration project. This project, on Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge in southern Idaho, culminated a four (4) year effort to restore swans to that area. During the spring of 2006 three nesting pairs were observed, the goal for that effort. Beginning in 2007 swans will be released at other Wildlife Refuges in Idaho to further increase numbers of nesting swans.

The first project, The Green River Project, resulted in a swan population that continues to surpass the remainder of Wyoming in production of young swans fueling a migratory tradition to southern states and further insuring the survival of swans. The Wyoming program ended in 2000 with the 10 territorial pair goal being reached. Today, some six years later, swans in the area are expanding into new habitats increasing the stability of the Wyoming swan population. In the 2000 and 2001 year end report we mentioned that two pairs of swans, with one member of each pair determined to be cygnets released from Pinedale in 1997 were observed in the Jackson area in 2000. One of those birds showed back up the spring of 2001 and was observed nest building at a local lake. After several years that bird moved to an abandoned territory at the Pinto Ranch Oxbow, just east of Moran, Wyoming. This pair of birds is extremely important, released in the Green River drainage and migrating south, they are now mixing with birds from the core area from northwest Wyoming. That single event will, in the future, allow those birds to teach their young southern migrations hopefully making the flock more productive. As reported in the 2001 report these successes encouraged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Pacific Flyway Council to adopt the WWS/TSF methodology for future efforts to restore trumpeters elsewhere in the western states.

The Salish Kootenai/Flathead Lake area of Montana continues to increase in numbers of nesting swans, similar to the results observed in the Wyoming program, a result of WWS/TSF efforts. A new project in the adjacent Blackfoot River drainage will further insure survival of swans in Montana. The *Blackfoot*

Challenge Swan Project was initiated the summer of 2005 and it is an important project linking swans produced in Montana with Wyoming swans. Both populations winter in the same area and this provides for valuable genetic interchange with Wyoming birds linking the flocks.

The WWS/*Trumpeter Swan Fund* also supports the captive flock of trumpeters. That flock continues to build in numbers and provides the young birds that are used in all the restoration efforts in the various States. Success has been seen in the various restoration projects including the Green River, the Salish Kootenai and most recently in the Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge project. Ultimately the success of restoring birds hinges on the production and release of an adequate number of swans to overcome mortalities. Having these birds produce young in the wild dampens the decline and or nest failures of the natural population. Through our efforts overall swan numbers in Wyoming and other states are remaining stable, though the trumpeter population as a whole still remains vulnerable.

In addition the WWS/*Trumpeter Swan Fund* supported the restoration and renovation of four (4) wetland projects in the Teton County, Wyoming area that are critical habitat for waterfowl and swans in the valley. Many of these projects are on the valley floor immediately south of Jackson and in the Gros Ventre drainage. What is readily apparent is the value of private wetlands in the valley for supporting wild wintering swans and other waterfowl. These wetlands are associated with spring and thermal influence that provide open water winter habitats. The WWS/TSF works with private landowners to insure that these wetlands are maintained or enhanced for waterfowl values.

In 2005 another sub fund was created. The WWS/*Beaver Restoration Project* was initiated to provide funding for efforts to restore problem beaver from urban settings to be transplanted to National Forest habitat to increase wetlands. Much suitable habitat exists and many of these areas are currently devoid of beaver. Over the next few years the organization will help census beaver populations, and restore beaver to suitable habitat promoting wetland development using nature's wetland engineers

Through your effort and support there is much that is noteworthy. We thank you for your continued interest in the programs and efforts of the Society. As always we want to extend thanks to the numerous volunteers and members that make the organization what it has become; *our success is your success.*