

Trumpeter Swan
1883

Little Twin Lakes, Hancock Co., IA
J. W. Preston
Anderson 1907, DuMont 1933

Record Number: 93-AS
Classification: A-D

REFERENCES

Anderson 1907
DuMont 1933
Bent 1925
Musgrove and Musgrove 1977

VOTE: 5 A-D

A-D, Preston gives specific data about nesting including a description of the nest. Mute Swans were not known in the Midwest at that time and Tundras would be unheard of in summer. /thk

Anderson 1907
pp 191-192

65. (181). *Olor buccinator* (Rich.). Trumpeter Swan.

At the present time the Trumpeter Swan is a rare bird in Iowa. During the early days the species undoubtedly nested in Iowa, though probably not commonly. A great many authorities have given the Trumpeter Swan as "breeding from Iowa northward," but there is little definiteness about the records. (Snow, Bds. of Kan., 1873, ii; Coues, Bds. of N. W., 1874, 544; Krider, Forty Yrs. Notes, 1879, 70; Ridgway, Cat. Aqu. and Fish-eating Bds., 1883, 19; Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, N. A. Bds., 1884, i, 430; Cooke, Bd. Migr. in Miss. Val., 1884-5, 79; Keyes and Williams, Bds. of Iowa, 1889, 119; Coues, Key to N. A. Bds., 1887, 682; A. O. U. Check List, 1886, 130; Goss, Bds. Kan., 1891, 108; Chapman, Bds. of East. N. A., 1903, 124; Bailey, Bds. of West. N. A., 1902, 70).

W. W. Cooke states: "Breeds from Iowa and Minnesota northward. It was reported breeding near Newton, Iowa, and at Heron Lake, Minn., as well as along the Red River of the North" (Bird Migr. in Miss. Val., 1884-5, 79).

The only definite record of the nesting of the Trumpeter Swan in Iowa which I have been able to trace was received from the veteran collector, J. W. Preston, in a letter dated March 22, 1904: "A pair of 'Trumpeters' reared a brood of young in a slough near

Little Twin Lakes, Hancock county, in the season of 1883, not many miles from where some good finds in the way of sets of Whooping Cranes were made. This was positively *Olor buccinator*. The nest was placed on a large tussock in a marshy slough or creek, and had been used for years by the swans, as I was credibly informed; but the nest mentioned above, so far as I am aware, was the last in that locality. During the earlier days the Trumpeter Swan was not an uncommon summer resident, being occasionally found nesting in some remote and hidden place, and as late as 1875 there were a few pairs known to breed on the headwaters of the Des Moines River. Of course the species of Swans have been somewhat confused in the minds of untrained observers, but to one familiar with the two American species there would be no chance of mistake. For many years I have not seen a Trumpeter Swan in the State."

County records; Blackhawk—"rare migrant; a specimen mounted by myself in museum of Iowa State Normal School" (Walters). Jackson—"tolerably common transient" (Giddings). Linn—"spring and fall migrant" (Bailey). Pottawattamie—Mills—"frequent migrant. I have seen the Trumpeters on the Missouri flying over from the Nebraska side of the river to the Iowa side, and in other directions, at numerous times. The following dates are noted by me in particular: April 5, 1893; Sept. 30, 1894; April 15, 1896; Sept. 20, 1897, and at various times since. *They were Trumpeters*" (Trostler). Poweshiek—"rare transient" (Kelsey). Sioux—"rare migrant" (Johnson). Webster—"migrant; from specimens actually in hand, and having no yellow at lores and having nostrils nearer eye than tip of bill" (Somes).

1933
DuMont ~~1933~~
pp 28-29

Cygnus buccinator Richardson. Trumpeter Swan

Extinct in Iowa. Rather full details of the nesting of this species at Little Twin Lakes, Hancock County, as observed by J. W. Preston, in 1883, are contained in Anderson's list (1907). On March 22, 1904, Preston wrote Anderson as follows: ". . . This was positively *Olor buccinator*. The nest was placed on a large tussock in a marshy slough or creek, and had been used for years by the swans, as I was credibly informed; but the nest mentioned above, so far as I am aware, was the last in that locality. During the earlier days the Trumpeter Swan was not an uncommon summer resident, being occasionally found nesting in some remote and hidden place, and as late as 1875 there were a few pairs known to breed on the headwaters of the Des Moines River." Several county records are given by Anderson. However, there may be some doubt regarding field observations of this species in the eastern part of the state after 1890.

A mounted specimen of the Trumpeter Swan, collected by H. B. Smith in Sac County is now in the Odebolt High School. It was examined by the writer September 3, 1932. It is probably the only Iowa specimen now preserved.

Bent, A. C.: Life Histories of North American Water Fowl Part II.
Bull 130 US Nat Museum, Washington, 1925.
pp 300-301

Breeding range.—Probably still breeds sparingly in the wilder portions of Wyoming (Yellowstone Park), western Montana, Alberta, British Columbia (Skeena River), and northwestern Canada. Has bred in the past east to James Bay (Norway House), Manitoba (Shoal Lake, 1893 and 1894), Minnesota (Heron Lake, 1883), and Indiana. South to Iowa (Hancock County, 1883), Nebraska, and Missouri west to British Columbia (Chilcoten) and Alaska (Fort Yukon).

Winter range.—Western United States. South to the Gulf of Mexico and southern California. North to west-central British Columbia (Skeena River) and the central Mississippi Valley. Now too rare everywhere to outline its range more definitely.

Spring migration.—Average dates of arrival: Nebraska, March 16; South Dakota, April 2; Minnesota, Heron Lake, April 4; Saskatchewan, April 16; British Columbia, April 20. Late date of departure: Arkansas, Helena, April 29, 1891; British Columbia, Osoyoos, April 25.

Fall migration.—Fall dates: Minnesota, Spicer, October 8, 1913; Michigan, St. Clair Flats, November 20, 1875; Washington, Douglas County, November 9, 1912; Colorado, Fort Collins, November 18, 1897, and November 25, 1915.

Egg dates.—Arctic Canada: Five records, June 17 to July 9. Alaska: One record, June 28. Alberta: One record, April 7. Dakota: One record, June 4.

Musgrove, J. W. and Musgrove, M. R. 1977. Waterfowl in Iowa, 5th ed.
State Conservation Commission. pp 4-5

TRUMPETER SWAN

Cygnus buccinator RICHARDSON

PLATE ON PAGE 7

Length: 60 to 70 inches

Weight: 20 to 30 pounds

DESCRIPTION: *Adult male and female*—Largest of all North American waterfowl. Pure white with black bill and feet. Nostril is located midway between tip of bill and eye.

Juvenile—Body plumage white mottled with light gray. Head and neck usually light gray. Bill black, mixed with flesh color. Feet dull yellow tinged with gray or olive.

FIELD MARKS: Probably indistinguishable from the whistling swan except in the hand. The trumpeter swan lacks the yellow spot in front of the eye, but occasionally whistling swans also fail to show this mark. The only true method of distinguishing between the two species lies in differences in the curvature of the windpipe and can be determined only by postmortem examination. All measurements vary and cannot be relied upon. Trumpeter swans are now found only in limited areas and refuges, mostly well away from civilization. For field identification purposes, the main difference

between the two species is in their breeding range; the whistling swan nests in the Arctic regions and the trumpeter swan in western United States, Alaska and British Columbia.

CALL: Loud trumpeting, similar to the sound of a French horn.

BREEDING: *Range*—Yellowstone Park, western Montana, British Columbia, and Alaska. Successful breeding colonies have been established by birds transplanted from the Red Rock Lakes Refuge in southwestern Montana to Malheur Refuge in Oregon, Ruby Lake Refuge in Nevada, and Lacreek Refuge in South Dakota. Formerly nested as far east as James Bay and south as far as Iowa and Nebraska. *Nest*—Composed of grasses and down, on large tussocks in marsh areas. *Eggs*—4 to 6, dull white becoming much nest-stained. *Downy young*—Probably resemble those of the whistling swan.

WINTER RANGE: Has mostly forsaken its former migratory habit and is a winter resident of much of its breeding range, moving only from one locality to another.

FOOD: Probably the same as whistling swans, chiefly vegetable matter supplemented by some animal food such as insects and snails.

IOWA STATUS: Extinct in Iowa, but formerly a nesting bird and probably the only swan ever to nest in the state. The last nest here was probably one reported by J. W. Preston; it was in a slough near Little Twin Lake in Hancock County in 1883, in an area that had been used by swans for many years. The birds were positively identified as trumpeter swans. (R. M. Anderson, 1907, reporting a 1904 letter from Preston in A. C. Bent's *Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl*.) A specimen taken in Sac County is listed by DuMont in *Revised List of Birds of Iowa*.