



ANIMAL SECTION - BIRDS

TRUMPETER SWAN

ABOUT

The Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) is the largest waterfowl species in North America and the largest swan in the world. It has a wingspan of 7-8 ft and can weigh between 21-30 lbs, although males are often heavier. Its long neck and strong feet enable it to uproot plants in water up to four feet deep. The term for a male is 'cob', whilst the female is known as a 'pen'. Adults are pure white with broad, black, flat bills. Their beaks have thin, salmon-red stripes along the bottom of the lower bill, which have fine tooth-like serrations along the edges, helping strain their diet of aquatic plants and water. Trumpeter Swans are migratory birds, arriving at their breeding grounds after the ice melts in early spring and leaving for their northern wintering grounds just before the freeze. Trumpeter pairs mate for life and usually choose their nesting territory near where the female was originally hatched. The nest they build in mid-April, on top of muskrat or beaver lodges or other suitable mounds, is 6 ft in diameter. The pen lays a clutch of 5-9 white eggs in late April and early May and sits on the eggs for 33 days while the cob defends the nest. Cygnets (baby swans) hatch in June and fledge at 14 weeks. They spend the rest of the summer preparing for migration with their parents. Perfect habitats for Trumpeters are shallow wetlands 1-3 feet deep in isolated areas far away from human activity.

DID YOU KNOW?

Trumpeter Swans were once fairly common throughout most of the U.S. and Canada. Excessive hunting in the 19th century for skin and feathers brought the bird to the brink of extinction. Europeans used the feathers to make ladies' powder puffs and adorn fashionable hats. By 1933 Europeans, upon their arrival in North America, had hunted and harassed the swan to the point where there were only 77 breeding in Canada and 50 in the United States. Luckily, a small non-migratory population survived in the remote mountain valleys of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Lead poisoning is another serious threat to the restoration of Trumpeter Swan numbers, particularly during droughts when lead shot or fishing sinkers are more accessible where they feed or eat grit to aid digestion. The 1991 nationwide ban on the use of lead shot for hunting waterfowl has helped decrease the number of swans dying from lead poison. As a result of enormous conservation efforts, there are now around 16,000 Trumpeters.

For more detailed information visit: www.dnr.state.wi.us

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What is the term for a baby swan?

- a. Pen
- b. Swanlet
- c. Fledge
- d. Cygnet

Answer is D

