

# Stewardship in Action: Trumpeter Swan nest site monitoring and habitat improvement in Teton County, Wyoming

## Executive Summary 2016

This project was undertaken to monitor at least 4 Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) nesting territories in Teton County to investigate causes of frequent nesting failures and cygnet losses. Trumpeter Swans that nest in Greater Yellowstone are the only population in the lower 48 states that was not completely extirpated by the early 1900s as the species neared extinction. This iconic population is highly valued by the community, as well as by people from around the world who know this special region. About 50-60 adult Trumpeters, usually including 10-12 nesting pairs, summer in Teton County. Their habitats face increasing human pressures and nest success in this area is often lower than in other portions of Greater Yellowstone. This swan population has been described as “conservation-reliant.” They are unlikely to thrive in the future without effective long-term management that ensures conservation of essential nesting habitats and reduces mortality factors.

In addition to monitoring we worked with Susan Patla (Wyoming Game and Fish Department) to come up with a strategy to improve a nest site in the Gros Ventre River drainage. This site was built up approximately 2 feet from its original height using willow branches, mud and grasses collected nearby.

Seven trail cameras total were installed at 4 swan territories in the Jackson region. Only two of these territories had nesting activity this summer with one producing cygnets. This is the first time a pair had been observed nesting at this wetland. They hatched 5 cygnets but none fledged. Trail cameras at the other territory detected nest building activity at the site that we built up this spring. There was no indication that eggs were laid at this site and trail camera images suggest they left the territory before June. Considering timing of when the pair left this territory, proximity to the new territory, and date of hatching it is possible the pair at Upper Slide Lake shifted territories. The other two territories either had very few swan observations with no nest building observed or no activity at all.

Images collected from trail cameras in this pilot season provided reliable data that would have most likely not been collected in such detail by sending personnel into the field. Continued nest monitoring with trail cameras and improving habitat will be our focus in the following year.

A special thanks to the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund for funding this year’s research!



