
CURRENT STATUS OF TRUMPETER SWAN REINTRODUCTION AT THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION

Dale M. Becker,* Tribal Wildlife Management Program, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, P.O. Box 278, Pablo, Montana 59855, daleb@cskt.org

Janene S. Lichtenberg, Tribal Wildlife Management Program, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, P. O. Box 278, Pablo, Montana 59855, janenel@cskt.org

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, in partnership with other agencies and non-governmental organizations, commenced a project to reintroduce trumpeter swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) at the Flathead Indian Reservation in 1996. Between 2002 and 2010 191 swans were released on the Reservation. Released swans generally wintered locally in the lower Flathead River drainage and its tributaries, likely due to mild winter weather conditions, abundant open water and ample food resources. Wintering swans from the project were also observed in southwestern Montana, northeastern Colorado and eastern Idaho, but few of these known migrants survived. Collisions with overhead power lines accounted for the majority of documented mortalities. Cooperative efforts with the local electrical utility are underway to mark lines and the marking seems to have reduced the incidence of collision mortalities. The first wild-nesting trumpeter swans from the reintroduction project were observed in 2004 with continued successful nesting each subsequent year and a total production of 89 fledged cygnets. Future plans for the reintroduction project include additional releases of captive-reared swans, continued monitoring of released and wild hatched swans, wetland habitat restoration projects, and marking of additional power lines.