



White-faced whistling duck, Photo Credit: Ian Gereg

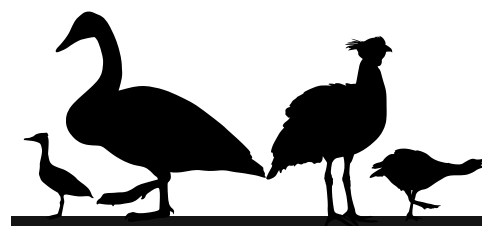
THE DUCK POND

Association of Zoos and Aquariums Anseriformes Taxon Advisory Group
Winter 2021 · Volume 1, Issue 1

OUR INAUGURAL ISSUE!

Welcome to the first ever edition of The Duck Pond, the newsletter of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Anseriformes (Waterfowl) Taxon Advisory Group. We look forward to sharing with you the latest news from the world of waterfowl. Among the features that you can expect in this and future issues are:

- Species profiles
- Updates from field conservation projects
- News from around the zoo and aquarium community, including new exhibits and significant hatchings
- Tips on nutrition, enrichment, exhibit design, and other aspects of waterfowl care and management



WATERFOWL

Taxon Advisory Group

**ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Species profile	2
Waterfowl in Aquariums	4
Around the Pond	6
Red-Breasted Goose Fieldwork in Bulgaria	6
Funding Opportunities	8



SPECIES FACT PROFILE: TRUMPETER SWAN

Named for their trumpet-like call, these giant birds can boast a seven foot wingspan and can reach weights of 30 lbs. Trumpeter swans typically form long-term pair bonds, often for life. They are known to be quite aggressive and protective during nesting season, but winter in large flocks.

Historically, trumpeter swans were plentiful throughout the United States and Canada. The species was nearly decimated due to market hunting for their feathers, meat and skin. In the 1930's, only ~69 trumpeter swans were known in the contiguous U.S. With the help of many people and organizations, including zoos across the country, trumpeter swans have made an incredible comeback now numbering over 60,000 and are currently listed by the IUCN as least concern though they are still considered endangered or threatened in many states. Some factors that still threaten trumpeter swans and other waterfowl species today include lead poisoning, wetland habitat loss, climate change and power-line collisions.

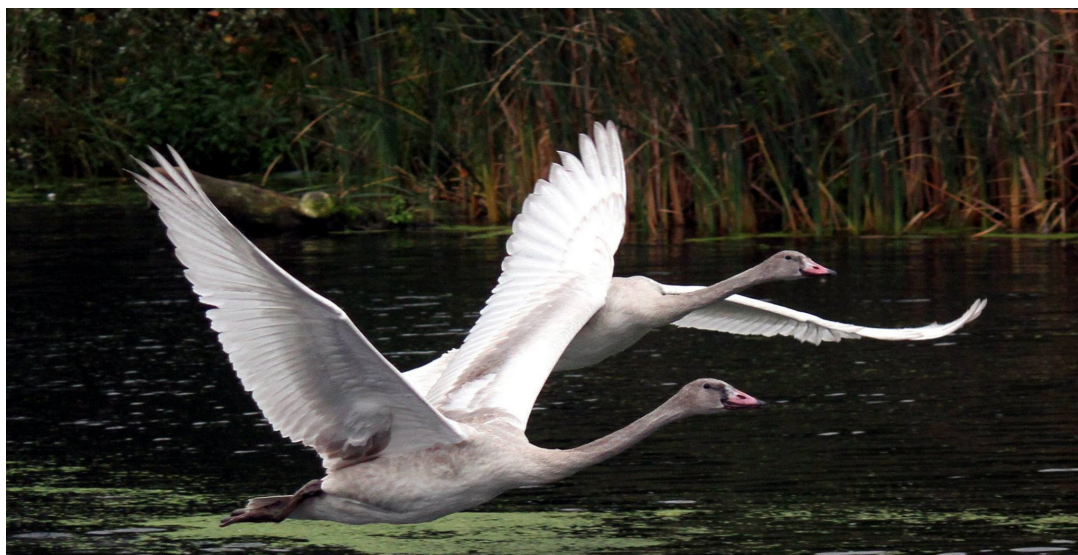


Photo Credit: Kim Stevenson of the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group

TRUMPETER SWAN

Cygnus buccinator

Range: Alaska, western Canada, northern United States

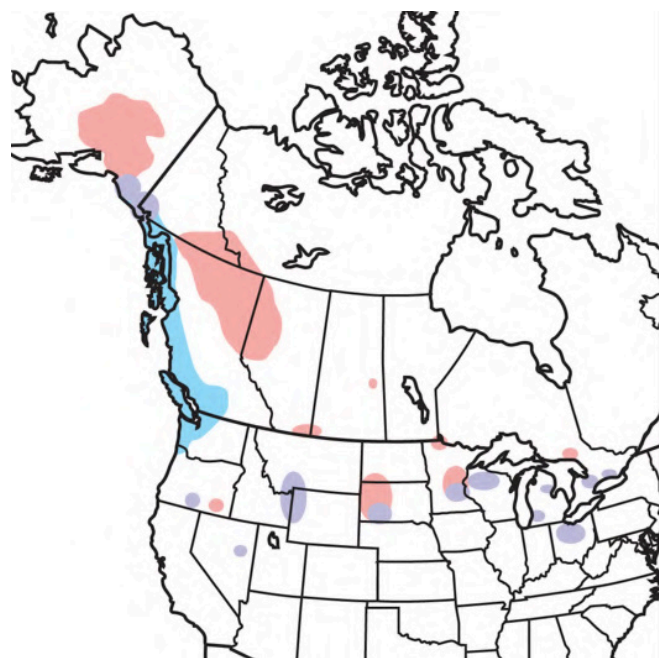
Program Status: Yellow SSP

Program Leader: Tiffany Mayo

trm1@clevelandmetroparks.com

TAG Appeal: Native to much of the United States, trumpeter swans are hardy birds that can thrive outdoors year-round in many locations. Displaying and breeding these handsome birds can provide your zoo with a rare opportunity to contribute directly to the conservation of an iconic North American species by participating in the reintroduction program.

The Species Survival Plan (SSP) works closely with The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS). This partnership has helped merge the wild population of swans with the zoological population. The SSP collaborates with TTSS on restoration initiatives, educational outreach and conservation projects involving swans and wetlands. Trumpeter swans do well in large exhibits with smaller waterfowl and are most commonly housed in male-female or female-female pairs and family groups. Zoo visitors are often drawn to their large size and beauty and they are a flagship species that can engage people and inspire them to take conservation action.



Range Map Credit: National Audubon Society



Photo Credit: Kim Stevenson of the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group

“Managing a local North American species like the trumpeter swan has given me the opportunity to connect people to waterfowl and wetlands on a local level which inspires conservation action starting right here at home and then translates to protecting wildlife around the world. The comeback of the trumpeter swan shows the impact, bad and good, that humans can have on a species and how a change in our behavior can save species from extinction. Trumpeter swans and other waterfowl are symbols of clean water and healthy wetlands which is important for animals and people alike. It’s always special to me when I see trumpeter swans in the wild and know I am part of their conservation story.”

- Tiffany Mayo, Trumpeter Swan SSP Coordinator and Studbook Keeper

QUESTION AND ANSWER – WATERFOWL TRIVIA

What are the only two countries in the world that have a species of waterfowl as their national bird? And what birds have they chosen?

Answer on Page 8



WATERFOWL IN MIXED-TAXA HABITATS

Waterfowl are seldom displayed in single-species exhibits. In most zoos and aquariums they are part of dynamic mixed-species displays, often with other birds, but sometimes with a variety of fishes, reptiles, and mammals.

Some of the mixed-species combinations seen can be remarkable. Blue-winged geese grazing alongside Nubian ibex and geladas, Hartlaub's ducks paddling around lazily bobbing pygmy hippos, or Orinoco geese squabbling with green iguanas and curassows in the understory of a mixed-species rainforest display.

Does your facility have an especially cool mixed-species waterfowl display? Send us pictures and we'd love to share them on our social media pages or in the next issue of *The Duck Pond*!



Hooded mergansers share an aquarium display with various fish in the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas "Gulf Shores" habitat (Photo Credit: William Robles)

A FUTURE FOR WATERFOWL IN AQUARIUMS? - WILLIAM ROBLES, AUDUBON AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

The dictionary defines the word Aquarium as 1: a container (such as a glass tank) or an artificial pond in which living aquatic animals or plants are kept and 2: an establishment where aquatic organisms are kept and exhibited. Nowhere in this description does it mention anything about fish, sharks or sea turtles but that is what the public perception of aquariums is.

The Audubon Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans, LA is setting out to change this perception. Over the last year they have added their first ever pair of ducks and are planning to build on that in the coming months. Sure, they have a vast amount of aquatic species, from clownfish to cownose rays to nurse sharks there is no shortage of underwater action. However, with a walk-through Amazon aviary filled with ponds and multiple species of fish, the Audubon Aquarium is in a unique position that some aquariums are not. They can house species such as Argentine ruddy ducks and Brazilian teal bringing life to the top of the water and compliment the action below.

Another exhibit which features the local Mississippi River (which the aquarium sits on) is aptly named "Gulf Shores". It features Atlantic stingrays on the river floor, spade fish and catfish swimming throughout, and hooded mergansers on the shore, swimming and diving. This saltwater exhibit has so many levels it can be compared to the levels of the rainforest – emergent, canopy, under canopy and forest floor. Mixed species exhibits are very popular in zoo's these days but sometimes a bit more challenging for aquariums to achieve. That's where waterfowl can come in and help turn a one-dimensional exhibit into a fresh new experience for aquarium visitors.



WATERFOWL IN AQUARIUMS (CONTINUED)

Quite a few aquariums feature African penguins at their facility and why not, penguins are a huge draw and guests adore them. Most penguin exhibits feature one species, but add Cape shelducks (African species) to a penguin exhibit and again you give the guests a different perspective on an exhibit that was once more simplistic. From the guest's perspective, very few animals are more recognizable to a child than a duck or goose. They make an appearance in children's books, lakes and ponds in their neighborhoods, and on the farms children visit on school field trips. Exhibiting waterfowl is a wonderful way to keep both children and their parents engaged at the aquarium.

One of the benefits of displaying waterfowl at an aquarium is to give a different viewing perspective from what is typically seen at a zoo. Most zoos have guests looking down at waterfowl in ponds, but aquariums can show guests ducks swimming at eye-level. Housing the right species will allow guests to watch diving ducks foraging and feeding in a way they've never seen before. Waterfowl are a wonderful way to keep guests engaged. The potential to incorporate these wonderful birds into aquariums should not be ignored.

“From the guest’s perspective, very few animals are more recognizable to a child than a duck or goose.”



Male hooded merganser, Photo Credit: Keith Lovett



PHOTOGRAPHS WELCOME

Got enough duck, goose, swan, or screamer photographs? We never do! Send us your favorite waterfowl pictures, and they may be included in future editions of *The Duck Pond*, or featured on our TAG social media pages!

Follow us on social media:



**Waterfowl Taxon
Advisory Group**



WaterfowlTAG



WaterfowlTAG

Zookeepers, aquarists, curators, veterinarians, educators, registrars, program leaders—managing waterfowl species within AZA takes a village. Every issue, we introduce you to a different member of our waterfowl community.

MINDY RABIDEAU

Senior Aviculturist

Tracy Aviary

“As a child I was always interested in animals. My father and grandfather would take time to teach me about the native birds visiting the bird feeders. When I was a little older, my main chore was helping to take care of the animals who resided on our little family farm, including our domestic waterfowl. I attribute my appreciation of birds, and waterfowl in particular, to these formative experiences.

Originally from Michigan, I moved around getting experience at a few different facilities before settling into my current job at Tracy Aviary. For the past decade, I've served as the primary keeper on a routine overseeing the majority of our waterfowl collection. I enjoy finding opportunities to expand and share my knowledge and husbandry skills and am especially excited when I get the opportunity to work with a new species. Currently, I serve as the SSP Coordinator for West Indian Whistling Duck, the Vice-Coordinator for the Trumpeter Swan TAG SSP, and I also have recently become a new member of the TAG's conservation and education committee.”



RED-BREASTED GOOSE CONSERVATION IN BULGARIA—NOTES FROM THE FIELD

- JOANNA KLASS, WOODLAND PARK ZOO

In February, I was awarded a Zoobright Scholarship from the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington. This scholarship allowed me to travel to eastern Bulgaria to volunteer with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) team coordinating and carrying out the activities of the EU LIFE for Safe Flight project. LIFE for Safe Flight specifically focuses on red-breasted goose conservation. Dr. Nicky Petkov, the project manager and Red-breasted Goose International Working Group Coordinator, invited me to stay at the field station for two weeks. While at the station I learned how they are protecting the Black Sea wetlands of Bulgaria, including areas that serve as crucial wintering sites for red-breasted geese. The LIFE for Safe Flight project includes work in five key red-breasted goose range countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Russia), and I was fortunate to also meet the crew from the Romanian Ornithological Society (SOR).

The goal of February's work was to equip male red-breasted geese with GPS harnesses. In order to accomplish this task, we needed to catch them first. Open fields with miles of visibility don't make things easy. Bob Swann from the British Trust for Ornithology joined our group to set up and coordinate the cannon netting. This involved scoping out where the geese were foraging during the day and then mapping their patterns and habitat usage to determine the best place to install the nets. Once they left to roost at sea for the night, we strapped on headlamps and got to work. Digging trenches under a full moon while the cackles of jackals echoed across the field is not a scene one soon forgets! The next day the geese had flown back in with a large group of greater white-fronted geese, and they were foraging in a perfect arc just out of the net's range. Finally, after hours of waiting, Nicky got his chance. Within minutes, the team from the field station came to the site to begin setting up the processing line. I assisted Bob with extracting and banding the birds while he and other team members took morphometric measurements. When all was said and done, we had successfully processed 42 red-breasted geese and about 20 greater white-fronted geese – an incredible catch! Nine males were fitted with GPS harnesses; females were not harnessed due to concerns about potential breeding interference.



Photo Credit: Save Branta (savebranta.com/en)

“When all was said and done, we had successfully processed 42 red-breasted geese and about 20 greater white-fronted geese — an incredible catch!”



RED-BREASTED GOOSE CONSERVATION IN BULGARIA (CONTINUED)

In addition to receiving a crash course in net cannoning, I actively participated in monitoring efforts. The excitement I felt as I heard the first high-pitched honks fighting their way through the ripping wind made me forget about the toenumbing cold. We had gotten up at daybreak to monitor the geese as they came from their roosting sites in and around the Black Sea to the rich cereal crop fields in Durankulak. Mihail Iliev, an ornithologist with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BPSB), quietly pointed towards the steely gray horizon over the Black Sea. I raised my trembling hands to peer through my binoculars, eventually fixing them on a ribbon of red-breasted geese trailing through the sky. I smiled, teeth chattering, branding the image into my memory.

If you'd like to learn more about the work of the AEWA Red-breasted Goose International Working Group, check them out at savebranta.org/en or find them on Facebook at Safe Flight for Redbreasts and the Red-breasted Goose International Working Group.



ANSERIFORMES TAG MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the AZA Anseriformes Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) is to provide leadership in the captive management of ducks, geese, swans, and screamers in North America. The TAG is committed to maintaining sustainable captive populations, improving the welfare of waterfowl within AZA, and raising awareness for conservation of waterfowl worldwide.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

ANSERIFORMES TAG GRANTS

Would you like to expand your knowledge of waterfowl care and husbandry? Do you have a vision for how to make a difference towards the conservation of ducks, geese, swans, or screamers in the wild? Do you wish you could do more for waterfowl, but don't know where to begin?

Here is your chance!

The AZA Anseriformes TAG is pleased to be offering not one, but two grants in the amount of up to \$500 US each. One grant designated for Conservation and Research, the other one for Professional Development.

For application materials, or with any questions, please contact TAG Steering Committee members Joanna Klass (Joanna.Klass@Zoo.org) and/or Ian Shelley (ian.shelley@marylandzoo.org).

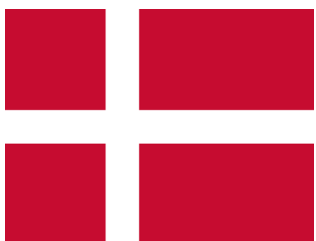
Applications are accepted on a rolling annual basis.



Mute swan, Photo Credit: Keith Lovett



Whooper swan, Photo Credit: Keith Lovett



Trivia Answers: Denmark (with the mute swan) and
Finland (with the whooper swan)

