



LIVINGSTON RIPLEY WATERFOWL SANCTUARY

N • E • W • S • L • E • T • T • E • R

Fall 2000

The mission of the Sanctuary is to conserve rare and endangered species of waterfowl through propagation, and through research and education to promote the conservation of waterfowl and their habitats.

Board of Directors: S. Dillon Ripley, President, Ms. Sylvia Ripley Addison, Dr. George Archibald, Mrs. Jackson Burke, Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, Ms. Julie Ripley Miller, Ms. Rosemary Livingston Ripley, Mr. T. Dennis Williams. **Avian Director:** Michael Bean

RECENT EVENTS

1999 was a busy and productive year for the Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Sanctuary. Our new barn has been fitted up for hatching and rearing young waterfowl, and our three incubators have been properly installed for the spring laying season. We have converted the barn's second story into pens for the African Crown Cranes and the Demoiselle Cranes, and it has proven to be an airy, yet warm, retreat for them during Connecticut's long winter. We also added a second winterized pen last year, utilizing our innovative design to protect the birds in the event of a heavy, icy snowfall. While these two new winterized pens have yet to be tested, we believe they will stand the test very well.

BREEDING RESULTS

Last year and the early results from this season have also been productive in raising new young birds, and we are very pleased so far. Among the most exciting news is that we have raised a silver mutation of the Black Swan, which is a first in the history of the Sanctuary. We also have hatched seven young Laysan Teal, one of three endangered species that we work with here at the Sanctuary. Native to Laysan Island in the Pacific, this species was reduced to only seven individuals by 1912 because of massive habitat destruction caused by the introduction of rabbits to the island some years earlier. Today, the population is estimated at under 1000 individuals.

Other successful hatches this year include, among others, 13 Black Swans, 6 Whooper Swans, 3 Emperor Geese, 3 Eider Ducks, 3 Smews, and 2 North American Ruddy Ducks!



A collection of young Black Swans (silver mutation right rear)

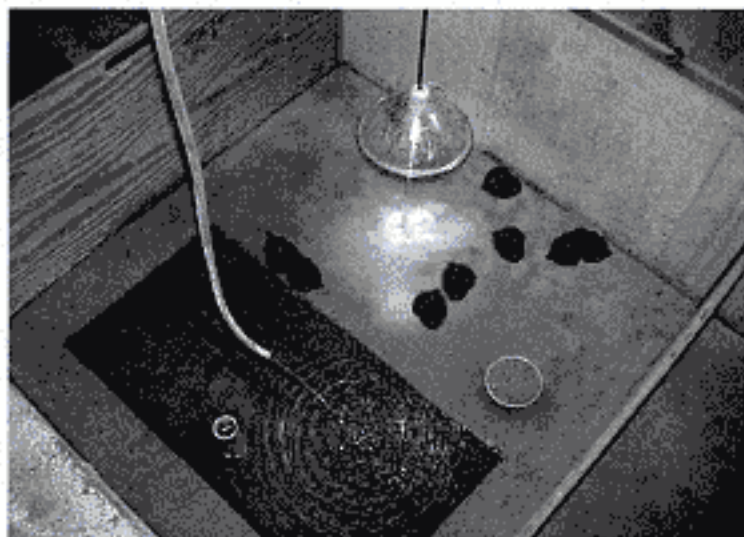
DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

Last year the Board of the Sanctuary decided to hire a consultant to assist them in setting the direction for the future. One of the choices the Board is trying to balance is how to make the Sanctuary more accessible to a larger number of people in a manner which is compatible to raising, breeding, and conserving rare waterfowl.

One step that we undertook last year was the development of our first website. That goal has been achieved and you can now access the site at www.lrws.org. We believe that maintaining an active, up-to-date website is a first step towards broadening our outreach in a useful, informative manner without straining our avian or human resources.

Another decision we are considering as part of our long-term planning effort is whether to migrate the focus of the collection from birds that were primarily of interest to the founder of the Sanctuary, S. Dillon Ripley, to a collection that may be more focused on species currently endangered or rare in captivity. We already have a number of these species, such as the Laysan Teal, the Nene Goose, the Cassowary, and the blue phase of the Ross's Goose. We also want to continue our work with swans, which thrive in the open spaces of the Sanctuary.

Additionally, the Sanctuary is beginning a search to fill a new position of Executive Director to assist us in growing and developing the Sanctuary for the future. Among the Director's management responsibilities will be to help the Sanctuary expand its public outreach programs and fundraising efforts.



Wet brooders with young birds

VISITORS AND PUBLICITY

During 1999, we had more visitors than usual with over 300 people visiting the Sanctuary. We have also had more publicity than usual with an article appearing in the November issue of Housatonic Home, an insert in a number of newspapers in northwestern Connecticut, and another in the July issue of Connecticut Magazine.

A new tour guide has been compiled as part of our effort to expand our outreach program so that additional tours can be given. We hope to make greater use of volunteers in the future to give guided tours of the Sanctuary.

RECEIPT OF FIRST LONG-TERM GRANT

One of the most exciting events of 1999 was the receipt of a sizable three-year grant of \$45,000, which came from the Marilyn M. Simpson Charitable Trust. Marilyn Simpson was a great friend of Mary and Dillon Ripley and a committed animal enthusiast. We are extremely grateful to the Board of the Marilyn M. Simpson Trust for this generous gift and are enthusiastic about how we can utilize this gift to achieve the mission of the Sanctuary. Over the next year, we hope to use the money to continue to make improvements to the infrastructure of the Sanctuary in order to accommodate a larger number of visitors.

CONTRIBUTORS (1998 to present)

Numerous people have generously given us financial assistance. We would like to recognize and acknowledge publicly our friends and supporters, who are listed below.

Mr. David Bubington
Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Berg
Mrs. W. M. Boyd
Mrs. Philip Buchen
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas R. Burke
Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Cammann
Brig. Gen. & Mrs. T. J. Camp, Jr.
Mrs. Thomas E. Crocker
Mr. David C. Crockett
Mrs. Robert Risley deCourcy
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur H. Diedrick, Jr.
Mr. Sidney G. Dillon
Michael & Maureen Doyle
Mrs. Charles A. Edwards
Mr. John B. Fahey, Jr.
Ms. Carleen Falconer
Mrs. D. L. Fleischmann
Ms. Shelley Floyd &
Mr. Albert Loshkajian
Dr. Marion Frank
Mrs. Philippa Groves Gerard
Mrs. H. E. Grandahl
Mr. & Mrs. Richard E. Gray
Mr. R. Jack Gulliver
Mr. & Mrs. George Hamilton
Mr. Edward H. Hamm
Mrs. August Heckscher
Mr. & Mrs. John W. Heilshorn
Mrs. Olga Hirshhorn
Mr. Bruce Howe
Mr. Robert E. Hubbard
Mrs. Virginia Munger Kahn

The Hon. Francis L. Kellogg
Miss Francoise A. Kelz
Mr. & Mrs. Michael J. Lasorso
Mr. & Mrs. James Levitt
Mrs. Alexander C. Liggett
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Livingston
Mrs. Lisa R. Lozier
Mr. Ulysses G. Lyon
Donald & Janet McClelland
Mr. & Mrs. Oswald W. Marrin
Victoria M. Moran
Mr. & Mrs. John Morosani
Mr. Eugene Morton
Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Paynter
Mr. & Mrs. Graham Platt
Ms. Priscilla Manning Porter
Mrs. Carol C. Price
Mr. Christopher Ripley
Mr. Richard P. Rorick
Mrs. Dorothy Rosenberg
Mr. Michael Rosmarin
Mrs. Sonia P. Seherr-Thoss
Ms. Abby R. Simpson
Marilyn M. Simpson
Charitable Trust
Mr. & Mrs. Allen M. Sperry
Mr. James E. Thompson
Mrs. James E. Thompson
Ms. Jeanne Toomey
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Van Der Kemp
Mrs. Alexander O. Victor
Mr. & Mrs. T. Ames Wheeler

HUMAN INFLUENCE ON SPECIES EVOLUTION

by Mike Bean, Avian Director

Man has had a long relationship with the swan species of the world. His interaction with these birds has not only had a major impact on their population, but has also played a role in their evolution. Of the seven swan species, genetic mutations have been identified in three: the Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus cygnus buccinator*; the Black Swan, *Cygnus atratus*; and the Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor*. While these genetic mutations occurred naturally, man has affected all three.

The North American Trumpeter Swan once spanned the continent from coast to coast. In the 1700's and early 1800's, they were hunted to near extinction for the beauty of their feathers and for their meat. Only a few pockets of birds managed to escape man's ruthless onslaught. One small pocket was found in Yellowstone National Park in the 1940's, while another, larger one, was later discovered in Alaska.

The Yellowstone birds were left alone on the protected land. Due to the small number of birds in the group, in-breeding began to occur. This gene pool promoted the development of pink feet, a recessive genetic trait, and the bird has become known as the Leusistic Trumpeter. The term Leusistic is a general term used to describe partial albinism. Ruth Shea, head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Relocation Project, has stated that "about one in one hundred trumpeters are pink-footed."

Shea has relocated some of the Trumpeters, along with some of the Leusistic ones, from Yellowstone National Park to other previously inhabited areas of the West in order to



A pair of Yellowstone Trumpeters

decrease the hazards that come with having the population exist only in one place. Alaskan Trumpeters have been imported to mate with the Yellowstone Swans. These swans do not carry the Leusistic trait. This cross-breeding will not eradicate the trait, but will force it back into hiding.



A pair of Black Swans - silver mutation in foreground

The Australian Black Swan is a sight that is not easily forgotten. Few creatures carry such a blend of both elegance and menace. In 1697, the first birds were brought from Australia to Europe. Since then, the prolific Black Swans have been bred extensively in captivity. It was not until the early twentieth century that the first mutation appeared. This was a silver-colored bird that was reared by Jean Delacour of France (a world-famous ornithologist and long-time friend of S. Dillon Ripley). His first individuals were destroyed in World War II. After re-establishing his collection, he continued to breed and raise these unusual swans.

In the last thirty-five years, not much has occurred with this mutation. There are several birds alive today that are descendants of Delacour's mutations. Here at the Sanctuary we have a single adult example of this very rare bird, and this year we have hatched our first young one. It is olive-colored, like other cygnets, but will turn a light blue-gray when mature, with the cobs (males) being a notably lighter shade than the pens.

There are few who have never seen the enthralling spectacle of a Mute Swan floating on water. It is by far the most wide-spread species of swan in the world. These swans are a native of Europe, with the most abundant population found in England. They are often called the Royal Mute Swan because, today in England, they are considered the property of the

Crown. However, it was not always this way. The swans were often found gracing British dinner tables. The younger birds were the most sought after for their meat, which is very tender. In their first year, young Mute Swans are gray, and these gray juveniles were the most desirable for hunters.

At some point, through genetic mutation, there appeared a sex-linked, recessive white cygnet. The juveniles with this abnormal trait never feathered out with gray feathers. This mutation began to gain a stronghold, since these juveniles were overlooked by hunters who thought the birds were adults and left them to grow up and pass along the new genetic trait to their offspring. These swans came to be known as the "Polish Mutes", which also have a brighter orange bill and light-colored feet.

Under natural circumstances, the single gene trait should have had a disadvantage in survival; the more visible cygnets should have been easier prey than their gray companions. Due to the intervention of man, however, the single gene has established itself in surprisingly large numbers.

The Mute Swan mutation is the best example of man's effect on swans, though in all three cases man has had significant impact on these populations. In the case of the Trumpeter Swans, man's hunting limited the birds' numbers, allowing recessive genes to appear in larger numbers than they would have if the swans had been left undisturbed. In the mutation of the Black Swans, man bred the birds in captivity to an extent that allowed the new trait to pass from generation to generation. Hunting also affected the Mute Swan, in which certain genes were promoted by selection when, under normal circumstances, they should have had a survival disadvantage.



A pair of Mute Swans

As we consider the stories of these three mutations, it should be evident that as long as man exists on this planet, we will continue to affect the evolution of other species. Dare we hope that as the new millennium progresses, human beings may have an increasingly positive influence on species' evolution?



This painting of three Trumpeter Swans in flight is by Victor Bakhtin, one of the foremost Russian painters of wildlife. Sign up as a Trumpeter Swan member and receive one of only 500 of these beautiful, signed, limited-edition prints. Unsigned color prints are available with a Siberian Red-breast membership (\$200), and a color poster version is available with a Nene membership (\$100). A set of ten notecards is available in black and white for \$15.00. See below for details.

L.R.W.S.

Duck Pond Road
PO Box 210
Litchfield, CT 06759-0210

Address Correction Requested

Tours are available in June and July at 2:00 pm. The cost is \$8.00 per person and children under 12 are free.

Directions to L.R.W.S. from the center of Litchfield:

Take Route 202 West toward Bantam. After leaving the center of town, proceed through the second traffic light at the intersection with Milton Road (just past Stop & Shop shopping center on left). Travel .6 miles past the traffic light and take the second right onto Brush Hill Road. Turn right at the first dirt road on right next to stone wall. This is Duck Pond Road. Proceed to driveway on left after the bird pens, #55 Duck Pond Road, and you will be met there.

Yes! I would like to support the L.R.W.S. by becoming a member.
Mail to: L.R.W.S., PO Box 210, Litchfield, CT 06759-0210

Name: _____

Address: _____

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| _____ \$50 - Wood Duck | _____ \$500 - Ross' Snow Goose |
| _____ \$100 - Nene | _____ \$1000 - Trumpeter Swan |
| _____ \$200 - Siberian Red-breast | |
| _____ Set of "Morning Splash" Notecards - \$15 | |

Please write us with your comments or suggestions.