

Short Notes

Neck Collars on Trumpeter Swans – On December 22, 1998, I saw an adult swan with a green neck collar among a flock of approximately 200 Tundra Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) in a flooded rice field on private property in western Placer County. With a closer look through my spotting scope, I could see that it had a longer, deeper bill and longer, heavier neck than other swans nearby. I identified it as an adult Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) based on the sharp, V-shaped rather than shallow U-shaped forehead feathering at the base of the culmen (Patten and Heindel, *Birding* 26: 306-318, 1994) and the very conspicuous tomial stripe on the lower mandible, brighter red and greater in extent than that of nearby Tundra Swans. Because it was standing behind several other swans, I could only read the letters on the collar when the bird lifted its head. It took several minutes for the swan to move into position so that I could read the collar's entire code: the number 9 and below that (and sideways), 3V.

In 1997, I had contacted Ruth Shea of The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS) after seeing several Trumpeter Swans in Yuba County. Ruth sent me information on the TTSS's banding program (see Table 1). In regards to the Placer County bird, she e-mailed me more information as follows:

“Prior to your sighting of 93V, I believe that all the green neckbands seen in California were on swans from Summer Lake and Malheur, however, there are others with green. Green neckbands were put on almost all swans that we captured at Harriman State Park, [in northeastern] Idaho and at Red Rock Lakes NWR, Montana and translocated to various release sites in 1990-97. A few also were marked with an ugly faded red and a very few with white.”

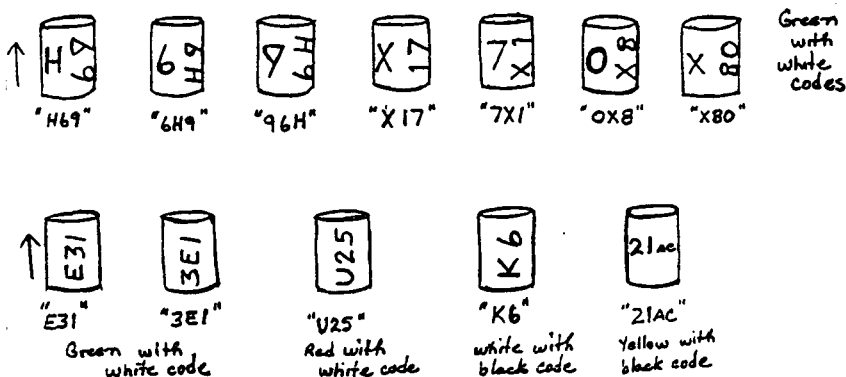
Collar color (code color)	Banding location
green (white symbols)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, OR• Summer Lake, OR• Harriman State Park, ID• Yellowstone National Park vic.• possibly Alaska
faded red (white symbols)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harriman State Park
white (black symbols)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harriman State Park
yellow (black symbols)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Northwest Territories, CANADA (a few)

Table 1. Banding locations associated with particular neck collar combinations placed on Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*).

Steve Bouffard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sent me information about 93V. It was a hatching-year female when banded and collared at Harriman State Park on 7 November 1996. Prior to its appearance in Placer County, it had also been seen at Camas National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, on 11 March 1997, Ennis Lake, Montana, on 23 March 1997, and Regina, Saskatchewan on 25 October 1997.

To aid swan watchers in California, I am including an illustration from a TTSS information sheet that shows how the collars may appear (Fig. 1). TTSS recommends that you sketch the layout of the code, as well. -- Bruce Webb, P. O. Box 2845, Granite Bay, CA 95746.

Examples of neckbands and correct identification- Read codes from bottom to top



Please reports your observations to: Ruth Shea, The Trumpeter Swan Society RMP Working Group, 3346 E. 200th N., Rigby, Idaho 83442. (208-754-8756) or ruthshea@srv.net

Figure 1. Examples of collar codes.

Note: On 8 January 1999, Jim & Debby Parker found a Trumpeter Swan with a green neck collar, code 8V0, at Pleasant Valley Reservoir about 6 miles north of Bishop, Inyo Co., California. It had been banded as an adult at Harriman State Park on 7 December 1996.

I recommend that you find out more about The Trumpeter Swan Society by writing to: The Trumpeter Swan Society, 3800 County Road 24, Maple Plain, Minnesota 55359. Their web site, at: <http://www.taiga.net/swans/index.html>, has considerable information about TTSS, the species' historical struggles, and some identification information. Trumpeter Swan sightings from recent years will be summarized in an upcoming CVBC Bulletin (Webb in prep.). Trumpeter Swan reports gathered by Rod Hug from the 1998-99 season may be accessed via Joe Morlan's web page at: <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/trswans.htm>. This web page also contains links to a Trumpeter Swan sighting report form.-- BW