



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

February 2012 – Vol. 19, No. 2

P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

Wildlife of India and Sri Lanka

On Friday, February 24th at 7:30 p.m. Dr. George H. Waring (SIU Professor Emeritus of Zoology) will present a program using, in part, his own travel photos, to demonstrate the "Wildlife of India and Sri Lanka." For this program, SIAS will be returning to the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale.

Overall, the illustrated lecture will acquaint us with some of the fascinating amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals found in India and Sri Lanka. Dr. Waring's lecture will begin with a discussion about the long journey the Indian subcontinent made (via plate-tectonic movement) from Gondwana to its present position south of the Himalayas. He will mention a few of the ancient animals that may have taken that journey, distributing kin to the landmass of Asia or islands along the way. Once the Indian subcontinent joined Asia starting about 50 million years ago, animals from the north had the opportunity to emigrate southward to add to the diversity of the fauna of India and Sri Lanka.

January Meeting Highlights

The annual meeting of SIAS on January 27th was a great success, with an estimated attendance of at least eighty members and guests. Thanks to all who brought items to the successful potluck dinner.

We were pleased to welcome Karen Kaufman as the new Chair of Hospitality and to re-elect Cathie Hutcheson as Conservation/Education chair and Greg Kupiec as Finance Chair of the board.

The final amount of funds brought in by the silent auction items was \$ 374. Additionally remember that we will be selling raffle tickets for the ornate martin church house at the February and March meetings with the drawing for a winner at the March meeting.

A reminder to all members that this is the time that yearly dues are due. *=Joe Merkelbach, President*

Future SIAS Program Speakers:

March 23rd – Chris Benda

April 27th – Program to be announced

January Program Highlights

Colony Collapse Disorder - Not So Simple

Honeybee hive disruption and disappearance and the cause were the presentation by Dr. May Berenbaum, chair of the University of Illinois entomology department at the annual meeting of SIAS. *Apis mellifera*, the domestic honeybee, is an important contributor to agriculture in the United States, particularly for vegetables, fruits and nuts. As an example the almond crop in California is wholly dependent on honeybee pollination by mobile hives moved around the central valley. The colony collapse disorder was first noted by the beekeepers who transport hives to pollinate crops in the west.

The story of disappearing bees is like catnip to popular journalism and the topic resurfaces periodically with various fanciful potential causes cited. The hives that experience collapse have only a small fraction of the normal population, with the queen, who never leaves, and a small number of young workers remaining. The population of workers that forage for nectar and pollen simply vanish and do not return to the hive.

The stress of being moved on trucks from location to location during the growing season is one explanation that has been offered, but of course many mobile hives do survive. Cell phone and tower transmissions with wave lengths that interfere with bee vital force, or something like that, have been cited with no evidentiary backing. The acarapis and varroa mites, both harmful to bees but known for several years now, and present in colonies whether collapsed or not, are not the sole cause of CCD. Gene technology corn, pollinated by wind, not insects including bees, was discounted as a cause. Israeli acute paralysis virus was brought forward as a possible cause but then recognized as present in the US before CCD was first seen.

Dr. Berenbaum and her colleague Dr. Gene Robinson and their graduate student Reed Johnson used genomic studies involving the microarray to determine that honeybees have fragmented ribosomes that lessen their potential to mount an effective immune system response against viral disease. Increased exposure to potent insecticides in combination with multiple viral exposures seems likely to be sufficient to tip hive populations into collapse.

There does not seem to be any single agent that causes CCD and the most effective means of counteracting it is to lessen the stressors on hives that can push them into collapse.

SIAS was pleased to have Dr. Berenbaum visit and present her ideas and patiently answer questions on bees.

=Joe Merkelbach, President

Treasurer's Annual Report 2011

SIAS continues to do very well financially. Our cash balance (which includes two C.D.'s) stood at \$7,153.56 on January 31, 2012.

Between January 1, 2011, and January 31, 2012, our three biggest non-donation expenses were \$437 for a new copier to produce the newsletter, \$150 for affiliate dues to the Illinois Environmental Council, and \$100 for affiliate dues to the Illinois Audubon Society.

Our donations totaled \$1,785 (\$1,000 to support Jeff Hoover's longtime research on the prothonotary warbler, \$500 to the Friends of the Cache River, \$250 to purchase bluebird boxes for our bluebird trail at Crab Orchard NWR, and \$35 for a conservation magazine subscription at the Carbondale Public Library).

In this 13-month period, we received cash contributions from Frank and Myra Bennett, Vickie Devenport, Bill Eddleman, Nancy Garwood, Sylvia Greenfield, Nelda Hinckley, Genevieve Houghton, Judith Kessler, Greg Kupiec, Richard Thomas, and Laraine Wright. Many thanks for your extra support of SIAS!

We also thank all those who donated and purchased items at our silent auction in January. Our proceeds totaled \$374.

- Laraine Wright, Treasurer

24th Annual Trinidad and Tobago Tropical Adventure

June 1st - 8th, 2012

Learn about the Tropical Ecology and the natural history this beautiful two-island nation in the Caribbean. Nelda Hinckley will again lead this visit to several unique natural areas throughout both islands. Participants will also have an opportunity to experience the unique culture of this island-nation through its food, music, and history.

For complete details visit: http://www.jalc.edu/international/education/trinidad_tobago/index.php To reserve your spot on this great trip, please phone Nelda at 618.549.5588 or email her at neldahinckley@jalc.edu.

Upcoming Events & Activities

March thru May > Movie Night at the Cache, 1st Thursday of the Month

Grab your family & friends for a relaxing and fun evening of watching movies about nature at the Cache River Wetlands Center. This year's movie series theme will be "Creepy Critters of the Cache". Each month will focus on a different "misunderstood" critter and try to dispel the negative perceptions surrounding them. For more information or movie schedule, call the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

March 3 > Native Plant Seminar – Cape Conservation Nature Center

The Missouri Department of Conservation and the Cape Girardeau County Master Gardeners are hosting the 6th annual Native Plant Seminar, from 8 a.m. 'til 3 p.m. Special presenter and author Dave Tylka will highlight the importance of using native grasses, wildflowers, trees and shrubs to add variety and color to your landscape, attract wildlife and reduce the cost of energy-consuming lawns. Call the nature center about event activities, guest speakers and registration requirements. Registration is free, register by March 3rd. Phone 573.290.52181. The Conservation Nature Center is located at 2289 County Park Dr., Cape Girardeau, MO, east off State Highway 61, just before I55.

Missouri Wildflower Nursery will again be at the Center with native plants and seed for sale. They accept pre-orders. Send them your personal order by Wednesday before the sale and they will bring the seeds/plants to the Center for pick up. Visit their website at <http://www.mowildflowers.net/index.htm> for seed and plant pricing and pre-ordering instructions.

March 17 > Pollinators: Not Just Honey Bees – At the Cache

Bees, butterflies, moths & wasps are just a few of the insects that play a critical role in pollinating farm crops, orchards, vegetable and flower gardens. Join the folks at the Cache River Wetlands Center from 10:30 a.m. 'til to learn about the "workers" besides honeybees, that help grow our food and bring flowers to our landscape. For more information, call the Cache at 618.657.2064. Location: Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress.

March 24 > SIAS / INPS Joint Outing to Degognia Canyon, Jackson Co. - Details to follow in March newsletter.

Seeing Birds

Vicki Lang-Mendenhall made the first season's report of an American Woodcock peenting and performing its aerial mating display on 01/18. Don Mullison heard woodcocks displaying in an open area south of the SIU Arena (Carbondale) on 02/10.

Nikki Martin reported that while on the way to Christopher, shortly after leaving the Little Muddy bottoms (around 1 p.m. on 01/27) she spotted a single Sandhill Crane. On the following Monday, she saw 5 mature Bald Eagles at the Kaskaskia Locks and Dam but added that she had seen 48 there the year before.

On 02/03, while driving back home from Vandalia, Joe Merkelbach saw a wavering white blanket on the fallow ag fields carved out of the east side bottoms of the Kaskaskia River. Acquiring a closer view revealed what he estimated to be something between 10 to 15,000 snow geese, covering the equivalent of a city block at least.

On 02/08, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall got word that an indigo bunting was at someone's feeder about 1/4 mile NE of Cedar Lake, Jackson County and advised everyone to be on the look-out. As many as three Indigo Buntings had been reported at Mermet Lake, Massac County, one having been seen on Mermet Lake Christmas Bird Count on 12/30/11.

Jim Smith of Homer, IL, wrote to say that if anyone was going to Champaign County in the near future, there are 2 or 3 Snowy Owls near by and a Prairie Falcon. The latter is harder to locate. Jim stated he'd only found the falcon once.

During the first week of February, there was a report of a snowy white owl near Lake Chautauqua, Murphysboro. A second report of such an owl being seen on Dogwood Ln., off Pump House Rd., Murphysboro was relayed to Cathie Hutcheson about a week later. Cathie remembered that an all white Barred Owl had been seen and photographed along Pump House Rd., just a couple years ago. The white owl recently seen there is most likely the same Barred Owl, but still quite a sight!

2011-12 has become the year of the Snowy Owl in Illinois, with Snowy's being found in many counties throughout the state. During the latter part of January, a report came in of a Snowy Owl in an area just east of Red Bud in Randolph County. This was the southernmost confirmed report at the time but was quickly to be replaced.

01/27, while driving to her office with The Nature Conservancy (housed at Shawnee Comm. College) Karen Tharp passed a very large white bird perched atop a fence post along Shawnee College Road, west of the College. She identified it as a Snowy Owl! Karen reported her discovery to the folks at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and the CCNWR folks shared the sighting with the birding public. Folks flocked to the area from as far away as Alabama, in hopes of getting a glimpse of it. Based on its dark feather bands, the snowy was identified as an immature bird. It has not always been easy to find/view. **The snowy was last sighted on 02/___.**

John Schwegman managed to snap several photos of the lovely Pulaski County bird on 01/27. On the bottom-left, the snowy was standing on the ground. On the bottom-right, it had taken flight.

This snowy owl was perched on a pole east of Red Bud, Randolph County on 01/30 and made the St. Louis TV news on 02/06. Its light markings identify it as an adult snowy.
Photo by Dennis Hale.



This winter season our area received a gift of below average frozen precipitation. It has, none-the-less, been a snowy winter thanks to the influx of what seems to be a greatly above average irruption of snowy owls. This jackpot for nature lovers comes at a price.

Snowy Owls do not come south into the states every year if they don't have to. It's a feast then famine situation that pushes them south into the lower 48. And, sadly, many of those that come south looking for food will never back it back north to their Arctic home.

Snowys are not annual migratory birds in the same sense as waterfowl and warblers. They are truly out of their element when so far south of their Arctic range. For snowys, humans and human habitat posts more obstacles and dangers than I could possibly list. Many will not make it back to the Arctic alive. It is very important that we be mindful of this and add as little stress to their lives as possible. *-Rhonda R.*



Photos by John Schwegman



All Things Snowy

The eBird website has a great collection of Snowy Owl related data including a range map listing sighting locations. <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/the-winter-of-the-snowy-owl>

The North American Birding website has a wonderful story entitled "When a Snowy met the locals". It describes a Snowy Owl's encounter with a Peregrine Falcon and includes some one-of-a-kind photos that have surely went viral by now. See them at: <http://www.nabirding.com/>

The show Chicago Tonight aired an interview with a birder and a Chicago Field Museum scientist regarding the snowy invasion and the hidden dangers snowys face at: <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2012/01/30/snowy-owls>

National Environmental Scorecard

The League of Conservation Voters has the 2011 National Environmental Scorecard, which for more than 40 years has been the nationally accepted yardstick used to rate members of Congress on environmental issues. Unfortunately, this year's Scorecard is a sad testament to the radical nature of the first session of the 112th Congress in the House of Representatives. For Illinois: Senator Kirk scored 18%, Senator Durbin scored 91%, Representative Costello scored 57%. Details at <http://www.lcv.org/scorecard>

How to Contact Our Affiliates

SIAS is an affiliate of three organizations that we strongly support and hope that you will, too:

- Illinois Audubon Society, now in its 115th year, operates bird sanctuaries around the state, pre-acquires and holds land for the state and federal governments, and is a land trust. Environmental education is another major goal. Individual membership is \$25 annually, which includes a lovely quarterly magazine. P.O. Box 2547, Springfield, IL 62708, 217-844-2473, www.illinoisaudubon.org.

- Illinois Environmental Council serves as the eyes and ears of state policy in Springfield. The IEC works to protect land, water, and wildlife resources and to advance clean and renewable energy and fuel efficiency. 230 Broadway, Suite 150, Springfield, IL 62701, www.ilenviro.org.

- North American Bluebird Society is a non-profit education, conservation, and research organization that promotes the recovery of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting bird species. Membership includes a very informative quarterly magazine for an annual membership fee of \$20. NABS Treasurer, P.O. Box 7844, Bloomington, IN 47407, www.nabluebirdsociety.org.

Barn Swallows On The Decline - Barn Swallows are in decline, something Cathie Hutcheson has been reporting to the Breeding Bird Survey compilers for the past 8 years. She received a link to a report on this topic (see below). It brings to light the plight of Barn Swallows. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XO4AUd6JFu4&context=C32bbdceAD0EgsToPDskJlOHlHaLZeZEMUOfvt4Dnq>

The Keystone XL, still a threat - At the bidding of deep-pocketed oil and gas interests, Republican senators are pushing legislation to reverse President Barack Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline and allow its immediate construction and operation. If built, the 1,700-mile pipeline would transport up to 35 million gallons of tar-sands oil - one of the dirtiest energy sources in the world - from Canada to refineries in Texas every day. Once there, much of it would be exported to global markets. The pipeline would directly threaten at least 20 imperiled species, from the whooping crane to the pallid sturgeon. Its projected 100 spills would contaminate pristine wildlife habitat and freshwater supplies for millions of people. Said to be a job boon, but even the pipeline company acknowledged that only "a few hundred permanent jobs" will be created. -from <http://action.biologicaldiversity.org/>

The Citizens for Southernmost Illinois (CSI) website to Nix I-66 was adjusted and is now up and running. Please visit the CSI website and sign the petition to stop this destructive and wasteful project. <http://citizensforsouthernillinois.org>

It's SIAS Dues Renewal Time! For those receiving a newsletter via U.S.P.S., check your mailing address label for your dues expiration date. It's located on the top line following your name.

-Rhonda R.

✂—cut here and return with dues—cut here and return with dues—✂

-- Join SIAS or Renew Your Membership --

To join or renew your membership, fill in the following form and return it along with your dues to:

Southern Illinois Audubon Society Individual member \$15
Attn.: Membership Additional member in a family \$10
P.O. Box 222 Student voting member \$ 5
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222 Amt. Enclosed:\$ _____

Annual membership renewal month is January and coincides with board elections held at the annual meeting in January. Member address labels reflect current dues status.

✂—cut here and return with dues—cut here and return with dues—✂

Your name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

I/we would like to receive my newsletter via email. YES or NO
Interested on being on the Board? Contact a Board Member!

Illinois River Watch Network Volunteer Training Workshop

March 24th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

at John A. Logan College, Carterville

The Illinois RiverWatch Network is a statewide, non-profit, volunteer stream-monitoring program. Volunteers are trained and certified as "Citizen Scientists" to monitor and protect a local stream. Upon completing the training and becoming certified, volunteers adopt a stream site and examine indicators of water quality like stream habitat and the diversity of species such as dragonfly nymphs, beetle larva, midges, and snails. Citizen Scientists play an important role in helping identify potentially degraded waters and areas that may need better protection. Attend this workshop to become a certified volunteer. Registration is \$50. To register, contact Nate at 618.468.2782 or email nkeener@lc.edu.

The deadline to register is March 17th.

Nature Website of the Month:

If there is space in the newsletter, we will feature one nature website a month. The number of nature related websites has grown exponentially. One interesting and educational site is eNature.

eNature offers a wealth of info with its online wildlife field guides that include both plants and animals. The site's core content of wildlife information about almost 6,000 individual species is the same data set used to create the printed Audubon Field Guides. All the data has been carefully reviewed and vetted by leading biologists, zoologists and other natural history specialists.

eNature proves simple descriptions, range maps, and, in some instances, vocalizations of listed species. The website has an "Ask an Expert" link, offer tips on birding and gardening, and provides links to local nature via their ZipGuide. Play games or download animal ringtones and mobile applications from their site free of charge. Interested readers can subscribe to a weekly electronic newsletter "On the Wild Side." Visit eNature at <http://enature.com/>

Do you march to a different drummer?

eNature offers dozens of free, easy to download, animal ringtones, including birds.

Let your friends know "Who Cooks For You!" each time your phone rings. If owls aren't your cup of tea, then how about a bugling elk, a howling wolf, a bleating toad, a honking goose, a singing thrush, or a bellowing howler monkey? Check out all the voices at: <http://wild.enature.com/ringtones/>

IDNR Needs Our Help - Lets Get Dedicated!

Mark Miller, the director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), spoke for more than two hours to an audience of concerned citizens at John A. Logan College on February 2. The purpose of the presentation was to publicize the many services the IDNR provides, to summarize the budget cuts the agency has endured in the last ten years, and to predict the future of the agency. Over the past ten years the IDNR budget has been cut by 50%. Head count has decreased from 2600 to 1205. In the next fiscal year the agency funds will be cut an additional 10%.

Some of the services provided by the IDNR include: care of over 500,000 acres of land in the form of state parks, natural areas, nature preserves, hunting and fishing areas, etc., conservation law enforcement, mine and mineral extraction oversight, watershed management, hunting and fishing oversight and regulation, resource conservation on private lands, land acquisition, operation of state museums, and other services. The agency has over 700 mandates passed by the state legislature. The IDNR, working with aged trucks, boats, and ORVs responded to the past spring floods along the Mississippi rescuing over 1000 people. When storms hit they are the only state agency with 4-wheel drive trucks and ORVs to rescue those stranded by snow. The IDNR is also responsible for protecting Lake Michigan from invasion by Asian carp as well as local infestations of kudzu. With their budget so severely cut most money goes to basic operations and paying the salaries of the reduced number of employees.

Mark Miller was appointed three years ago by Governor Quinn when he replaced former Governor Blagojevich. He holds a Master of Science degree from the University of Illinois in Environmental Administration and is an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman. His goal is to establish a secure and dedicated source of funding for the IDNR that cannot be used for any other purpose. The IDNR has three sources of revenue: funds that come from licenses and fees, federal funds, and funds from the state's general revenue. General revenue funds are the largest of these three and have been "swept" in the past for use in other areas of state government. General funds have decreased from \$107 million to \$49 million over the past ten years. The current budget is \$5.7 million short of what is needed to maintain basic operations. The projected shortfall for the next fiscal year is \$22.2 million. Services that will be affected by these cuts include loss of seasonal workers, trash pick-up, mowing, control of invasive species, decreased monitoring of Nature Preserves, loss of *Outdoor Illinois* magazine, failure to review status endangered species, and many other problems. The Realty and Environmental Planning section of the IDNR oversees 22,000 projects annually. A slow-down here would slow projects and depress the state economy.

One Illinois State Legislator, Representative Frank Mautino, is working with many concerned groups to introduce a bill that will provide secure funding for the IDNR. A secure source of funding would allow the IDNR to restore the many services that have been reduced or eliminated and to make long range plans. Plans are to introduce this bill in this legislative session. In this tough economic climate the bill will need much public support to pass. Because of his position, Director Miller cannot publically campaign for this bill but groups like SIAS, Sierra Club, hunters, fisherman, the many "Friends of ___" groups throughout the state, and those who appreciate and cherish our natural environment will need to advocate. *-Mary McCarthy, Secretary*

USFWS Due to Release Wind Guidelines- The Department of the Interior is poised to release federal guidelines that represent a significant step forward for the proper siting of wind power projects nationwide. The guidelines will set a new standard and expectation of wildlife protection for wind development in the U.S. and give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a more meaningful role in the review of wind power projects.

For three years, conservation experts from National Audubon Society and other conservation organizations (including Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, and Bat Conservation International) worked with wind industry representatives, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other experts on a 22-member Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee to advise the Secretary of Interior on the best way to create a balanced, science-based approach to reducing the impacts of wind turbines on birds, bats, and wildlife habitat.

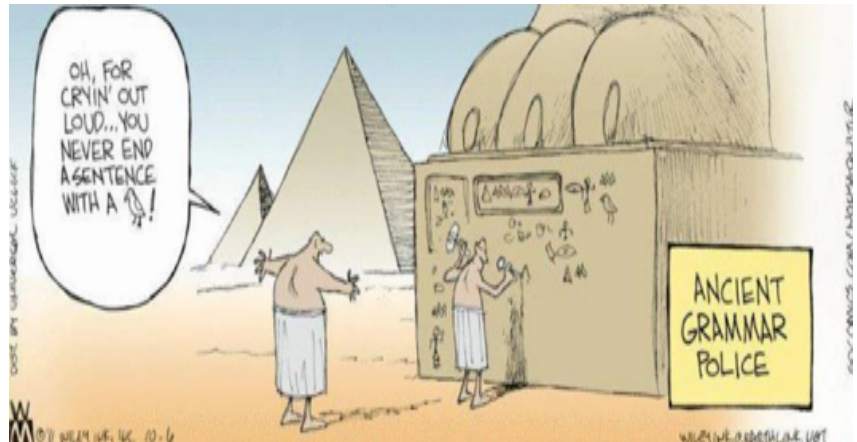
The guidelines represent a consensus approach that will use the best scientific methods, address the most significant impacts of wind, and be implementable on the ground. They steer wind turbines away from major bird flyways and vital habitat, toward land already designated for development. They help ensure higher standards of scientific review and more significant efforts to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts at sites with high potential risk for birds. And they create a process for analyzing and minimizing the fragmentation of habitat created when wind projects are built in the midst of sensitive wildlife areas. For more details, visit the Fish and Wildlife Service's wind energy website <http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/>

SIAS Board of Directors

President: Joe Merkelbach 618.532.2112
Vice President: Vicki Lang-Mendenhal 618.697.9868
Secretary: Mary McCarthy 618.684.8182
Treasurer: Laraine Wright 618.457.8769
Conservation/Education Chair: Cathie Hutcheson 618.529.2022
Finance Chair: Greg Kupiec 618.684.5168
Hospitality: Karen Kaufman *Outings: Open*
Membership Chair & Newsletter Editor: Rhonda Rothrock
618.684.6605, woodthrusheola@hotmail.com
SIAS Website: <http://www.siaudubon.org>

Southern Illinois Audubon Society
P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

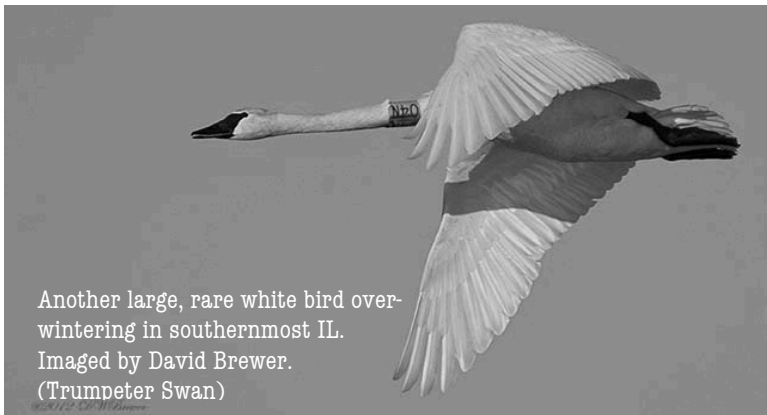
*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society,
the Illinois Environmental Council,
& the North American Bluebird Society*



Don't Forget to Save Your Stamps for the IAS Land Acquisition Fund. ☑

Bring 'em to any Sias meeting!

For more info visit: www.illinoisaudubon.org



Another large, rare white bird overwintering in southernmost IL.
Imaged by David Brewer.
(Trumpeter Swan)

