

**STORY: SWAN LADY**

Air Date: For Immediate Release

Length: 2:45

Suggested lead: WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU COMBINE A NONGAME WILDLIFE RESTORATION PROGRAM AND A WOMAN WITH A PASSION FOR WILDLIFE? A LOT OF BIRDS! DENNY BEHR WITH THE MINNESOTA DNR HAS THE STORY.

*Roll story:*

NATS Trumpeter Swans honking

THIS IS THE SOUND OF SUCCESS!

NATS more honking

THE MAJESTIC TRUMPETER SWAN HAS MADE AN INCREDIBLE COMEBACK IN MINNESOTA. ONCE A NATIVE TO OUR STATE, THEY WERE HUNTED FOR THEIR MEAT, FEATHERS AND SKINS. BY THE 1880'S THERE WERE NONE LEFT TO BE FOUND HERE. MORE THAN NINETY YEARS LATER, A MAN WITH A VISION WOULD HELP CHANGE THAT.

01:01:03 CH "...when I first came in as the new non-game wildlife supervisor in 1977, restoring Trumpeter Swans was one of my dreams, one of my goals..."

ENTER THE DNR'S CARROL HENDERSON, AND THE NON-GAME CHECKOFF. A DNR PROGRAM DESIGNED TO USE DONATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC TO BENEFIT NON-GAME SPECIES.

01:01:36 CH "... by the middle 1980's, we had put together a plan...I went up to Alaska for three years in a row to collect fifty eggs each year to bring them back, hatch them, and then start releasing them into Minnesota..."

NATS pouring corn

03:04:23 SL "... I was feeding ducks and geese along the river when we first moved here ...and then swans started showing up ..."

THAT'S SHEILA LAWRENCE...ALSO KNOWN AS THE 'SWAN LADY'. NEAR HER HOME IN MONTICELLO ON THIS BITTERLY COLD MORNING, HUNDREDS OF TRUMPETER SWANS GLIDE AMONG THE MISTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

02:25:45tp2 NATS pouring corn into tub

DURING THE WINTER, SHEILA'S OUT THERE LIKE CLOCKWORK FEEDING THE SWANS...HAULING TWO BUCKETS OF CORN AT A TIME...1500 POUNDS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK...EVEN WHEN IT'S 2 BELOW WITH A MINUS 16 WIND CHILL.

02:35:21tp2 NATS "...cold out, huh?..."

THEY GOBBLE DOWN THE KERNELS AS FAST AS SHE CAN FILL THE PLASTIC TUBS! A MOVING CANVAS OF BRIGHT WHITE NECKS AND BLACK BEAKS.

SINCE 1987, THE DNR HAS RELEASED MORE THAN 350 TRUMPETER SWANS, NOW ABOUT 2000 OF THEM CALL MINNESOTA HOME. MORE THAN HALF THE FLOCK SHOWS UP TODAY FOR LUNCH.

NATS honk

INSIDE THE WARMTH OF HER DINING ROOM, SHEILA USES BINOCULARS TO SCAN THE SWANS FOR MARKINGS. SHE ADDS THE INFORMATION TO HER DAILY LOG.

01:11:34 CH "...she's maintained incredible, detailed records of all of the banded birds, and the marked birds over the years so we know how long they live, we know how many young they've had...so she's kind of our unofficial biologist there..."

DOES THAT UNOFFICIAL BIOLOGIST EVER GET TIRED OF THE RACKET?

03:15:21 SL "...I have a very faithful donor and she said, "you know, its music to my ears," ...and its music to my ears too..."

01:06:42 CH "...the birds are back, they're doing well...without the checkoff, it would still be a dream..."

*Suggested tag:* TWO OF THE PROJECTS THE NONGAME WILDLIFE PROGRAM WILL TACKLE THIS YEAR ARE A RED-NECKED GREBE SURVEY AND A DRAGONFLY SURVEY. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NONGAME PROGRAM ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.