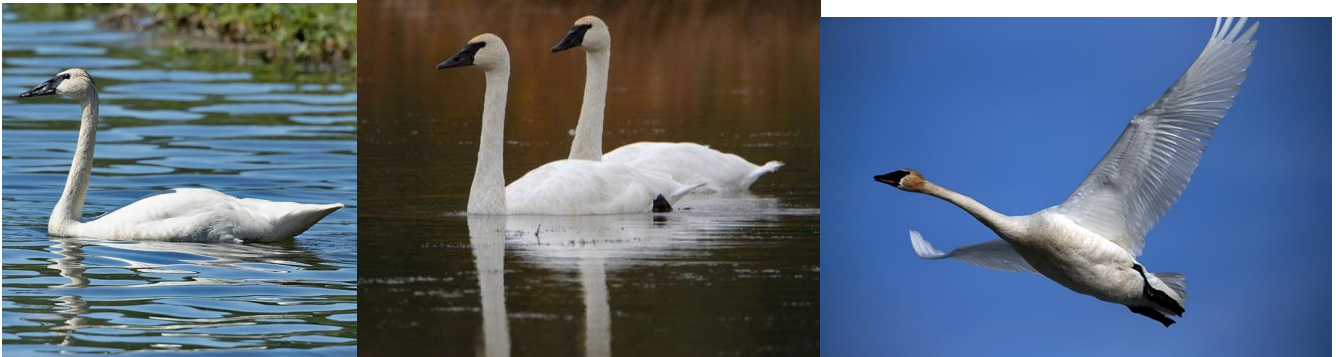


Alaska Trumpeter Swan Guide

Your Complete Guide to North America's Largest Native Waterfowl



Graceful, elegant, and unmistakable, the **Trumpeter Swan** is one of Alaska's most beautiful birds. With its brilliant white feathers, long black bill, and resonant trumpet-like call, this magnificent waterfowl is a symbol of Alaska's pristine lakes and wetlands.

Once nearly driven to extinction in the Lower 48, trumpeter swans have made a remarkable recovery, and Alaska now supports one of the healthiest breeding populations in North America.

Whether you spot a pair gliding across a quiet lake or hear their distinctive calls echoing through the wilderness, seeing a trumpeter swan is a peaceful reminder of Alaska's incredible natural beauty.

Quick Facts



Scientific Name: *Cygnus buccinator*

Length:

- 4½–5½ feet

Wingspan:

- 6½–8 feet

Weight:

- 20–30 pounds

Lifespan:

- 20–30 years in the wild

Diet:

- Aquatic plants
- Pondweed
- Grasses
- Sedges
- Roots
- Occasionally small aquatic animals

Trumpeter swans are the **largest native waterfowl in North America.**

📍 Where Can You See Trumpeter Swans?



Excellent places to spot trumpeter swans include:

- Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge
- Kenai Peninsula
- Potter Marsh
- Interior Alaska
- Fairbanks area
- Matanuska-Susitna Valley
- Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge
- Quiet lakes and wetlands throughout Southcentral Alaska

They're most often found on calm freshwater lakes, ponds, and marshes.

★ Why Are They Called "Trumpeter" Swans?



Their name comes from their loud, rich, trumpet-like call.

Unlike the softer sounds made by many other swans, the call of a trumpeter swan can carry for long distances across open water, especially during the breeding season.

Hearing that unmistakable sound is often the first clue that swans are nearby.

😊 Swans Mate for Life



Trumpeter swans are known for their strong family bonds.

- Most pairs mate for life.
- Both parents help build the nest.
- They share responsibilities raising their young.
- Baby swans are called **cygnets**.

Watching a family of swans glide quietly across a lake is one of Alaska's most peaceful wildlife experiences.

🚢 Can You See Trumpeter Swans on an Alaska Cruise?

Traditional Southeast Alaska cruises rarely encounter trumpeter swans because they prefer freshwater habitats.

Your best opportunities are during:

- Denali CruiseTours
- Anchorage sightseeing
- Kenai Peninsula excursions
- Alaska Railroad land journeys
- Interior Alaska road trips

Adding a land tour to your cruise significantly increases your chances of seeing them.

Photography Tips



For the best photographs:

- Visit lakes early in the morning when the water is calm.
 - Look for reflections on still water.
 - Use a telephoto lens to avoid disturbing the birds.
 - Include mountain scenery in the background.
 - Watch for family groups during summer.
-

Best Time to See Trumpeter Swans

May

Excellent.

Breeding season begins.

June

Outstanding.

Families with cygnets become easier to spot.

July

Excellent.

Adults and young are active on lakes and wetlands.

August

Excellent.

Cygnets continue growing.

September

Very Good.

Some birds begin migrating south while others remain until freeze-up.



Interesting Behaviors

Trumpeter swans are known for:

- Forming lifelong pair bonds.
- Building large nests from aquatic vegetation.
- Defending nesting territories.
- Powerful, graceful flight.
- Communicating with loud trumpet-like calls.

They require a surprisingly long stretch of open water to become airborne because of their size.



What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Telephoto lens
- ✓ Polarized sunglasses
- ✓ Patience

Quiet observation is the best way to enjoy these graceful birds.



Premium Travel Group Tip

If you're spending time in Anchorage before or after your cruise, visit **Potter Marsh** or another nearby wetland. Early morning is often the best time to see trumpeter swans feeding or swimming, and the calm water can create beautiful reflections for photography.



Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Bald Eagle Guide
 - Golden Eagle Guide
 - Great Horned Owl Guide
 - Puffin Guide
 - Moose Guide
 - Anchorage Guide
 - Alaska Railroad Experience Guide
 - Best Time to Visit Alaska
 - Kenai Peninsula Guide (*future guide*)
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Fun Facts

- Trumpeter swans have the **largest wingspan of any native North American waterfowl**.
 - They can fly at speeds of **50–60 mph** during migration.
 - Their nests can measure **up to 6 feet across** after years of use.
 - Young cygnets are covered in soft gray down before developing white feathers.
 - Their loud calls can be heard from more than a mile away under the right conditions.
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Why Are Trumpeter Swans So Special?

Trumpeter swans represent the quiet beauty of Alaska's wetlands and lakes. Their graceful movements, lifelong pair bonds, and inspiring conservation success story make every sighting meaningful. Whether you're watching them glide across a glassy lake or listening to their echoing calls at sunrise, they offer a peaceful contrast to Alaska's larger and more dramatic wildlife.



Joe's Logbook

After spending time looking for bears, whales, and moose, it's easy to overlook Alaska's quieter wildlife. That's why I enjoy seeing trumpeter swans so much. They have a way of making you slow down and simply appreciate the moment.

There's something special about watching a pair glide silently across a calm lake with snow-capped mountains in the background. It's one of those classic Alaska scenes that doesn't need excitement or action to leave a lasting impression.

If you're adding a few land days before or after your cruise, keep your binoculars handy whenever you're near wetlands or small lakes.