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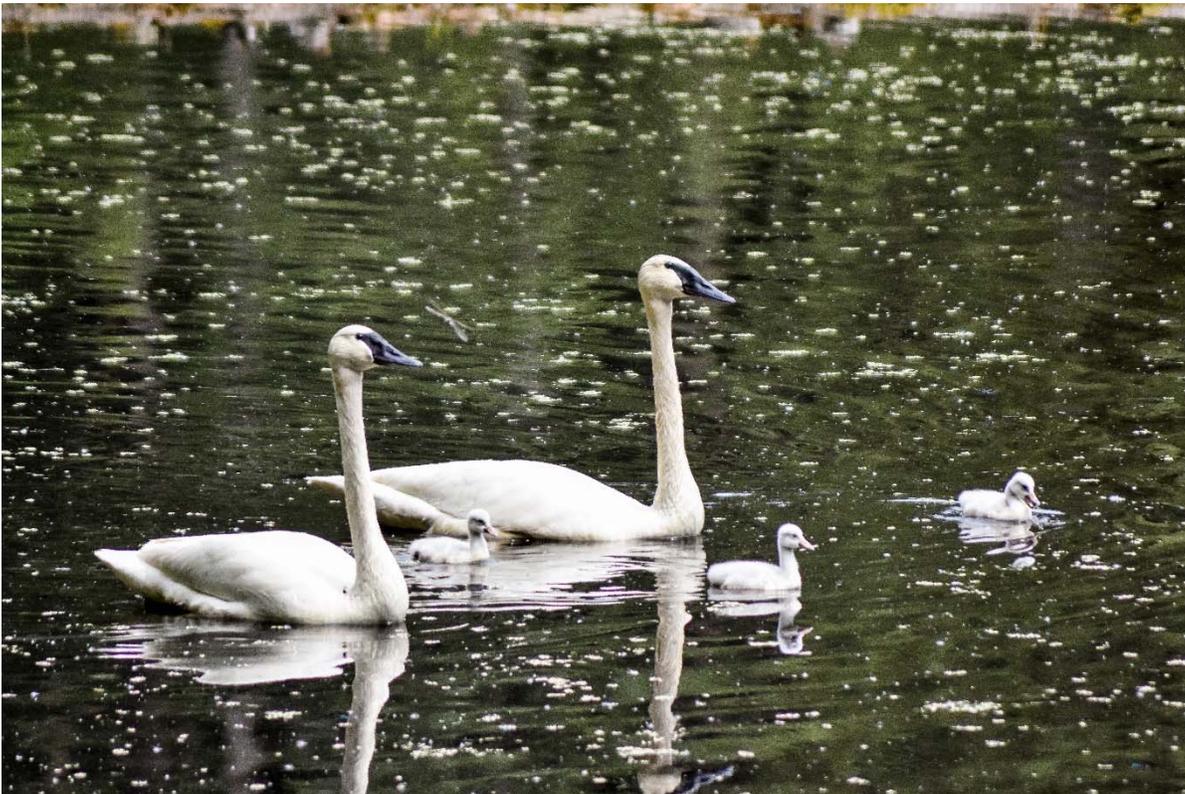
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NEW BABY ANIMALS AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK INCLUDE THREE SWANS A-SWIMMING

Newly hatched trumpeter swans join other spring offspring in the Free-Roaming Area; 4 elk calves, 4 bison calves and 2 bighorn sheep lambs

EATONVILLE, Wash. – Visitors to Northwest Trek might catch a rare sight over the next few days: three young trumpeter swans, or cygnets, are placidly paddling around a lake in the Free-Roaming Area with their parents, but they won't be there for long.



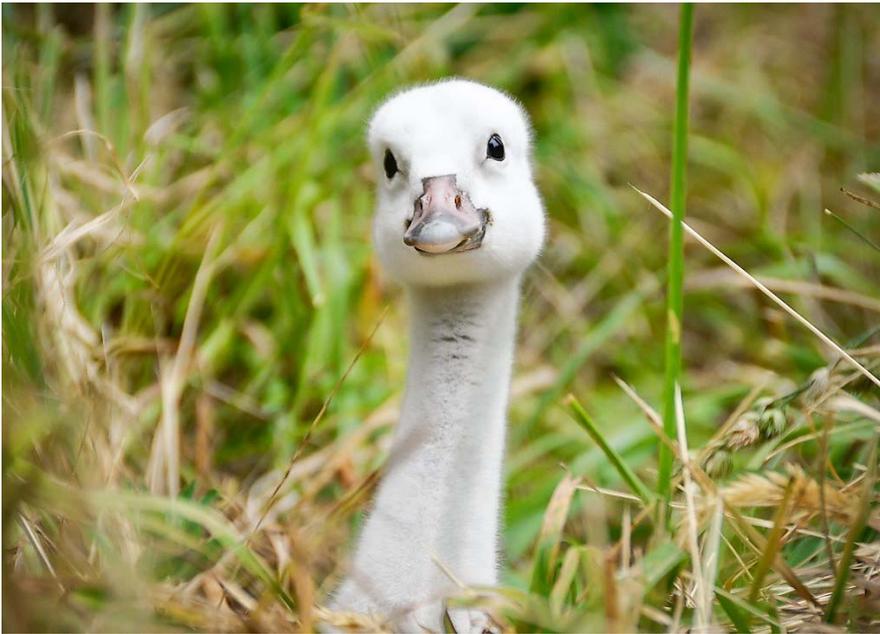
A pair of trumpeter swans and their three newly hatched cygnets glide serenely on a lake at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

Folks who look carefully from the comfort of a tram ride through the wildlife park's 435-acre Free-Roaming Area might get a birds-eye view of the cygnets waddling after their mama or papa, or finding shelter beneath a parent's knobby knees.

Watch for the graceful, snow-white swan parents to take their fluffy babies under their wings for a glide on the water.

To protect the cygnet trio from predators like bald eagles, they soon will be carefully gathered up by keepers, checked out by Northwest Trek veterinarian Dr. Allison Case and then placed under the care the Northwest Swan Conservation Association.

Their parents, both rescued birds who are unable to fly, are permanent residents at Northwest Trek. The pair has contributed about 10 cygnets to their species over the last few years.



Trumpeter swans mate for life, but this pair has only been together a relatively short period of time; each of their previous mates died.

Northwest Trek's role in conservation of the species stretches back more than two decades, Free-Roaming Area keeper Dave Meadows said, and its pairs of swans have produced more than four dozen cygnets over the years.

For many years, the cygnets hatched at Northwest Trek were reared in Washington and then released in Iowa.

The majestic trumpeter swan is North America's largest native waterfowl species – and one of special concern. Though the species is doing well in the West, trumpeter swan numbers have dwindled drastically in Middle America, said Martha Jordan, executive director of the Northwest Swan Conservation Association.

Over the years, many of Northwest Trek's cygnets were released to the wild in Iowa, once they were fledged and ready to fly off on their own.

More recently, the wildlife park's cygnets have been released to wild places in Oregon and Washington.

It is illegal to hunt them in Washington.

Northwest Trek's contribution to the species has been a large one, Jordan said. Not only has the wildlife park added cygnets to the population numbers, staff members have heightened public



awareness and education about the birds, she said.

People who hope to see them must act quickly. It will likely be only a matter of days before they're carefully caught and transferred to the Northwest Swan Conservation Association.

Visitors to the wildlife park also might catch sight of other newborns in the Free-Roaming Area. There are now four Roosevelt calves, four American bison calves and two bighorn sheep lambs sticking close to their mothers, nursing and growing amid a landscape that's perfect for grazing, getting a drink from the lake or just enjoying the sun.

The wildlife park's Free-Roaming Area also is home to six moose and dozens of deer. Canada geese mothers and their fluffy goslings also might be spotted.

Every visit to Northwest Trek comes with a 50-minute, naturalist-narrated tour aboard a comfortable tram as it winds its way through the forests and meadows of the Free-Roaming Area.

Top: One of the 2015 Northwest Trek cygnets posed for a photo shortly after it was hatched;

Above: Female elk watch over one of four newly born elk calves in the Free-Roaming Area.

Visitors also may wander forested pathways and stop at exhibits featuring black bears, wolves, foxes, Canada lynx, bobcats, river otters, beavers and other animals in natural habitats.

And kids from toddlers through tweens will enjoy spending hours exploring the half-acre, nature-inspired Kids' Trek playground. It includes a replica of a 20-foot-tall hollowed-out tree stump into which children can climb, nets and ladders to scale, several slides, a stream to splash in, and areas where they can use sand or sticks to build imaginative structures. All the while getting closer to nature.

All of these activities are free with admission or membership.

Northwest Trek is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays and from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

For more information about Northwest Trek, go to www.nwtrek.org.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

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