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April 10, 1970 Volume 68, Number 13  
LIFE is published weekly except two issues yearly combining two issues in one by Time Inc., 541 N. Fairbanks Court, Chicago, Illinois 60611, principal office Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020; James R. Shepley, President; Richard B. McKeough, Treasurer; John F. Harvey, Secretary. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department at Ottawa, Canada and for payment of postage in cash. U. S. subscriptions \$13.00 a year and Canadian subscriptions \$12.00 a year.

## A welcome victory for the cause of beauty

Good news about almost anything is rather a rarity these days. Good news about our environment is scarcely heard at all.

For more than a decade LIFE has been recording the destruction of wilderness and wildlife. It has been a dismal tale of despoiled lands, polluted rivers, spreading smog and endangered species. In the past year this has become a nationwide cause, a matter of concern to more and more citizens. Bad news about our environment is now plentiful, and the feeling grows that no week will pass without the threat of some new ecological disaster. Most depressing of all, many people feel that little can be done about it.

It is therefore a special pleasure to present the story beginning on page 48, Photographer Vernon Merritt's "A Victory for Beauty." His pictures of the magnificent trumpeter swan are a triumph of photography, but even more, they are a triumph of conservation. The species was once reduced to a total of 69 birds, and it seemed inevitable that these last few would vanish altogether. But almost 60 years of careful protection have brought the trumpeters back in such numbers (more than 5,000 today) that they are no longer considered an endangered species.

The swans survived because a number of people in government agencies and conservation groups believed that something *could* be done. There were also some private citizens, the members of the Edwards family in British Columbia, who made a special personal contribution, described by Dolly Connelly on page 56. The contribution had nothing to do with money—the Edwardses never had any to speak of—but it is one that all admirers of wildlife can respect and perhaps envy.

I have never seen a trumpeter swan in the wild, or heard the strange call that is responsible for its name. Most LIFE readers will probably never have that opportunity, either, since the birds live in wilderness territory and are still not a common sight even today. But the great white wingspread is there in Merritt's pictures, a startling flash of beauty across the sky to say that something can, indeed, be done.



TRUMPETER SWANS

*Ralph Graves*  
RALPH GRAVES  
Managing Editor

# LIFE

## A BITTER FEUD

Two great surgeons at war  
over the human heart



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