

The Obsession

A deep love of duck and goose hunting and the species themselves drove a passionate conservationist to photograph them all for *Waterfowl of the World*.

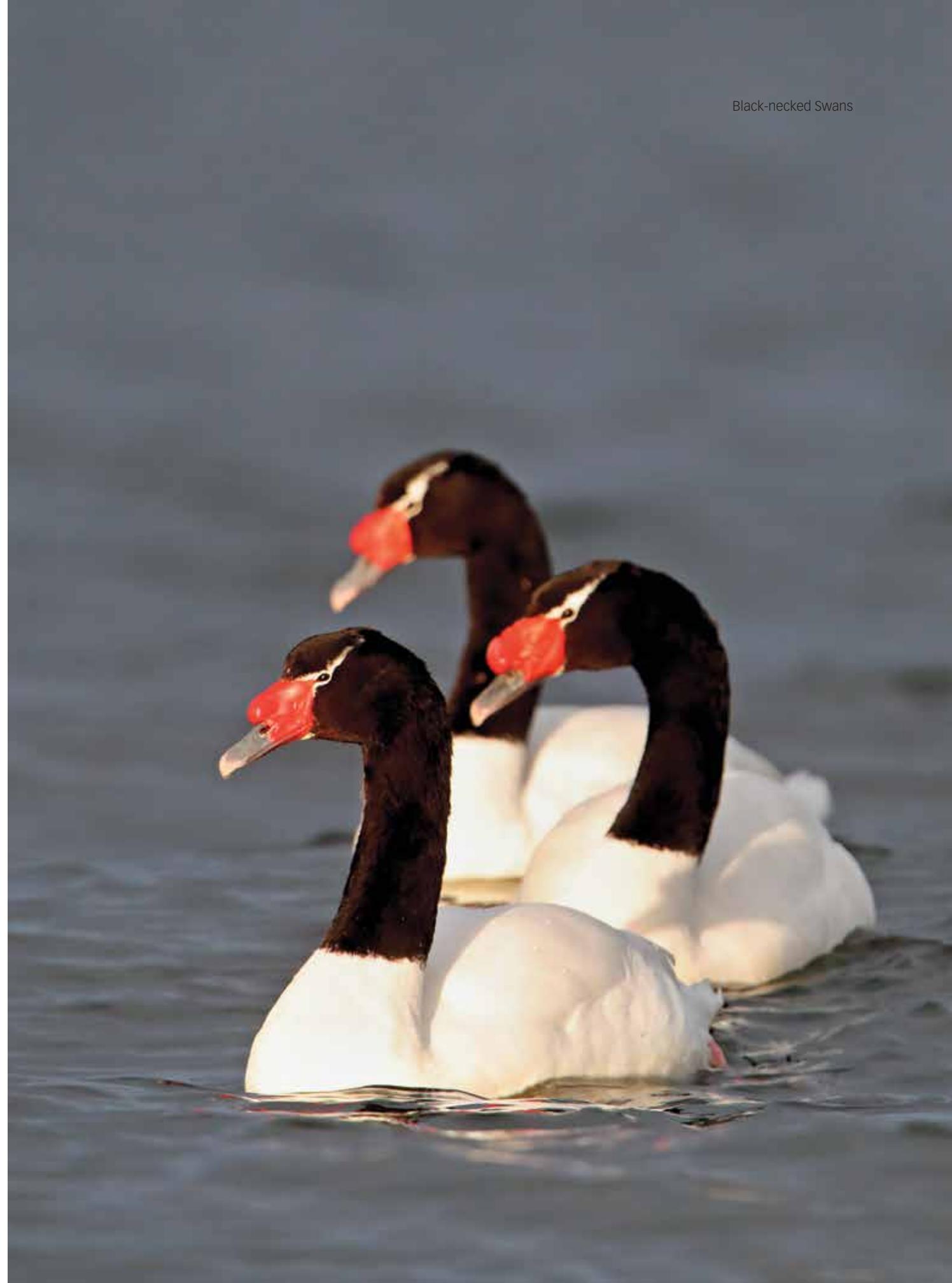
BY GARY KRAMER



Black-bellied Whistling Ducks



Black-necked Swans



WATERFOWL AND waterfowl hunting have been my passion ever since I was a teenager growing up in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Living near the beach, sand and surf were always close at hand but marshes and duck hunting were a long way from home. Somehow, I figured out the public duck hunting programs at several Southern California state wildlife areas and federal national wildlife refuges. Each fall, I made hunting trips to the Imperial Wildlife Area and Kern National Wildlife Refuge.

Fast forward 50 years and waterfowl have become ingrained in my daily life. First with degrees in wildlife management from Humboldt State University, then a 26-year career as a biologist with the U.S.F.W.S. I served at four national wildlife refuges, ending in 1999 with an early retirement after a 10-year stint as the refuge manager of the

Pink-eared Ducks



Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Along the way I started writing and soon became aware that my stories were more likely to be accepted if photos were provided. I made photos a priority. I set a goal—to

shoot every species of waterfowl in North America. It took nearly 50 years but by 2015, I did it. Then in 2017, Emperor Geese became legal quarry for the first time in more than 30 years. I have applied for a permit every year since, but have not been

drawn. So, I still technically have one to go—the Emperor Goose.

Once I'd bagged every legal species in North America, an even more ambitious goal loomed: To photograph and produce a book that included every species of waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans) on earth—all 167 of them. In looking at the available literature, it became apparent that the overall status of the world's waterfowl had not been updated since 1997, when Frank Todd authored *Natural History of the Waterfowl*. Since that time, dramatic changes in human populations and our natural landscapes had occurred.

In the fall of 2017, after some serious soul searching, I decided to embark on this ambitious project, a feat that had never been attempted. I dedicated the next three-and-a-half years to traveling the world to obtain the images and write the text. The result is *Waterfowl of the World*, a

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photo-driven coffee table book with 540 pages and 1,299 photographs.

I have traveled by boat, airplane, vehicle, and foot in pursuit of waterfowl, visiting 40 countries and logging more than 300,000 miles by

aircraft and thousands of miles in small airplanes, embarking on epic voyages to sub-antarctic islands, and driving thousands of miles on every continent except Antarctica. I travelled to the Arctic Circle in Alaska



Silver Teal



Ruddy Shelducks



Ruddy Ducks



Red-breasted Geese

and to the equatorial rainforest of the Central African Republic, the Puna Grasslands of Peru at 15,600 feet, the jungles of Papua New Guinea, remote lakes in Madagascar, and the bitter cold of Norway's northern coast in winter, and many places in-between. I have driven, walked, and flown in torrential downpours, blizzards, blowing dust storms and spent hundreds of hours sitting in cramped blinds enduring temperatures from zero to more than 100 degrees.

During these travels, I was driven to showcase the magnificence of these birds in their native habitats. Included are species on the brink of extinction, like the Madagascar Pochard and Brazilian Merganser; those that are struggling, like the White-winged Duck and Blue Duck; waterfowl populations that have flourished in recent decades, like the Snow Goose and Cackling Goose; plus, those that are relatively secure today, such as the Nene and Campbell Teal, largely due to successful wildlife management efforts.

Hopefully, this book will provide a framework and stimulus at the administrative, scientific, private, and educational levels to further the conservation of waterfowl worldwide. Through words and photos, my goal is to educate and focus

awareness on waterfowl so that people are compelled to conserve these species and the habitats on which they depend for generations to come. No matter what your level of interest, I hope this book elevates your desire to know more about the world of waterfowl.

(The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Wild Waterfowl Association,

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, National Audubon Society, British Waterfowl Association, Yale University, University of California—Davis, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and the California Waterfowl Association have endorsed this project and are cooperating organizations.

Signed books can be purchased at GaryKramer.net for \$99 postpaid in the US).

