

24 February 2024

Dear Chairman Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 957, a bill that would allow the hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland, which I **strongly oppose**. I am a retired journalist and communications consultant and a Maryland Master Naturalist, and I live in Charles and Montgomery counties.

The Tundra Swan is a magnificent, graceful bird that mates for life, nests in the remote Arctic of North America during warmer months, and migrates (often more than 3,000 miles) to spend winters in the Chesapeake Bay area and a few other places in the mid-Atlantic region. For multiple reasons – disappearing habitat, lead poisoning from spent shot, climate change, and oil and gas drilling in the Arctic, among others -- the population of Tundra Swans wintering in Maryland has plummeted in recent years.

It's not clear why anyone would want to hunt Tundra Swans. They are not dangerous, they are not a nuisance, there are centuries-old cultural taboos against eating swan, and given their large size and often slow, lumbering manner, it is hard to imagine any sport in hunting them.

According to [a report](#) by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland's share of Tundra Swans in the so-called [Atlantic Flyway](#) has fallen from as high as 80% in the 1960s to about 8% in 2020 – representing a real decline from more than 50,000 Tundra Swans to just 7,000 wintering in Maryland over that period. From 2012 to 2022, according to the report, there were no reports of damage to crops or aircraft in Maryland from Tundra Swans.

I would also offer a personal observation. At my home on the Wicomico River in southern Charles County, 10 years ago I would spot small flocks of about 12 Tundra Swans on the water several times every winter, and it was always a cause for celebration. Last year, I saw one flock of about six swans; this year, I have yet to see a single Tundra Swan.

Given this record and these trends, it is clear that these beautiful, elegant creatures should be protected – not hunted and killed. I urge you to vote **against** HB 957 allowing for the hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland.

Sincerely,

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CC: Sponsors of HB 957
District Reps