

KEVIN B. HORNBERGER
Legislative District 35B
Cecil County

Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Local Revenues Subcommittee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight

Chair, Cecil County House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 325
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3284 · 301-858-3284
800-492-7122 Ext. 3284
Fax 410-841-3609 · 301-858-3609
Kevin.Hornberger@house.state.md.us

District Office
64 S. Main Street
Port Deposit, Maryland 21904
410-378-2718

February 28th, 2024

Delegate Marc Korman
Chair, Environment & Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

HB-957 - Natural Resources - Hunting - Tundra Swans - SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and fellow Committee Members. In addition to my oral testimony, please accept this written testimony in support of House Bill 957 Natural Resources - Hunting - Tundra Swans. I represent the Susquehanna Flats at the top of the Chesapeake Bay, an area renowned for decoy carving and hunting traditions. I have worked with my colleagues across the Susquehanna (members representing Havre de Grace) and across the aisle to craft this bill. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation.

This bill establishes a federally-regulated **Tundra** Swan hunting season in Maryland with harvest numbers determined by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Enactment of a Tundra Swan season will serve as an economic boon to the State, as well as offering more funds for DNR's conservation efforts. Maryland is considered a wintering state in the "Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans," signed by the flyway councils in 2007. Maryland would be eligible for a percentage of the total number of permits allocated for the eastern population (5,600) receiving approximately 478 permits, which would constitute roughly 10% of our recent wintering population. The management plan harvest strategy assumes a 50% success rate for hunters that draw permits, however the actual success rate would likely be closer to 35% (167 swans). This would translate to 2-3% of Maryland's wintering swan population being harvested. Passage of this bill will align us with Virginia, Delaware, and North Carolina who have for many years administered a Tundra Swan hunting season

Passage of this bill will not change the number of Tundra Swans harvested in the Atlantic Flyway. It will in fact likely result in a net decrease of birds harvested. Less birds are wintering here than in other states in the Flyway such as North Carolina. Our permits will most likely come from them as they have the majority of the 5,600. A bird is more likely to be harvested in a state where birds winter longer. A bird is less likely to be harvested in Maryland versus the three other hunting states to our South.

The sale of these permits via lottery hosted by the DNR will result in tens of thousands of dollars for the agency tripled by the Pittman Robertson Act via the federal government. All those dollars fund enforcement and preservation of ALL natural resources. Tundra Swans are one of the most regulated, studied, and protected birds in the county, second only to sandhill cranes. Both populations have bounced back significantly. This is because of the dollars spent by governmental agencies, generated from hunting license sales, to preserve and protect them.

Rumor Control

I wanted to dispel opposition talking points emailed to Committee members. These rebuttals are from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, DNR, the Fiscal Note writers, and the USFW.

Trumpeter Swans (There are six/seven species of "Swan") will be inadvertently killed because of this bill passing. I will call your attention to the three maps below. As shown below in item A in contrast to items B and C, Trumpeter Swans and Tundra Swans **do not** share a flightpath or wintering locations in the State of Maryland.

Tundra Swans mate for life and will never take another mate. The following game animals also mate for life and are regularly hunted: beavers, grey wolves, sandhill cranes, coyotes, and red foxes. Just like these game species identifying another mate is dependent on age at time of loss and size of the brood hatched from the lost mate. The life monogamy phenomena is only present with a European sub-species (not present in North America at all), *bewickii*. See item D.

Tundra Swans are somehow threatened/their population will undergo an environmentally risky decline if this bill passes. Passage of this bill may even lower the net harvest amount. Please see item E, which can be found in the [DNR report from 2022](#) about Tundra Swans. "Although the number of tundra swans in the Atlantic Flyway has grown substantially since the 1960s, the number wintering in Maryland has declined."

Passage of this bill will invalidate norms/in-place laws/regulations/otherwise binding rules surrounding hunting practices. Poaching, unlawful discharge of a firearm, and any other unlawful activity relating to hunting, remains illegal under this bill. I do recognize many are opposed to hunting in general for various reasons but thank you for consideration and I am looking forward to a favorable report. I am happy to answer or discuss any questions.

Sincerely,



Delegate Kevin B. Hornberger
District 35B, Cecil County

TYPES OF SWANS



Mute Swan



Black Swan



Trumpeter Swan



Tundra Swan



Black-necked Swan



Whooper Swan

Trumpeter Swans (A)

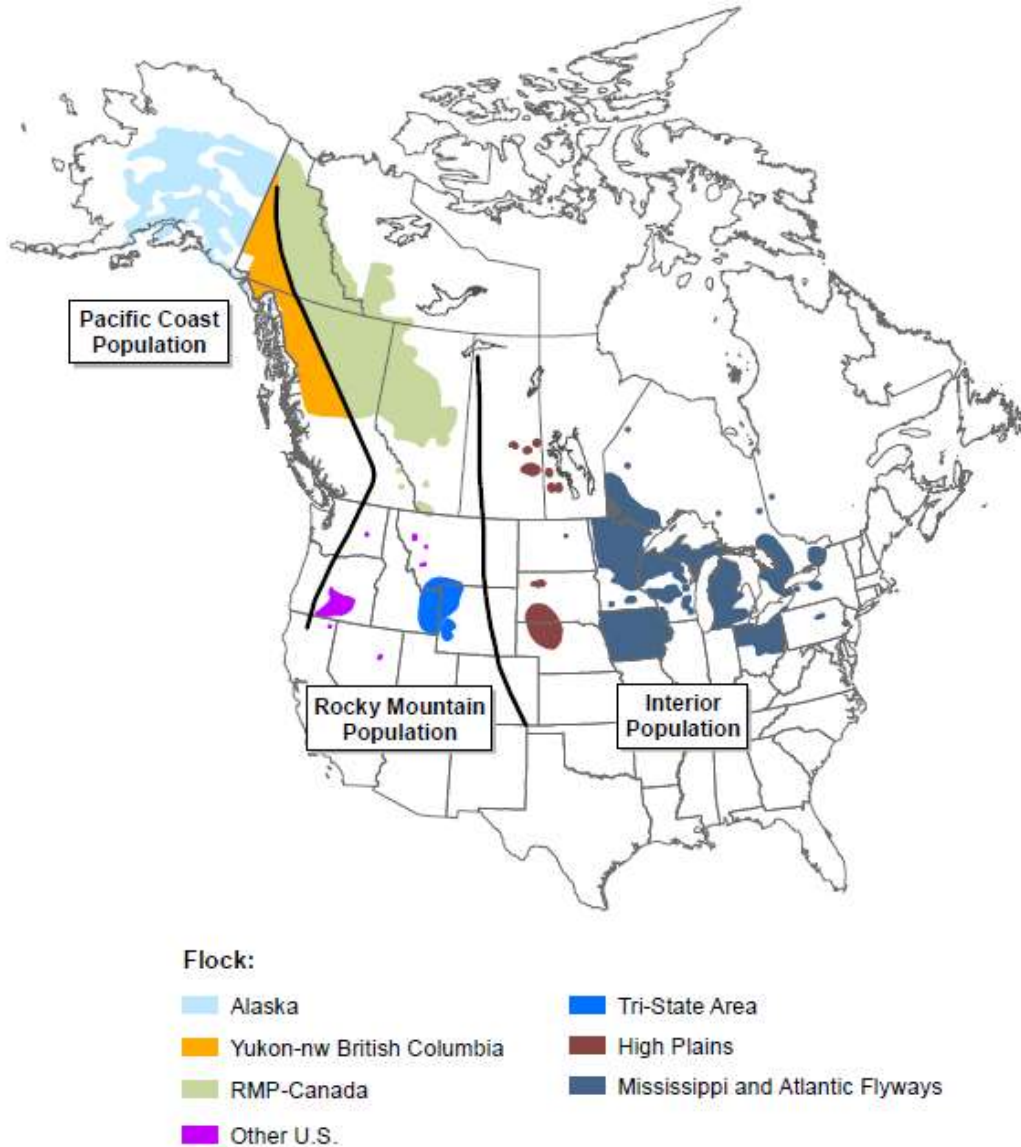
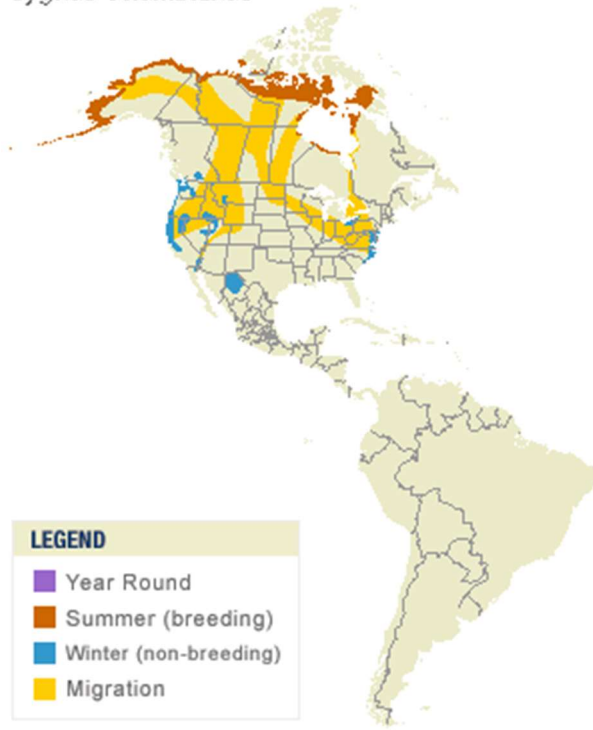


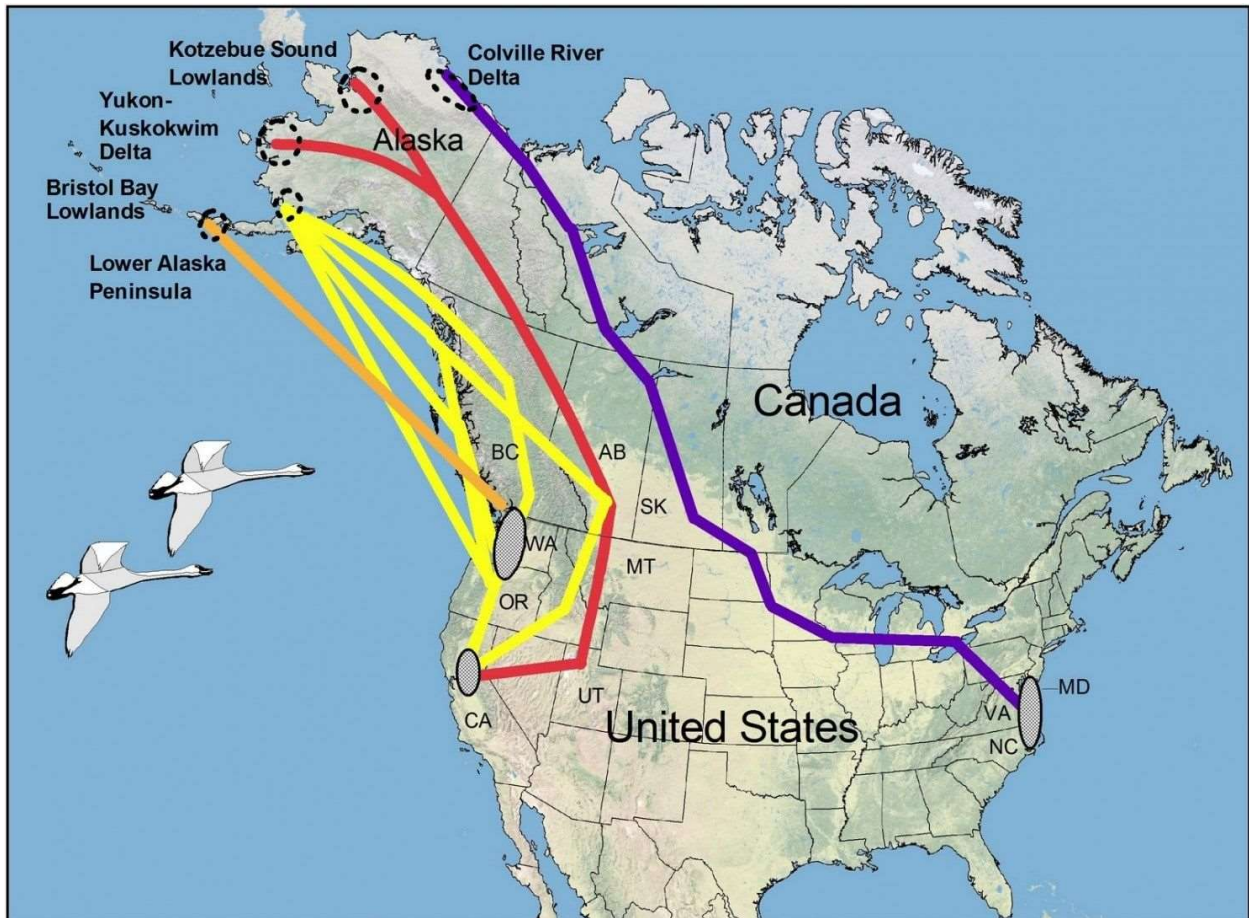
Figure 1. Approximate summer range of Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountain, and Interior populations of trumpeter swans, as reported by 2015 North American Trumpeter Swan Survey (NATSS) cooperators. The range in British Columbia was delineated using data from the 2015 survey and the British Columbia Breeding Bird Atlas (2015). Alaska, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba ranges were based on 2005 NATSS data.

Tundra Swans (B, C)

Tundra Swan
Cygnus columbianus



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe



European Subspecies Life-Mating Habits (D)

Pair Bond: Nature And Duration

Pair bond maintained year-round. Specifics of pair bond thought to be similar across entire range.

In Palearctic populations, Tundra Swans form permanent pair bonds at 2–3 yr of age and first breed 1–2 yr later (Scott 1978a). Divorce while both members are alive is uncommon (2%); it is also uncommon for pair members to winter on different sites. Before pairing permanently, a young swan may form one or more sequential, loose alliances with a member of the opposite sex (Scott 1978a). bewickii If mate is lost, other bird may take up to nine years to re-pair, or as little as 12 months (mean 2.6 years; Kear 2005). European subspecies, not NA.

Pair Bond: Displays

The following descriptions adopted from Hawkins (Hawkins 1986b).

(1) Forward Call: Head and neck extended horizontally, held parallel to ground at a height approximately halfway between the ground and the shoulder position when in an upright, relaxed posture.

Tundra Swan Numbers, Maryland DNR Report 2022 (E)

- Population concerns - Although the number of tundra swans in the Atlantic Flyway has grown substantially since the 1960's, the number wintering in Maryland has declined (Figure 1). The percentage of tundra swans that choose to winter in Maryland has declined relative to other Atlantic Flyway states (mainly Virginia and North Carolina) from around 65% of the flyway total in the 1960's to about 8% now (Figure 2).

