

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

Southern Maryland Audubon **very strongly opposes HB957**, which would allow the hunting of the magnificent Tundra Swan in Maryland. I am president of Southern Maryland Audubon, which represents 640 members in Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's and Calvert counties and beyond in Maryland. I am also a Maryland Master Naturalist living in Charles County.

This elegant swan migrates more than 3,500 miles from north of the Arctic Circle to winter in our Chesapeake Bay and Maryland. National Audubon's climate change model projects the Tundra Swan will lose 61 percent of its winter range by 2080, with limited potential for moving elsewhere. The Arctic summer range is also forecast to shrink, raising questions about how these swans will adjust to the disruption in both seasons.

Already we have seen a precipitous decline in Tundra Swans in Maryland from more than 50,000 in the 1960s to about 7,000 in 2020, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Add to disappearing habitat and declining populations the threats from lead poisoning from spent shot and oil and gas drilling in the Arctic, and it is unclear why Maryland would want to open season on this swan, or indeed, why anyone would actually want to hunt it.

Let me be clear: Southern Maryland Audubon does not oppose hunting. Most hunters are strong conservationists and hunting stamps pay to support wildlife habitat. But there are plentiful waterfowl species now open to hunting in Maryland waters. Why target Tundra Swans which pose no threat to agriculture, aircraft or suburban yards? Please don't confuse them with the non-native Mute Swans which are often blamed for crop damage.

Long associated with romance, when these snowy white swans reach two to three years of age, they mate for life. Here in Maryland, we frequently observe pairs traveling with— and protecting— their buff-colored juvenile young. A hunter killing one of the pair could threaten the survival of the entire family against predators and the perils of flying 3,500 miles back to the Arctic for the summer.

Thank you for allowing comments on this bill. We appeal in the strongest possible way that you not move it forward.

Sincerely,
Molly Moore
President
Southern Maryland Audubon