

Dear Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB0957 which would allow hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland. These birds are declining in the state, and we should not be risking the future health of their population through unnecessary hunting.

Loss of breeding and non-breeding habitat and many other human-caused threats such as lead poisoning from spent shot, climate change, and oil and gas drilling in the Arctic among others, has caused the population of Tundra Swans wintering in Maryland to drop from 50,000 in the 1960s to just 7,000 in 2020. **This is an 86% decline in just a little over 50 years.** While their numbers have not yet dipped to levels that require federal protection, clearly Maryland should not be allowing the hunting of these birds. Furthermore, because Tundra Swans pair for life, if one member of the pair is shot the other will not find another partner and thus will not breed, continuing the cycle of human-caused population decline. We should be protecting what's left of these beautiful birds.

An additional critical point is that Tundra Swans are difficult to distinguish from the rarer and protected Trumpeter Swans, even for expert birders. Trumpeters would almost certainly be mistakenly shot as a result of this bill. Both of these birds deserve full protection in Maryland.

We are in the midst of a catastrophic biodiversity crisis. Given the immensity of this problem, we should be seeking opportunities to limit hunting, not expand it. We do not need to eat native wild animals that have precarious population numbers. We certainly should not be hunting them for sport at this point. We need to start undoing centuries of a mindset that says animals are disposable and should only live or die as it pleases us, and start living in harmony with wild animals and nature and treating them with the respect they deserve, which will ultimately be critical to the health of the planet and our own survival.

Please vote against HB0957.

Sincerely,
Diana Colangelo
North Bethesda, 20852