

# **HB-957 John Sojda III Message to E&T 2024.pdf**

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Position: FAV

**From:** <email address hidden>

**Sent:** Monday, February 26, 2024 11:09 AM

**To:** Korman, Marc Delegate <[Marc.Korman@house.state.md.us](mailto:Marc.Korman@house.state.md.us)>; Boyce, Regina T. Delegate <[Regina.Boyce@house.state.md.us](mailto:Regina.Boyce@house.state.md.us)>; Hornberger, Kevin Delegate <[Kevin.Hornberger@house.state.md.us](mailto:Kevin.Hornberger@house.state.md.us)>; Griffith, Mike Delegate <[Mike.Griffith@house.state.md.us](mailto:Mike.Griffith@house.state.md.us)>; Johnson, Andre Delegate <[Andre.Johnson@house.state.md.us](mailto:Andre.Johnson@house.state.md.us)>; Johnson, Steve Delegate <[Steve.Johnson@house.state.md.us](mailto:Steve.Johnson@house.state.md.us)>; Schmidt, Stuart Delegate <[Stuart.Schmidt@house.state.md.us](mailto:Stuart.Schmidt@house.state.md.us)>; Tomlinson, Chris Delegate <[Chris.Tomlinson@house.state.md.us](mailto:Chris.Tomlinson@house.state.md.us)>; Fraser-Hidalgo, David Delegate <[David.Fraser.Hidalgo@house.state.md.us](mailto:David.Fraser.Hidalgo@house.state.md.us)>; Foley, Linda Delegate <[Linda.Foley@house.state.md.us](mailto:Linda.Foley@house.state.md.us)>

**Cc:** [johnsojda@gknowmx.com](mailto:johnsojda@gknowmx.com)

**Subject:** HB957 Natural Resources - Hunting - Tundra Swans.

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, Bill Sponsors, and local House Delegates,

My simple message is that I would like to express my full support for HB957 Natural Resources – Hunting – Tundra Swans.

I would also like to offer a much more detailed message:

I first became aware of HB957 when I received an email from the Maryland Ornithological Society's Conservation Chair urging me to express my *disapproval* for this bill. I suspect that you and other members of the house may receive a number of emails from MOS members expressing passionate disapproval in response to this call to action. I would like to add some factual balance to any such responses you may get and offer you some reference material should you have more involved dialog with HB957 opponents.

I can respect that some individuals are opposed to hunting. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. It is an unforced error by MOS, and all who follow MOS's call to action without diligence, to pollute an honest feeling-based position with unfounded assertions:

1. The numbers of swans wintering in Maryland have declined in recent years; any hunting will put further pressure on them.
2. Trumpeter Swans and Tundra Swans are hard to tell apart, even for expert birders. Therefore, it is very likely that hunters would mistake protected Trumpeter Swans for Tundra Swans.
3. They do minimal damage (some feeding on winter grains).
4. And, finally, these are magnificent birds that pair for life, and deserve better from Maryland than to be brought down by shotgun blasts.

As a very serious birder based in Montgomery County, MD (<https://ebird.org/profile/MjA5NDgwOA/US-MD-031>, <https://ebird.org/top100?region=Montgomery+County&locInfo.regionCode=US-MD-031&year=2024&rankedBy=spp> ) I belong to both the Montgomery County Bird Club as well as MOS, The Audubon Society, and I support The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. But I am also a member of Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, and The Ruffed Grouse Society. As a member of these organizations, I am aware of the great works that hunters perform in volunteering their time and money to support the welfare of not only the birds that they hunt, but of all the species that are part of the habitats that they rehabilitate, maintain, and help flourish. At leadership and local levels, hunters and birders realize the wisdom and value of reaching across the table for the common good. One example is Ducks Unlimited partnering with Audubon for the good of birds. <https://www.audubon.org/news/why->

[birders-and-waterfowl-hunters-are-natural-allies](#) Responsible stewards work with all stakeholders that their endeavor affects.

It is a shame when some birders, in leadership roles no less, take a careless stance when they have the opportunity to work with serious hunters, wildlife agencies, and government officials to promote the welfare of species we all care so much about.

Point by point, here are facts that oppose the talking points that MOS has offered:

1. Tundra Swan numbers are not declining.
  - a. According to the [most recent survey](#) by The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Migratory Bird Management (based right here in Laurel, MD no less), Tundra Swan numbers are *not* declining (pg 39).
  - b. According to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Birds of the World" site (login needed):  
<https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/tunswa/cur/introduction?login>

i. Conservation Status – Least Concern

ORDER Anseriformes FAMILY Anatidae GENUS Cygnus

SPECIES  
**Tundra Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*

R. J. Limpert, S.  
Version: 1.0

Introduction  
Identification  
Plumages, Molts, and Structure  
Systematics  
Distribution  
Habitat  
Movements and Migration  
Diet and Foraging  
Sounds and Vocal Behavior  
Behavior  
Breeding

## Conservation and Management

### Conservation Status **LC** Least Concern

Not globally threatened (**Least Concern**). Sizeable populations remain of both races. Winter counts produced 169,300 individuals of nominate *columbianus*; commonest swan in N America, with both W & E populations increasing (latter reaching c. 100,000 birds in 2000) [Kear 2005](#). Race *bewickii* has recently increased in tundra of NE European sector of Russia.

### Effects of Human Activity

#### Shooting

The most direct human impact on Tundra Swans has been in the form of an annual hunting season since 1962 on the western wintering population and 1984 on the eastern wintering population. Hunting is authorized during fall migration in Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota, and Utah, and on the wintering grounds in New

- ii. There are already several regulated hunting seasons:

## Effects of Human Activity

### Shooting

The most direct human impact on Tundra Swans has been in the form of an annual hunting season since 1962 on the western wintering population and 1984 on the eastern wintering population. Hunting is authorized during fall migration in Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota, and Utah, and on the wintering grounds in New Jersey, N. Carolina, and Virginia (Serie and Bartonek 1991a). Hunting is by permit only and each permit holder is allowed to kill one swan per season. During 1979-1988, the number of permits issued to harvest western wintering Tundra Swans averaged 3,552 (range 3,500-3,600); based on the return of hunter questionnaires, an annual average of 1,075 swans were killed and retrieved (600-1,619) and another 215 swans killed but not retrieved (66-377). During 1985-1988, the average number of permits issued to harvest eastern wintering Tundra Swans was 6,381 (6,120-7,094) resulting in an average of 2,601 swans killed and retrieved (2,343-2,797) and another 292 killed but not retrieved (260-324; Serie and Bartonek 1991a). Of dead birds that were analyzed, 44% contained lead shot.

The hunting of Tundra Swans has been justified due to population increases, concerns about damage to agricultural crops from field-feeding swans, and to provide a trophy hunting experience (Serie and Bartonek 1991a), although these authors concluded that in most portions of their range, Tundra Swans posed few social or

iii. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service already have management plans in place

### Management

Not globally threatened (Least Concern). Possible race *jankowskii* included in CITES II.

Tundra Swans are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service as two populations, the Eastern Population (EP) and the Western Population (WP), based on their respective wintering locations in North America (see Distribution). Management plans for the two populations establish target population sizes of 80,000 and 60,000 respectively for the EP and WP (Can. Wildl. Serv. and U.S. Fish Wildl. Serv. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service 1986). Hunting by permit is the technique used to achieve the desired population levels and will not be allowed if the three-year average wintering population falls below 60,000 for the EP and 40,000 for the WP (Serie and Bartonek 1991a).

In Europe, declines of Tundra Swans lead to a Bewick's Swan action planning workshop in St Petersburg in Sept 2009, which attempted to identify major threats (including weather and habitat changes) and to develop the monitoring, research and conservation work required to halt and reverse the decline Rees and Beekman 2010.

- c. But let's take a look at what might happen when a species subject to hunting regulations falls into decline. In general, wildlife officials have a stream of revenue from hunters to survey species population and offer forecasts. Hunting seasons and bag limits are adjusted accordingly. Hunters, seeking to maximize their hunting opportunities work closely with wildlife officials and local property owners across a species' entire range to improve habitat in an effort to strengthen a species numbers and overall health. When they are successful, there are more birds overall—enough to hunt and enough to enjoy watching. All birds die eventually, perhaps a few more will succumb to hunting pressures, but far more birds will benefit from the greater good performed. The language of this Bill is clear enough to indicate that Federal agencies will dictate the amount of hunting allowed; it will not just be a free-for-all.
2. Trumpeter Swan flock demographics not negatively affected by Tundra Swan hunting  
<https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/truswa/cur/introduction>

ORDER Anseriformes FAMILY Anatidae GENUS *Cygnus*

SPECIES

# Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator*

Introduction

## Conservation and Management

Identification

Plumages, Molts, and Structure

Conservation Status **LC** Least Concern

### Shooting

Original declines and local extirpation were due in part to trade in swan skins and quills (3, 87, 89) and to excessive market (23), subsistence (3) and recreational (343, 110) hunting. Trumpeter swan adults deemed "very tough and hardly edible" (343), but cygnets were "excellent" and "very good eating" (343, 110). Hunting is currently controlled by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918) and not currently legal anywhere in North America. Unintentional and malicious shooting remains a problem (188, 6, 306, 307, 206, 174, 80). Trumpeter Swans are probably more vulnerable to shooting in part because they tend to fly lower (51 m ± 4 SD on foraging flights) and in smaller groups than Tundra Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) (344, 215, 237, CDM). A very few Trumpeter Swans are mistakenly shot during legal Tundra Swan hunting (345), but not enough to negatively affect flock demographics. However, incidental harvest may affect natural range expansion by sacrificing pioneering birds developing new migratory traditions (244).

### Pesticides and Other Contaminants

3. Grain damage may be minimal based on studies like this:

This is a preview. [Log in through your library.](#)

### Effect of Tundra Swan Grazing on Winter Wheat in North Carolina

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**Abstract.**—Tundra Swans (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) grazing on winter wheat (*Triticum durum*) were studied using 61 sets of paired plots (one enclosure, one subject to grazing) in fields near a major wintering area in North Carolina during 1995–1996. Aboveground biomass, number of seed heads, and seed head mass were determined for each plot and used as measures of grain yield; plant height and leaf damage on each plot were used to assess grazing intensity. Tundra Swans reduced aboveground biomass by 12% and seed head mass by 11% in grazed plots compared to enclosure plots. More blades were grazed and plant height was reduced in grazed plots compared to enclosure plots in each month after plot deployment, with the greatest reduction in plant height (28%) occurring in February, and a final reduction of 6% at the time of harvest in June. However, these differences in crop yield and plant height occurred only in plots on sanctuary fields, in which swans can feed without disturbance from farmers or hunters, but not in plots on non-sanctuary fields.

**Key Words.**—Crop damage, crop yield, *Cygnus columbianus columbianus*, effects of grazing, Tundra Swan, winter wheat.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

## Effect of Tundra Swan Grazing on Winter Wheat in North Carolina

David R. Crawley, Jr. and Eric G. Bolen

Waterbirds: The International Journal of Waterbird Biology

Vol. 25, Special Publication 1: Proceedings of the Fourth International Swan Symposium 2001 (2002), pp. 162-167 (6 pages)

Published By: Waterbird Society



<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1522349>

4. No evidence that Swans pair for life:

<https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/tunswa/cur/behavior#sex>

**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). in 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.

In summary, based on MOS’s own talking points, it is a shame they didn’t do their homework. If there are objective published facts to the contrary of those presented here, so be it, but I respectfully wait for such information to emerge from MOS.

The other aspect of this subject that I would like make note of is the economic impact that passing this Bill could be expected to have. I don’t have exact figures but I am sure someone does, that speak to the millions of dollars a year that hunting pumps into the Maryland economy. Waterfowl hunting in the Chesapeake Bay region has historical and cultural significance. While hunting is a passionate hobby for many, it is a vital livelihood for others. Proceeds from hunters’ licensing dollars and taxes on spending on hunting materials goes directly to maintain State and Federal Gamelands—Gamelands that MOS birders use year around as much, or more, than hunters and yet birdwatchers pay nothing for the privilege. I do not see MOS leadership urging fellow birders to purchase hunting licenses, not to hunt, but solely to support Gameland maintenance.

I support HB957.

R/

John

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# **HornbergerWrittenHB957FAV2024.pdf**

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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



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February 28<sup>th</sup>, 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)

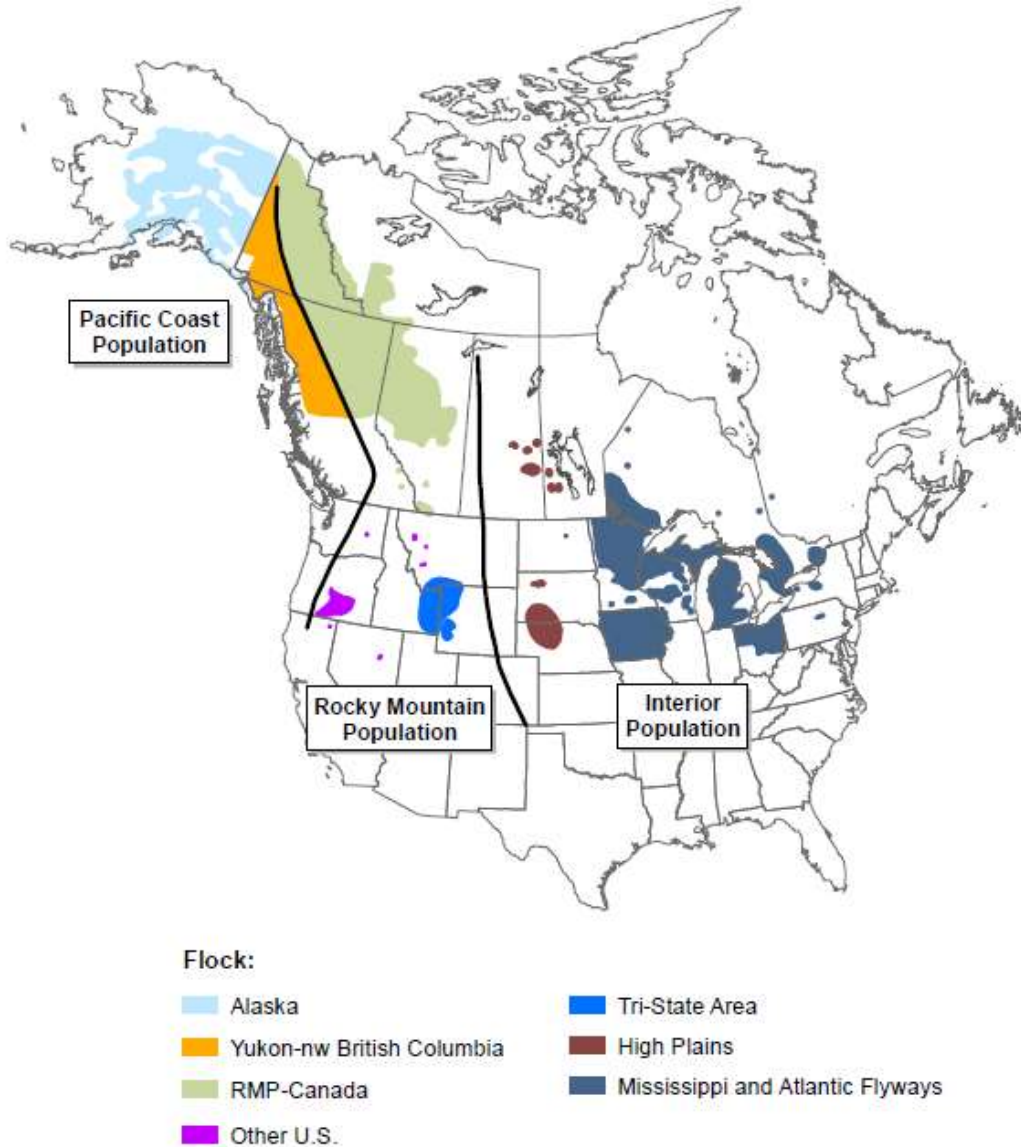
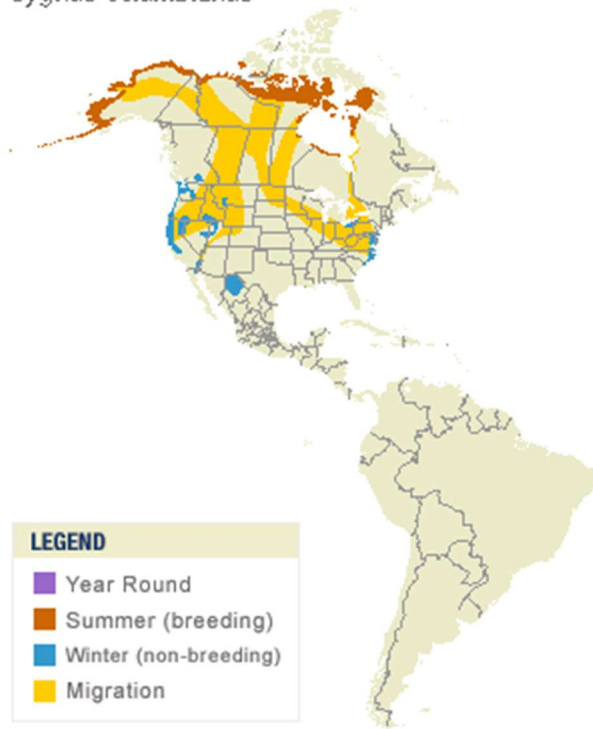


Figure 1. Approximate summer range of Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountain, and Interior populations of trumpeter swans, as reported by 2015 North American Trumpeter Swan Survey (NATSS) cooperators. The range in British Columbia was delineated using data from the 2015 survey and the British Columbia Breeding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

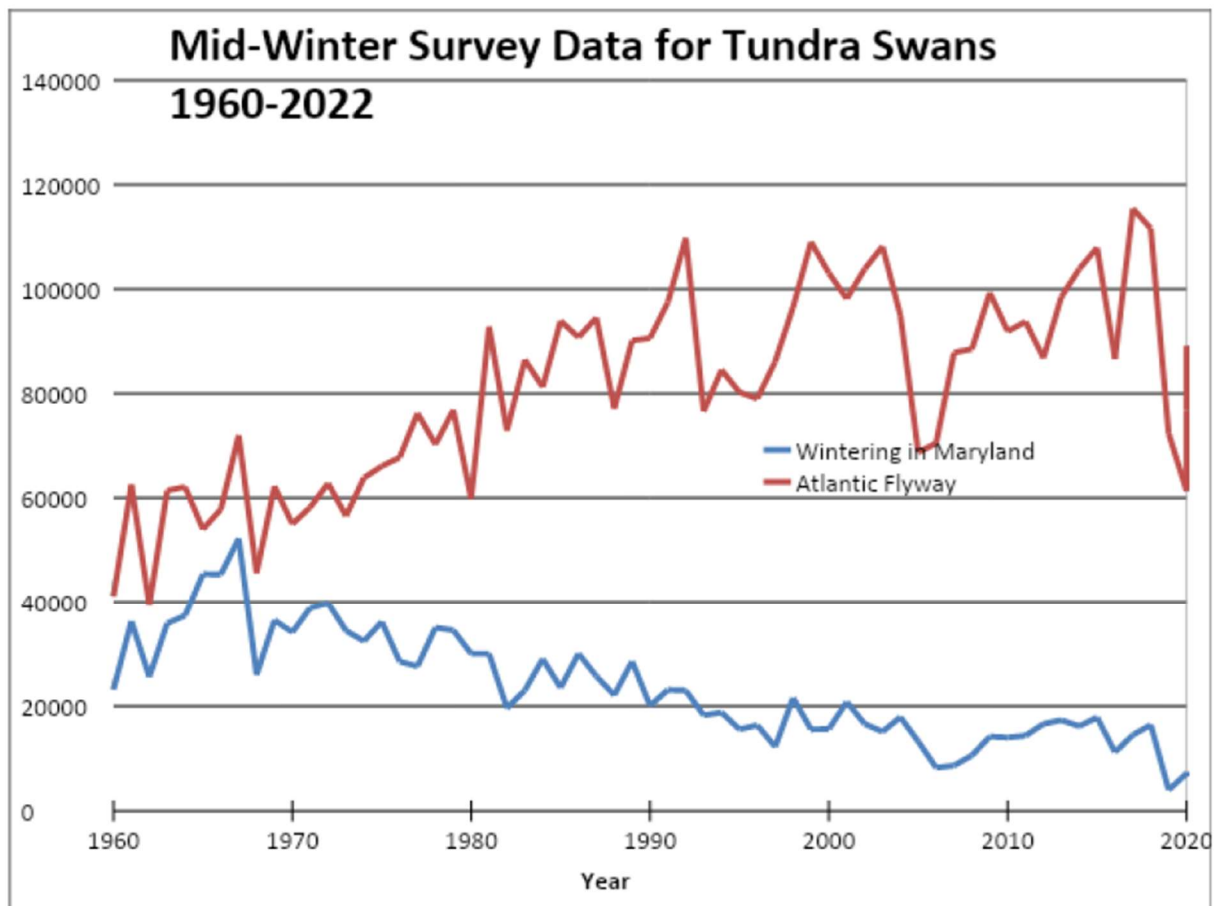
### **Pair Bond: Displays**

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).



# **JCR\_pg82\_DNR\_Tundra Swan Hunting Season report .pd**

Uploaded by: Kevin Hornberger

Position: FAV



## **Tundra Swan Hunting Season**

### **Joint Chairmen's Report**

#### **Page 82**

Submitted by:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*The facilities and services of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or physical or mental disability. This document is available in alternative format upon request.*

## Summary of Current Tundra Swan (*Cygnus Columbianus*) Information Pertinent to Maryland



Tundra Swan  
Photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth, USFWS

### **Tundra Swan Annual Cycle**

The Eastern Population (EP) of tundra swans nests throughout northern Canada and as far west as Alaska. In the fall, they typically leave nesting areas in early October and travel generally southeast across the boreal forest, northern plains, upper Mississippi Valley, the great lakes, arriving in the Atlantic flyway in December (Figure 1). From December through February, swans feed on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), invertebrates (e.g., clams), and agricultural crops such as winter wheat and waste grain. By late February, swans are staging throughout the mid-Atlantic in preparation for spring migration, and most swans depart Maryland by the second week of March. The spring migration route is generally a reverse of the fall, however swans take more time to travel that distance in the spring. The additional time allows swans to attain the body weight necessary for breeding and egg production.

### **State and Flyway Population Trends**

Tundra swans in Maryland and throughout the Atlantic Flyway (AF) are monitored with the Mid-winter Waterfowl Survey conducted each year in early January. Mid-winter counts of tundra swans in the AF increased steadily from the 1960s to the early 2000's, stabilized in the 90,000-110,000 range and recently experienced some declines (latest 3 year average is around 75,000) (Figure 2). In the early years of the Mid-winter Survey, Maryland supported about two thirds of the AF total. Since that time, the number wintering in Maryland and the proportion of



the AF total they represent has declined (Figure 3) (latest 3 year average Mid-Winter Survey count is around 7,000).

Most of the EP tundra swans winter from Pennsylvania to South Carolina, with approximately 98% wintering in four states: North Carolina (80%), Maryland (8%), Virginia (6%), and Delaware (4%). Recent satellite-telemetry research has shown that after arrival on the wintering grounds, swans will readily move throughout their winter range. Winter range movements tend to be toward the south early after arrival and northward prior to spring migration, but short trips between the wintering states are not uncommon. These movements suggest that the EP should be considered one population as opposed to multiple distinct sub-populations. Management philosophies should continue to encourage a wide range approach in terms of habitat conservation and harvest allotment as the means to best manage this resource.

### Crop Damage and Other Complaints

In some areas of the state, large numbers of tundra swans feed in harvested grain fields. However, data collected by the United States Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - Wildlife Services, include few complaints related to tundra swan crop damage in Maryland. A report provided by APHIS showed only three crop damage complaints in the last 10 years (Table 1). There are a number of aviation-related complaints reported each year (62 complaints over the same 10-year period) primarily regarding swans occupying areas near runways and taxiways. However, the paucity of agricultural complaints suggests that they are not causing major economic loss in commodity crops. No collisions between swans and aircraft have been reported.

### Swan Hunting Guidelines

Maryland is considered a wintering state in the “[Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans](#),” signed by the flyway councils in 2007. As such, we could be eligible for a percentage of the total number of permits allocated for the eastern population (5,600). Maryland would receive 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.

The tundra swan harvest strategy section of the management plan referenced above details the procedure for “new hunt states” to request a tundra swan season. Requests to Flyway Tech Section and Council need to be made at the winter Atlantic Flyway Tech Section (AFTS) meeting the year prior to initiating a new season to ensure the proper state allocation requests can be calculated by the fall Atlantic Flyway Council meeting. The winter AFTS meeting is scheduled for the week of February 27, 2023 with the fall AFC meeting scheduled for late August/early September 2023. For Maryland, that would mean the 2024-25 season would be the earliest that a hunt could be held.

The new hunting season permit request cannot exceed an estimated 5% harvest rate of the most recent 3-year average of peak seasonal numbers in the new hunt location. New seasons will be

considered experimental for 3 years and harvest will be monitored by a special survey, which will be summarized in an annual report to be provided to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Atlantic Flyway Council. Each state forms a separate Memorandum of Agreement with the USFWS that establishes hunting season evaluation procedures (permits, tags etc.).

Table 1. USDA, APHIS Wildlife Services Tundra Swan Damage Report for Maryland, 08/1/2012 – 8/19/2022.

Resource	Damage	Incidents Reported	Value
Aircraft	Damage threat - none reported	12	none reported
Agriculture	Damage threat - none reported	3	none reported
Human Health and Safety (aviation)	Damage threat - none reported	62	none reported

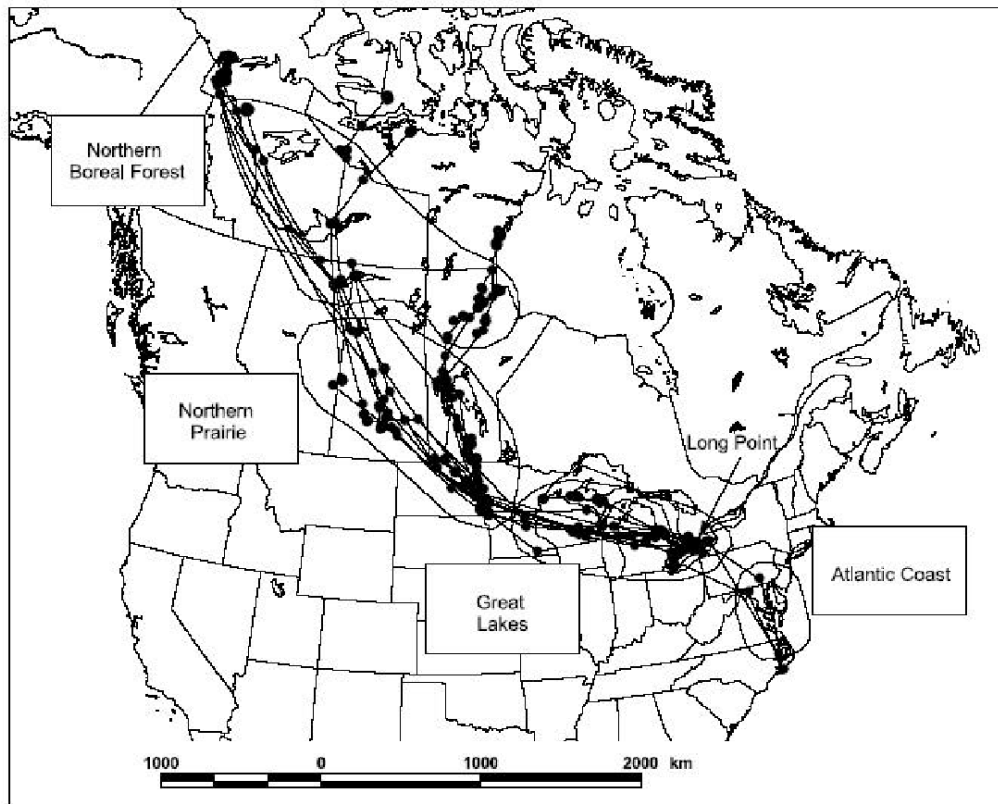


Figure 1. Movement patterns and key migratory stopovers of satellite marked Eastern Population tundra swans (Petrie and Wilcox 2003).

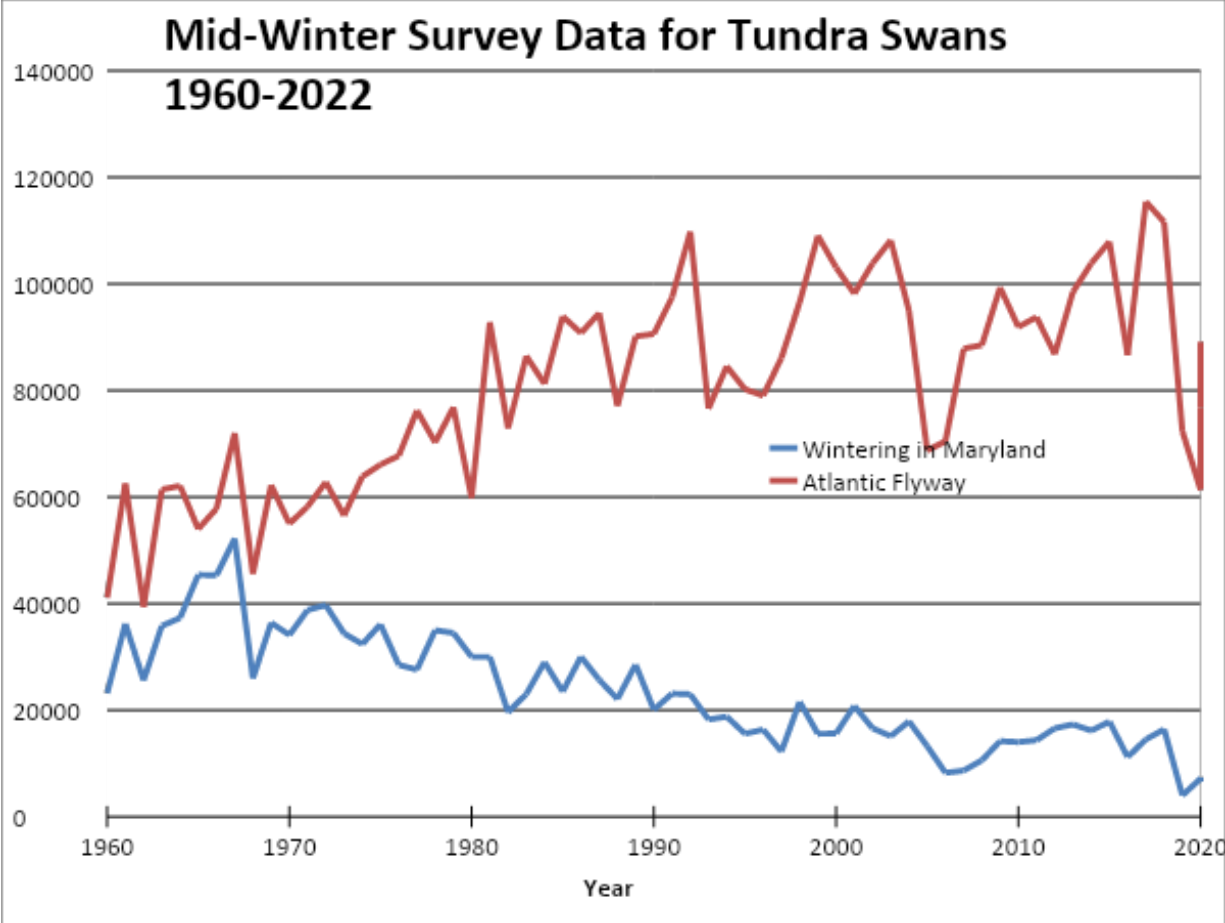


Figure 2. Mid-winter Survey results for Maryland and Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swans (Atlantic Flyway Databook and committee reports)

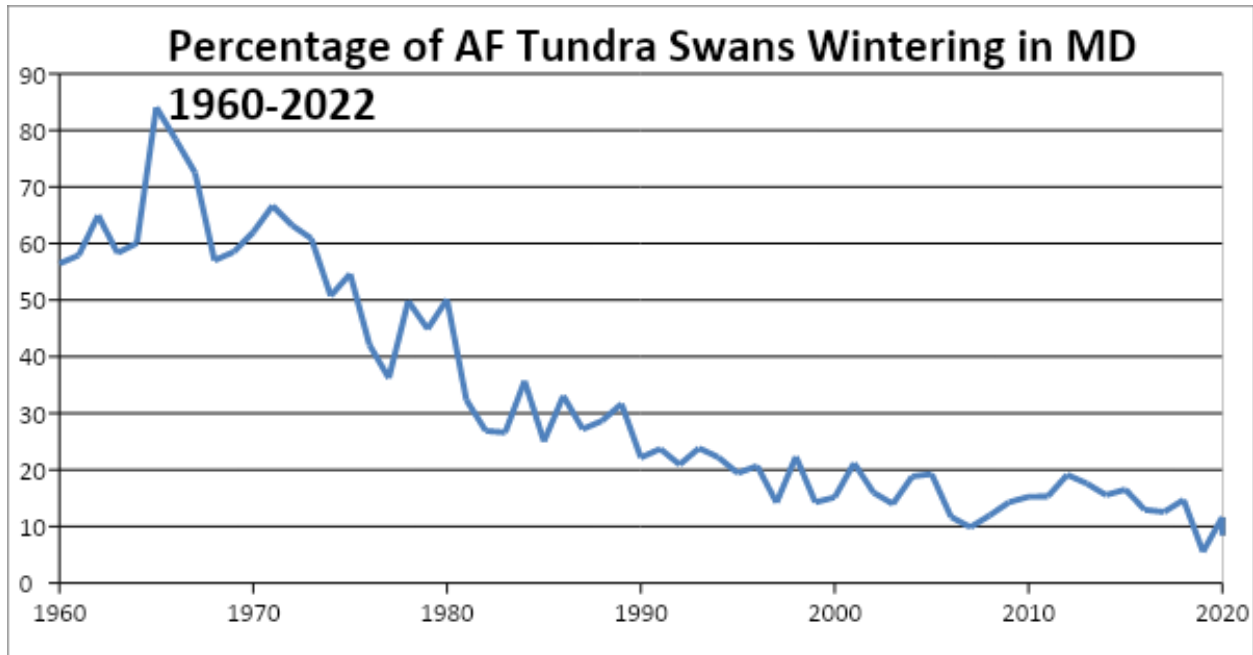


Figure 3. Percentage of Tundra Swans Wintering in Maryland (Atlantic Flyway Databook and AF Committee Reports)

#### **Process and Timeline for Requesting a Tundra Swan Hunting Season**

- 1) Requests to add a tundra swan hunting season must be submitted to the Atlantic Flyway Technical Sections and Council during the winter meeting to initiate the review process. The next winter meeting is scheduled for February 26-March 2, 2023. Requests filed by states at this time allows the AF Technical Section and Council to calculate the number of permits allocated to each state using the most recent 3-year average of the Mid-Winter Survey tundra swan estimate. Permit allocations between states are compiled using the relative percentage of the tundra swan population each state winters. Using current Mid-Winter Survey tundra swan data we estimate Maryland would receive 478 permits with an estimated harvest of around 160-180 birds.
- 2) The USFWS Service Regulation Committee (SRC) reviews information discussed at the winter meeting in April 2023 however this is a non-decisional meeting.
- 3) The Atlantic Flyway Technical Section and Council would consider and vote on the request to have a Tundra Swan hunting season at the summer/fall meeting, which will be held in August or September 2023. The request would include hunt, harvest monitoring, and data collection plans at this point.
- 4) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regulation Committee would also review and vote on this request at their 2023 October decisional meeting. If approved, the measure would be published in the 2024-25 proposed Federal Frameworks, which outline all migratory game bird seasons for state hunting season selections.

- 5) Maryland also has a regulatory process related to hunting seasons. Maryland would need to propose a tundra hunting season during our annual public review process for all migratory game bird seasons. The public review process typically begins with the presentation of all proposed migratory game bird seasons to the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee and Wildlife Advisory Commission in January of each year and concludes with the end of the public comment period in late February of each year. Comments garnered during this process would determine if and when a tundra swan hunting season would be held and the mechanisms that would be used to select and disperse the permits.
- 6) After completion of the public review process, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Department) would present the final season selections to the Wildlife Advisory Commission for a vote then forward Maryland's final migratory game bird season selections (including the tundra swan season) to the USFWS in April 2024. These season selections would be published by the USFWS as "final" in the federal register.

NOTE: Holding a tundra swan season requires hunt states to report annual harvest data to the USFWS. These reporting requirements and the limited number of permits would necessitate the formation of a formal process used to issue individual permits to hunters wishing to acquire a tundra swan hunting permit and to collect their hunting data.

### **Considerations For Tundra Swan Hunting In Maryland**

While the process by which the Department would work with the Atlantic Flyway Council and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not a barrier to obtaining authorization to hold a tundra swan season in Maryland, other factors warrant consideration prior to moving forward. Those considerations include:

- 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).
- Necessity - In some areas of the state, large numbers of tundra swans feed in harvested grain fields. However, data collected by USDA, APHIS Wildlife Services, include few complaints related to tundra swan crop damage in Maryland. A report provided by APHIS showed three crop damage complaints in the last 10 years. There are a number of aviation-related complaints reported each year (66 over the same 10-year period). However, the paucity of agricultural complaints suggests that they are not causing major economic loss in commodity crops.
- Public perception - Cultural views of tundra swans may pose a significant challenge to garnering large-scale public support for opening a hunting season on tundra swans in Maryland.
- Future populations - While the overall tundra swan population has been healthy and stable (80,000) their reproductive effort has been hampered in recent years by late spring thaws on northern Canadian and Alaskan nesting grounds, similar to reduced

reproductive effort experienced by other arctic and sub-arctic nesting waterfowl during this same time (Figure 3.).

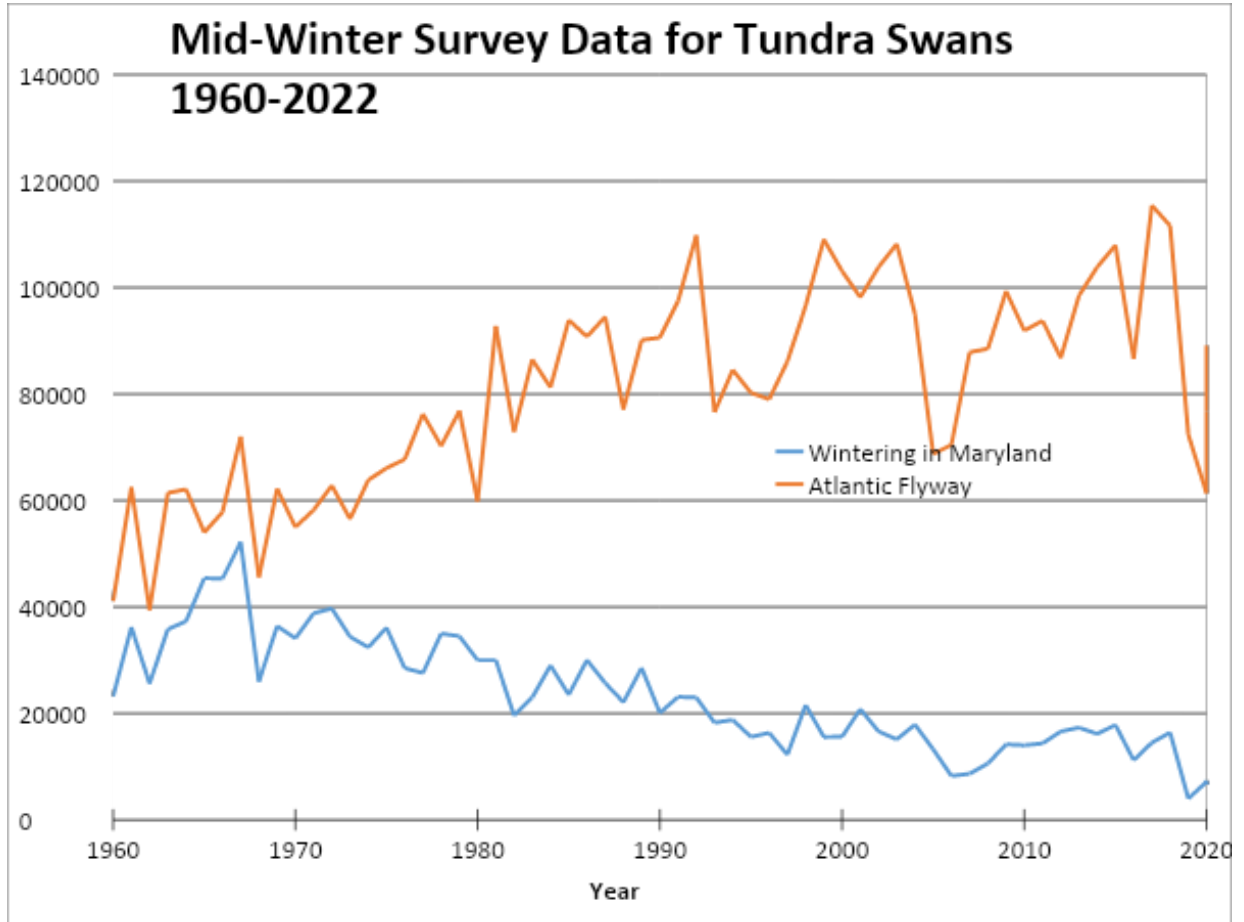


Figure 2. Mid-winter Survey results for Maryland and Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swans (Atlantic Flyway Databook and committee reports)

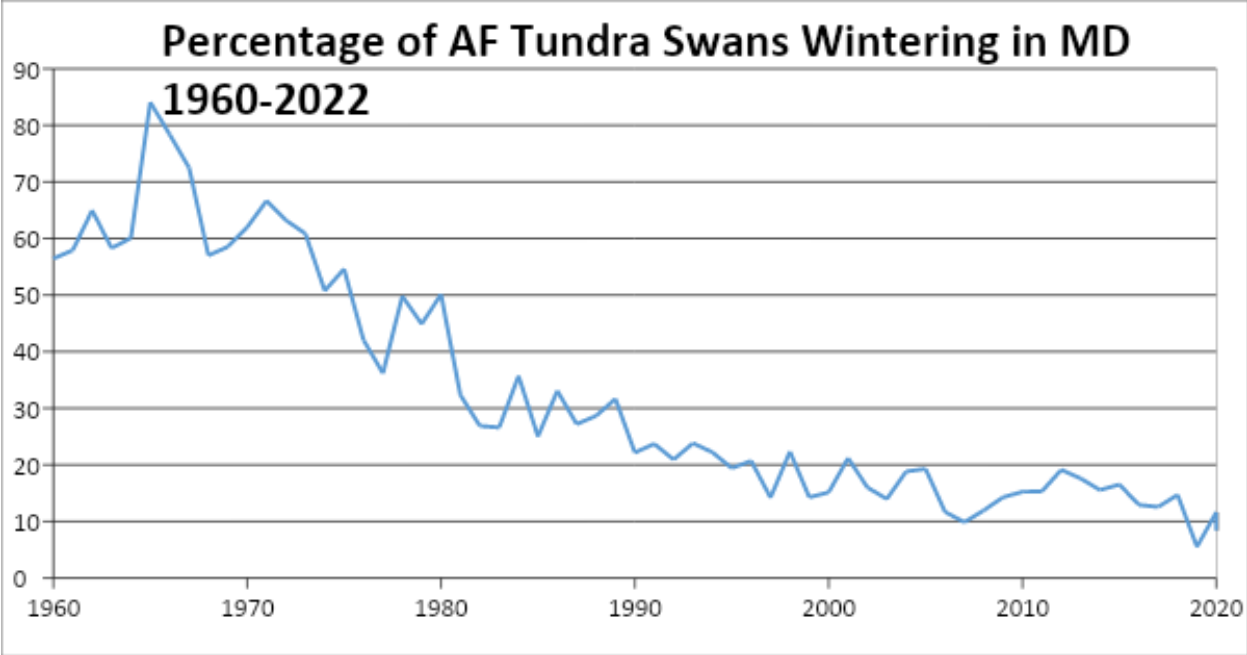


Figure 3. Percentage of Tundra Swans Wintering in Maryland (Atlantic Flyway Databook and AF Committee Reports)

# **HOM Testimony in Support of HB 957 Tundra Swan Hun**

Uploaded by: william miles

Position: FAV





P.O. Box 501  
Huntingtown, Maryland 20639  
[billmilesmd@comcast.net](mailto:billmilesmd@comcast.net)

February 28, 2024

**HONORABLE CHAIR & MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE**

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 957 (Natural Resources --Hunting – Tundra Swans)

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The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND represent the interests of Maryland's hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite 100% of all wildlife management/research costs through their purchase of hunting license fees/ equipment. For the record, hunters do so willingly b/c of **American System of Conservation Funding**, a user-pay model celebrating its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America's original conservationists.

Steve Keithley, Founder (301/785-4774 [[sssbkeith@comcast.net](mailto:sssbkeith@comcast.net)])  
Bill Miles, Advocate (443/404-7449 [[billmilesmd@comcast.net](mailto:billmilesmd@comcast.net)])

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Relevant to the General Assembly's debate on House Bill 957 is the Report presented by DNR pursuant to the General Assembly's 2022 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR) which reads as follows:

**Tundra Swan Hunting Season:** The committees are interested in exploring the possibility of a tundra swan hunting season in Maryland. Therefore, the committees request DNR to submit a report on the status of its work with the U.S. Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct the necessary flyover studies for permit allocation and to establish a fee and application process for licensed hunters. The report is requested to be submitted by October 1, 2022.

DNR responded as shown in the following link: [2022\\_82\(b\).pdf \(state.md.us\)](#)

Accordingly: "Maryland is considered a wintering state in the Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans, signed by the flyway councils in 2007. As such, we could be eligible for a percentage of the total number of permits allocated for the eastern population (5,600). Maryland would receive approximately 478 permits, which would constitute roughly 10% of our 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."

Other factors to be considered if enacted: (1) Maryland would join its neighbors within the Atlantic Flyway --, Virginia, Delaware and North Carolina – which authorize permitted hunting of tundra swans **CONDITIONED ON APPROVAL BY THE USFW**; (2) hunters would likely be eligible for only one permit annually and would be limited to one tundra swan per season; (3) permits would likely be issued through an annual random lottery; (4) all lottery revenues would be credited to the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund (§ 10-209 NR); (5) enhanced opportunities afield is consistent with and responsive to America's 3R initiative, aka, recruitment, retention and reactivation...ways/means to encourage more hunting.

# **Tundra Swan testimony\_2024-0226.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Braun

Position: UNF

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 environmental policy and communications professional, a Maryland Master Naturalist, I live in Calvert County on the Chesapeake Bay.

The Tundra Swan is a spectacular, graceful bird that mates for life, which means that if one is killed it results in much more than a 50% reduction in the number of Tundra Swans, because no more chicks will be born. These magnificent birds nest in the remote Arctic of North America during warmer months and migrate 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 – e.g., disappearing habitat, lead poisoning from spent gun shot, climate change, and oil and gas drilling in the Arctic -- the population of Tundra Swans wintering in Maryland has plummeted precipitously 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 percentage of Tundra Swans in the [Atlantic Flyway](#) has fallen from as high as 80% in the 1960s to about 8% in 2020 – representing a decline from more than 50,000 to just 7,000 Tundra Swans 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 know of one person who saw a lone Tundra Swan last year.

Given the trend, it is clear that these elegant creatures should be protected – not hunted!

I urge you to vote **against** HB 957, which would allow hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland.

Sincerely yours,

David Braun  
2417 Acacia Road, Port Republic, MD 20676  
Dbraun7247@yahoo.com  
[703-258-4998](tel:703-258-4998)

# **Opposition to HB0957.pdf**

Uploaded by: Diana Colangelo

Position: UNF

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

**HB957\_UNF\_HSUS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: UNF



## THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

February 28, 2024

Bill: HB 957 – Tundra swan hunting season  
Committee: House Committee of Environment and Transportation  
Position: OPPOSE

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the House Committee of Environment and Transportation:

We submit this testimony in opposition to HB 957, which would require the Maryland DNR to establish an annual tundra swan hunting season if authorized by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. There is no justification for opening up Maryland's tundra swans to hunting just to provide a new opportunity for a very small number of hunters,<sup>1</sup> and doing so could put Maryland's recovering trumpeter swans at risk of accidental kills.

### **Trumpeter swans in Maryland could be killed by hunters shooting at lookalike tundra swans.**

In June of 2023, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources prohibited the hunting of trumpeter swans in the state, after hunters of tundra swans went far over the allowable quota for killing of lookalike trumpeter swans for four years in a row.<sup>2</sup> Even experienced birders have noted that it is difficult to distinguish between trumpeter and tundra swans, both of whom have black beaks with only small differences in coloration.<sup>3</sup> Trumpeter swans have been sighted in Maryland and northern Virginia.<sup>4</sup>

The largest and one of the heaviest of North America's native waterfowl, trumpeter swans were nearly driven to extinction by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by market hunting and habitat loss. While these magnificent birds have begun to make a recovery because of protection from hunting, they continue to face myriad risks from lead poisoning due to ingestion of lead sinkers and spent shot, collisions with power lines, loss of habitat, diseases such as avian influenza, the effects of climate change, and illegal shooting.<sup>5</sup> A tundra swan hunting season in our state would add yet another, entirely unnecessary and completely avoidable hazard that this iconic species could face.

---

<sup>1</sup> Only 10 U.S. states (Alaska, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Virginia) currently allow the hunting of tundra swans.

<sup>2</sup> "Utah Wildlife board votes to prohibit harvest of trumpeter swans, approves other changes to upland game and turkey hunting." The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, June 9, 2023. <https://wildlife.utah.gov/news/utah-wildlife-news/1691-wildlife-board-prohibits-trumpeter-swan-harvest-and-approves-changes-to-upland-game-and-turkey-hunting.html>; Maffly, B. "Utah to ban hunting trumpeter swans, North America's largest bird." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 2023. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/environment/2023/05/05/utah-ban-hunting-trumpeter-swans/>

<sup>3</sup> The Trumpeter Swan Society: "Which Swan Species Did You See?" <https://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/swan-information/identification/overview.html>

<sup>4</sup> Cher Muzyk: "Rare trumpeter swans spotted locally late into spring." *Prince William Times*, May 6, 2022 [https://www.princewilliamtimes.com/news/rare-trumpeter-swans-spotted-locally-late-into-spring/article\\_75a84d9a-cc8a-11ec-9bd6-7379f8422e7e.html](https://www.princewilliamtimes.com/news/rare-trumpeter-swans-spotted-locally-late-into-spring/article_75a84d9a-cc8a-11ec-9bd6-7379f8422e7e.html); Hugh Vandervoort, "Rare Trumpeter Swans Breeding in Maryland." *Patch*, June 1, 2022 <https://patch.com/maryland/annapolis/rare-trumpeter-swans-breeding-maryland>; Timothy B. Wheeler: "Trumpeter swans add flourish to Patuxent Refuge's winter." *Bay Journal*, March 19, 2018 [https://www.bayjournal.com/archives/trumpeter-swans-add-flourish-to-patuxent-refuge-s-winter/article\\_3b411a8a-d6b5-5af5-bc24-724bb2bca69f.html](https://www.bayjournal.com/archives/trumpeter-swans-add-flourish-to-patuxent-refuge-s-winter/article_3b411a8a-d6b5-5af5-bc24-724bb2bca69f.html)

<sup>5</sup> Audubon: "Trumpeter Swan" at <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/trumpeter-swan>; The Trumpeter Swan Society: "Top 10 Threats to Trumpeter Swans" at <https://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/swan-information/threats-to-trumpeter-swans/top-10-threats-to-trumpeter-swans.html>.



## THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

**Maryland's wildlife is worth far more alive than dead, there is no justification for adding another species to be hunted.**

Recent landmark research led by Colorado State University titled the “America’s Wildlife Values Project” found that animal welfare has become an increasingly important concern for the general public, and the number of those who value wildlife as “part of their extended social network” has grown.<sup>6</sup> In that study, more Marylanders identified with a “mutualist” view that favors coexistence with wildlife, than a “traditionalist” view that wildlife should be used and management for human benefit. And more than 67% of Maryland residents surveyed agreed that their state should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.

In its recently released *2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that non-consumptive public land users outnumber and outspend hunters by a wide margin nationwide. Wildlife watchers now outspend hunters by almost 6 to 1 (5.54 to 1) and outnumber hunters 10 to 1.<sup>7</sup>

Maryland’s non-consumptive public land users outnumber and outspend hunters and trappers by a wide margin. The National Park Service reports, “In 2022, 5.8 million park visitors spent an estimated \$199 million in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands in Maryland. These expenditures supported a total of 2,360 jobs, \$104 million in labor income, \$172 million in value added, and \$276 million in economic output in the Maryland economy.”<sup>8</sup>

And according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis-Dept. of Commerce, outdoor recreation in Maryland generated more than \$8 billion for the state’s economy in 2022. Of that figure, hunting and trapping generated 1%, while spending for RVing was more than three times that. And people spent more than 33 times as much on travel and tourism in Maryland than was spent on hunting and trapping (Fig. 1).<sup>9</sup>

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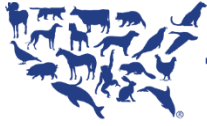
<sup>6</sup> Manfredo, M.J., Sullivan, L., Don Carlos, A.W., Dietsch, A.M., Teel, T.L., Bright, A.D., & Bruskotter, J. (2018). *America’s Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.* National report from the research project entitled “America’s Wildlife Values.” Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Sep. 2023), *2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. <https://digitalmedia.fws.gov/digital/collection/document/id/2321/rec/1>

<sup>8</sup> National Park Service. (2022). National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis: Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2022. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>





**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Fig. 1. Outdoor recreation spending in Maryland (2022 data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)

Outdoor recreation spending in Maryland (2022) From: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis		
Sample activities	Spending (in thousands of dollars)	% of total
Hunting and trapping	83,257	1
RVing	270,224	3.3
Other outdoor recreation	1,860,536	22.5
Travel and tourism	2,767,709	33.5
Total Outdoor Recreation	8,263,326	100.00

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that in 2023, only 1.9% of Maryland residents were paid hunting license holders.<sup>10</sup> There is no reason to allow the hunting of tundra swans, and put trumpeter swans at risk, simply to provide additional recreational activities for a tiny percentage of the state's population.

We therefore ask that you issue an unfavorable report for HB 957 to authorize the hunting of tundra swans in Maryland. Thank you again for the opportunity to share these comments.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel  
Maryland State Director  
The Humane Society of the United States  
[jbevandangel@humanesociety.org](mailto:jbevandangel@humanesociety.org)

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2023). Hunting Licenses, Holders, and Costs by Apportionment Year. <https://us-east-1.quicksight.aws.amazon.com/sn/accounts/329180516311/dashboards/48b2aa9c-43a9-4ea6-887e-5465bd70140b>

**Tundra Testimony 022324.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Anderson

Position: UNF

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,

John Ward Anderson  
14955 Deer Haven Place  
Newburg, MD 20664  
[jwetel@yahoo.com](mailto:jwetel@yahoo.com)  
+1-240-393-0982

CC: Sponsors of HB 957  
District Reps

# **Tundra Swan testimony Feb 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kathy Daniel

Position: UNF

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 environmental policy and communications professional, a Maryland Master Naturalist, and a Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional. I live in Calvert County on the Chesapeake Bay.

The Tundra Swan is a spectacular, graceful bird that mates for life, which means that if one is killed it results in much more than a 50% reduction in the number of Tundra Swans, because no more chicks will be born. These magnificent birds nest in the remote Arctic of North America during warmer months and migrate 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 – e.g., disappearing habitat, lead poisoning from spent gun shot, climate change, and oil and gas drilling in the Arctic -- the population of Tundra Swans wintering in Maryland has plummeted precipitously 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 percentage of Tundra Swans in the [Atlantic Flyway](#) has fallen from as high as 80% in the 1960s to about 8% in 2020 – representing a decline from more than 50,000 to just 7,000 Tundra Swans 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 know of one person who saw a lone Tundra Swan last year.

Given the trend, it is clear that these elegant creatures should be protected – not hunted!

I urge you to vote **against** HB 957, which would allow hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Daniel

2417 Acacia Rd

Port Republic, MD 20676

[kdaniel20816@gmail.com](mailto:kdaniel20816@gmail.com)

301-906-3337

CC: Sponsors of HB 957

District Representative Mark Fisher

# **MOS HB0957 Tundra Swan Hunt.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kurt Schwarz

Position: UNF



February 28, 2024

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB0957: Natural Resources – Hunting – Tundra Swans**

**Position: Oppose HB0957**

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS), American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and Safe Skies Maryland (SSM) strongly opposes HB0957, and urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report. This bill would establish a hunt for Tundra Swans, and a lottery system for that hunt.

MOS, ABC, and SSM feel a hunt for Tundra Swans is inopportune, and unwarranted. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) winter surveys of waterfowl have shown a steady and significant decline in the wintering population from 1970 to present. Numbers have declined from about 50,000 in the late 1960s to as low as 6000 in 2021. Numbers climbed slightly in 2022 to about 9000, but that hardly reverses the steady downward trend.

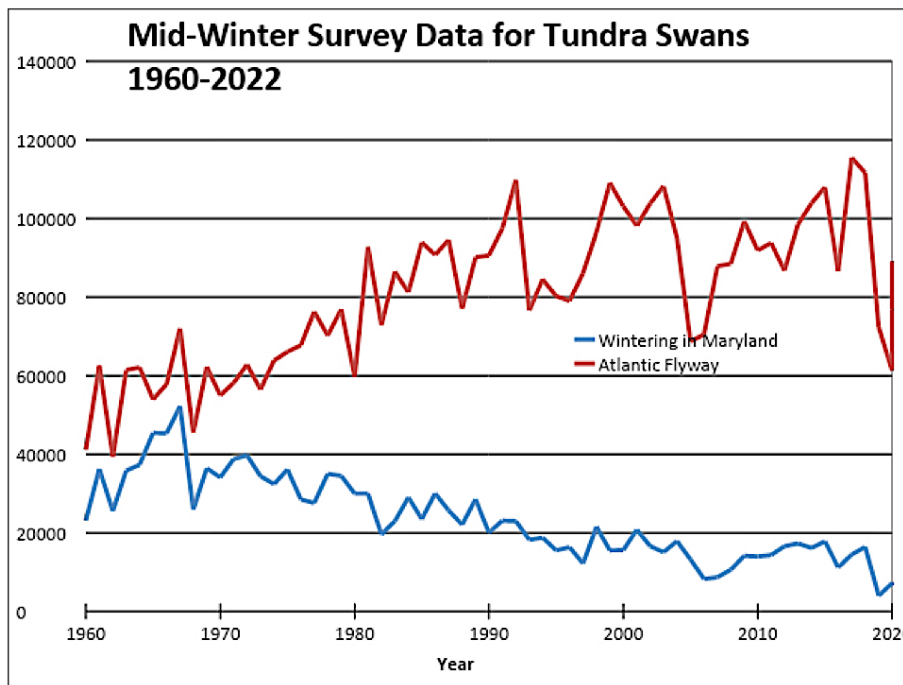


Figure 1 Mid-winter Survey results for Maryland and Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swans (Atlantic Flyway Databook and committee reports)

The percentage of total Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swans wintering in Maryland has fallen from a peak of over 80% in the 1960s to around 10% in 2020. With declining numbers in Maryland, another source of mortality for the swans cannot be allowed. DNR also notes the Tundra Swans present virtually no threat to agriculture or aviation.<sup>1</sup>

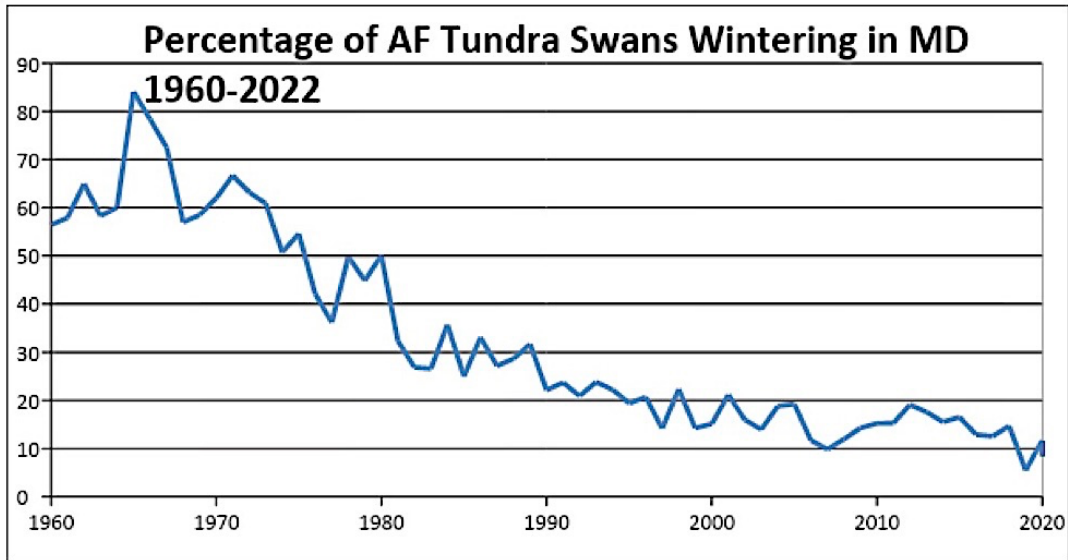


Figure 2. Percentage of Tundra Swans Wintering in Maryland (Atlantic Flyway Databook and AF Committee Reports)

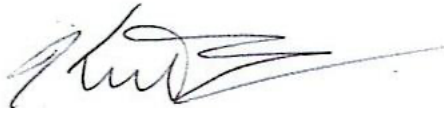
Tundra Swans are an iconic species, a part of the winter landscape in Maryland. The public enjoys seeing numbers of them at Eastern Neck and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuges, or on harvested fields on the Eastern Shore. Birders who travel to see swans spend money on gas, food, souvenirs, etc., generating economic activity on both the Eastern and Western Shores in the off-season. Furthermore, the Tundra Swan is displayed on the logo of our organization.

Another concern about permitting Tundra Swan hunting is the increasing numbers of Trumpeter Swans in Maryland. Indeed, Trumpeters have successfully nested in Maryland since at least 2022. Two pairs have produced young in Anne Arundel County, another pair on Hart-Miller Island in Baltimore County has also produced young. Trumpeters are difficult for even experienced birders to tell from Tundras. We submit a hunter in a blind, with just seconds to react, is even less capable of distinguishing a Trumpeter from a Tundra. Trumpeter Swans are a protected species in both the United States and Canada.

Mos, ABC and SSM do not oppose waterfowl hunting. We recognize hunting as a valid wildlife management tool and form of recreation. A hunting season for Tundra Swans, however, is not warranted at this time due to declining wintering population and concerns of protecting the nascent Trumpeter Swan population. We urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,





Kurt R. Schwarz  
Conservation Chair Emeritus  
Maryland Ornithological Society



E. Hardy Kern III  
Director of Government Relations  
American Bird Conservancy



Mark Southerland PhD  
Legislative Director  
Safe Skies Maryland

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Tundra Swan Hunting Season, 2023,  
[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2022/2022\\_82\(b\).pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2022/2022_82(b).pdf)

# **Natural Resources – Hunting – Tundra Swans - HB 95**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: UNF



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

February 28, 2024

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee  
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
Re: Natural Resources - Hunting - Tundra Swans – HB 957- Oppose

Chair Korman, Vice - Chair Boyce, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across the State of Maryland, I respectfully ask that the House Environment & Transportation Committee give an unfavorable vote to Natural Resources - Hunting - Tundra Swans – HB 957.

This bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to establish an annual tundra swan hunting season if authorized by federal law; requiring the Department to request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorize an annual tundra swan hunting season in the State and provide the Department with a certain number of permits to take tundra swan annually; requiring the Department to distribute tundra swan permits annually using a lottery-based system under certain circumstances; and generally relating to a tundra swan hunt in the State.

Tundra Swans are monogamous, and a mated pair will remain together for life. Therefore, killing one of a pair impacts the mate, as well.

Maryland Votes for Animals opposes adding this species to the list of birds killed during a hunting season. Tundra Swans are monogamous, and a mated pair will remain together for life. Therefore, killing one of a pair impacts the mate and the possibility of having future offspring. Very few states allow the hunting of Tundra Swans. Maryland already has a robust list of birds to hunt without adding this species.

I urge the committee to give HB 957 an unfavorable vote.

# **Oppose HB0957 Hunting Tundra Swans.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maureen Fine

Position: UNF

Committee—Environment and Transportation

Sponsored by Delegates Hornberger, Griffith, A. Johnson, S. Johnson, Schmidt, and Tomlinson

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 957 which would allow hunting of Tundra Swans in Maryland. There are not enough of these majestic birds in our state to allow hunting, and their numbers are declining.

Statistics show us that the number of birders in MD is much higher than the combined fishing/hunting segment (<https://birdersguidemddc.org/about-us/birding-economics/>). “The number of birders is much higher than the combined fishing/hunting participants (934 thousand versus 426 thousand for fishing and 88 thousand for hunters). Birders spend more on their activities than hunters (\$264 million), but less than anglers (\$535 million).”

Even more important than the contributions to MD’s economy made by bird related activities, in 2019 - the number of nesting midwinter Tundra swans in Md. (recorded by the DNR) was 4000, down from 17,800 in 2015. With the biodiversity loss that we are experiencing, it makes no sense to hunt this elegant bird whose numbers have already declined so precipitously.

Tundra Swans pair for life; if one member is shot the other likely will not find another partner for the rest of its life. The remaining partner very often can die from a broken heart after their mate dies. Swans have been known to be with a new mate if their first mate has been gone for a long time, but it may take years. This does not bode well for replenishment of the species. These birds deserve full protection in Maryland.

**Please vote against HB0957.**

Maureen Fine

2509 Knighthill Lane

Bowie, MD 20715

Volunteer-Prince George’s County Audubon Wildlife Habitat Advisor Program,

Prince George’s County Sierra Club, Maryland Master Naturalist

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# **Opposition to HB957.pdf**

Uploaded by: Molly Moore

Position: UNF



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