

What is the legal status of Mute Swans?

Federal protection for the exotic mute swan was removed by the Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act in 2004. This occurred because mute swans are not native. Native tundra and trumpeter swans remain protected.

In Indiana, mute swans are currently protected, so a permit is required to possess a live mute swan or to kill one. Live birds must be pinioned (made flightless) and kept in an enclosure that prevents their escape into the wild.

What do other states do to control Mute Swans?

Many states enforce removal policies for mute swans. Below are a few specific examples.

Maryland: Personnel from Maryland's DNR have lethally removed hundreds of mute swans from Chesapeake Bay, due largely to concerns regarding the removal of aquatic plants by the swans, as well as

due to direct conflicts with species of conservation concern.

Michigan: Michigan has the largest mute swan population in the US. The Michigan Natural Resources Commission recently gave the Michigan DNR authority to reduce mute swans to prevent interference with native species (including but not limited to threatened and endangered species) and to protect public health, safety and welfare.

Ohio: Personnel from Ohio DNR have lethally removed 50-60 mute swans per year from public lands in northern Ohio for the past several years. Private land owners are also issued permits to remove mute swans. In addition, egg addling occurs on many of the large marinas in northern Ohio.

Wisconsin: Wisconsin has an aggressive removal policy, supported by such groups as the state's waterfowlers, the Izaak Walton League, and Wisconsin Audubon. Their policy is statewide elimination, including shooting where feasible and egg addling where public sensitivity or safety preclude shooting. They also issue permits to private landowners for swan removal. There are currently about 600 free-flying mute swans in Wisconsin, and these aggressive policies have slowed, but not stopped, the population growth.

What is the Indiana DNR doing about Mute Swans?

On private property and public freshwater lakes, the DNR will issue free permits to lake associations and landowners to take adult mute swans and/or to destroy nests. In addition, the DNR is taking measures to control mute swans on state-owned properties.

How can I get more information?

For more information on mute swans, contact your local district wildlife biologist (www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/2716.htm).



The Mute Swan in Indiana



Photo: J. Mosesso/NBII

There are three swan species in Indiana, two of which are native. The mute swan, an alien species introduced from Europe, is now a resident in Indiana.

2011, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife

What is a swan?

Swans in North America are large, white birds that are closely related to geese and ducks. They eat mostly plants but will also eat snails and other aquatic invertebrates.

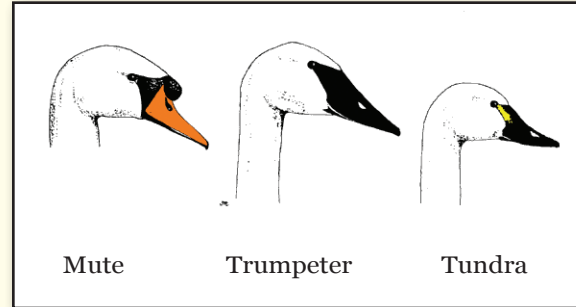
What swans are in Indiana?

Only the mute swan breeds in Indiana. However, two other native species of swan migrate through and/or spend the winter in Indiana.

The tundra swan, the smallest swan to occur in Indiana, breeds in Arctic areas in Canada and Alaska. They are fairly common in Indiana in the fall and winter as they pass through to their wintering areas, such as the Chesapeake Bay. There is limited hunting on tundra swans in many states.

The trumpeter swan, the largest North American swan, breeds in Canada and many northern states, including Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio. It has the smallest population of the native swans, but it is recovering very well. Trumpeters are not hunted in the US.

How do I tell Mute Swans from native swans?



Graphic: The Trumpeter Swan Society

The Mute Swan:

- Is the only swan with an orange bill
- Is the only swan likely to be in areas frequented by people
- Is the only swan in Indiana in summer
- Is the only swan that usually carries its neck in a strongly-curved S-shape while swimming

Native Swans:

- Have solid black bills, often with a small yellow area near the eye
- Are unlikely to be in heavily inhabited areas
- Spend the summer outside of Indiana
- Usually swim with their necks straight or only slightly curved

What's so bad about Mute Swans?

Mute Swans Are Not Native.

Mute swans are native to Europe and Asia, and were released in the US as an ornamental species. Native plants and animals are not adapted to mute swans.

Mute Swans Damage Native Ecosystems.

Mute swans require eight pounds of aquatic plants for food every day, and destroy much more while feeding. These plants would normally be available for native waterfowl, such as migrating ducks, and other wildlife. They destroy both underwater plants and plants at the water's edge, so they affect both food supplies and cover for native species. They tend to select higher-quality native plants, leaving aquatic weeds to expand in the area.

Native fish and other aquatic animals require aquatic plants as nursery habitat that provides cover for their young. These aquatic plants are also habitat for invertebrates that serve as food for fish, birds, and other animals. Reduction in these native plants can cause population declines in fish and other wildlife.

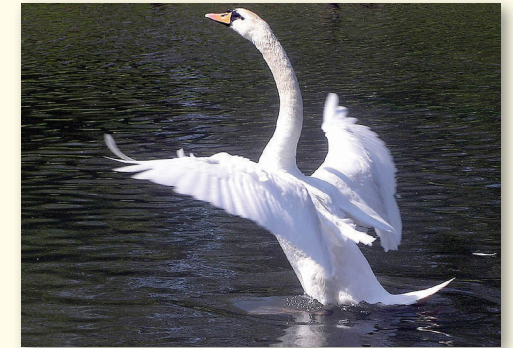


Photo: Adrian Pingstone

Mute Swans Are Aggressive.

Mute swans are known to attack other animals, including ducks, geese and other birds. During the nesting season, they will also come out of the water onto land to drive off people or pets that enter their territories. They can be dangerous to the elderly or children.

But don't Mute Swans keep geese away?

No. Mute swans may keep a single pair of geese off of a pond for a short time, but geese often occur on the same bodies of water as mute swans. Furthermore, mute swans come with their own problems. They are larger and more aggressive than Canada geese, and they cause more environmental damage than Canada geese.