

Mute swan

Cygnus olor

Description

Introduced to North America from Europe in the mid-1800s to adorn city parks and large estates. The first feral mute swans was introduced to MI in 1919 in Charlevoix County. The population in MI is approximately 15,500 as of 2010.

Identification

Adults are the only swan with an orange bill and have a black knob on the top of their bill, their neck curves like an "S". Adults grow to 55-63 in (140-160 cm) long and have a wingspan of 79-94 in (200-240 cm). Males average 24-26 lbs while females average 19-20 lbs making them one of the heaviest flying birds. Bright white in color. Young birds are not white and their bills are dull greyish-black.

Habitat

Can be found in freshwater ponds, slow rivers, coastal bays and inland lakes.

Reproduction





Breed at the age of 3 and remain with the same mate for life. Territory takes up 4-10 acres in size, nests are large (4 ft by 4 ft). An average of 4-6 eggs are laid in a 3-4 in depression in the nest center and incubated by the female for 36-38 days. They have a lifespan of 20-30 years.

Impact

Dangerous to humans (very aggressive), they drive out native waterfowl and other wetland wildlife with their hostile behavior, they destroy wetland habitat by consuming 4-8 lbs of plants a day which are a main food source for native birds and cover for native fish and invertebrates.

Similar

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) has an all black bill and is native; Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) is much smaller, with an all black bill and is also native.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Egg and nest destruction; live capture and euthanized by veterinarian; live capture and inhalation of carbon dioxide; live capture and injection of euthanasia drugs; live capture and cervical dislocation; capture with Alpha Chloralose; single shot to the head with approved firearm approved in permit.

Credits

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