



• Indiana Department of Natural Resources

• Start voice input

Mute Swan Questions & Answers

- **What is so bad about mute swans?**

Mute swans destroy native, underwater aquatic plants and wetland vegetation as they forage. Mute swans also use this vegetation, which would normally be available for native waterfowl and wildlife to use, to build their nests. This native vegetation is important because it preserves water quality, stabilizes shorelines, and provides native fish and wildlife cover, including nursery habitat for their young. Aquatic plants are also habitat for invertebrates that serve as food for fish, birds, and other animals. Reduction in these native plants due to mute swans can cause population declines in fish and other wildlife.

Mute swans are one of the most aggressive waterfowl species and can injure or displace native wildlife; they have also been known to directly kill the young of other species. Adult mute swans may become especially aggressive toward people and pets in areas where they have become accustomed to food handouts. During nesting and rearing of young, they often drive off people, pets, and other waterfowl that enter their territories. Mute swans have even knocked people from their boat and drowned them.

- **Don't mute swans keep Canada geese away?**

No. Mute swans may keep a single pair of Canada geese off a pond for a short time, but Canada geese often occupy 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. They may also push more Canada geese onto land.

- **What can I do about mute swans?**

The DNR will issue [free permits](#) to public properties to legally take mute swans, render eggs incapable of hatching, or to destroy nests in public areas. Resident landowners and tenants do not need a permit from the DNR to legally take mute swans that are causing damage or posing a health or safety threat to people or domestic animals on their own land.

Use abatement techniques. Abatement must be used frequently if chosen as a site-specific management strategy. On a broad scale, control methods, such as deterrents, relocation, and sterilization, have not proven to be effective. Mute swans that have been relocated will cause the same problems in a new location and will reproduce elsewhere.

Sterilization is cost-prohibitive, causes undue stress on the animal, and those animals will continue to negatively affect habitat and native wildlife.

Do not feed mute swans because doing so will encourage mute swans to remain in the area. Be mindful of incidental feeding, an example of which is spillage from birdfeeders.

- **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 because mute swans are not native to this country. Native tundra and state endangered trumpeter swans remain protected. In Indiana, mute swans are currently protected under state law, so a permit is required to take a mute swan from public property. Live mute swans can be possessed without a permit but must be pinioned (made flightless) and kept in an enclosure that prevents their escape into the wild. Mute swan populations are healthy in their native ranges of Europe and Asia and are not of high conservation concern.

- **If I have mute swans on my private pond or property owned by me that are attempting to nest, have hatched young, or are aggressive, what can I legally do?**

On your personal property, you may deter the birds, destroy nests, and legally take mute swans without a permit from Indiana DNR, following local ordinances. If mute swans are on public water adjacent to your private property, permits must be secured to lethally remove the birds; however, they can be discouraged without a permit if the mute swans are not harmed.

- **Mute swans are nesting on public water, so what can be done?**

Nests can be destroyed prior to eggs being laid, when no permit is needed. Once eggs are in the nest, then a permit through the Indiana DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife must be obtained before disturbing the eggs.

- **There are aggressive mute swans defending nests and/or young on the public water that I live on or visit. What are the options to remove the adults (and young, if present)?**

In situations in which mute swan aggression is not resolved by removing the nest and eggs or deterring the adults, you should work with the lake association or local property owners association to seek a permit through the Indiana DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife to euthanize the adults (and young, if present). The mute swans must be euthanized by individuals approved by the lake or property owners association. A permit can only be issued to someone with the legal authority to represent lake and property owners on the property in question (e.g., HOA, Property Manager, etc.).

- **I have mute swans on my property or on the public water where I live/recreate. Can the mute swans be trapped and relocated to another location?**

Because mute swans are an invasive species and can create conflicts, the DNR recommends euthanizing the mute swans instead of relocating them.

Doc:DNRqandamuteswans