

Hotline to Report Dead, Sick, or Injured Swans

OLYMPIA The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has re-established a hotline to report dead, sick, or injured swans in three northwest Washington counties as part of its ongoing effort to assess the impact of lead poisoning on trumpeter and tundra swans.

State wildlife managers ask that people call (360) 466-4345, ext. 266 to report dead, sick, or injured swans in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. Callers should be prepared to leave a short detailed message including their name and phone number, along with the location and condition of the swans.

The hotline is available 24 hours a day through the end of March [2018].

Some trumpeter and tundra swans in those three counties and in southwestern British Columbia die each winter from lead poisoning after ingesting lead shot in areas where they feed.

Lead shot has been banned for waterfowl hunting in Washington for more than two decades, but the risk to swans remains. The birds can still pick up and ingest lead shot while foraging in shallow underwater areas, in fields and roosts where lead shot is still present.

Swans are also vulnerable to collisions with power lines.

"People who observe dead, sick, or injured swans are advised not to handle or collect the birds," said Paul DeBruyn, WDFW waterfowl biologist for Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Instead, people should call the hotline, he said. WDFW and Puget Sound Energy employees, as well as volunteers from the Trumpeter Swan Society, will pick up the birds.

WDFW and other agencies and organizations have been working since 2001 to locate sources of toxic lead.