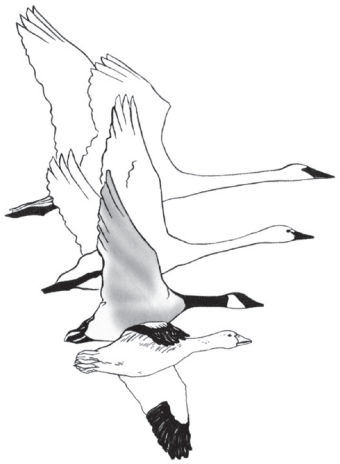


Swan & Goose Identification

It's Important to Know

VOICE

One of the very best ways to identify swan species, as well as goose species, are calls: **an absolute method of species identification**.

Trumpeter: Resonant, sonorous, loud, low-pitched, bugle like call.

Tundra: High pitched often quavering OO-OO-OO accentuated in the middle; or who, who-ho: woo-oo-woo; or who-who.

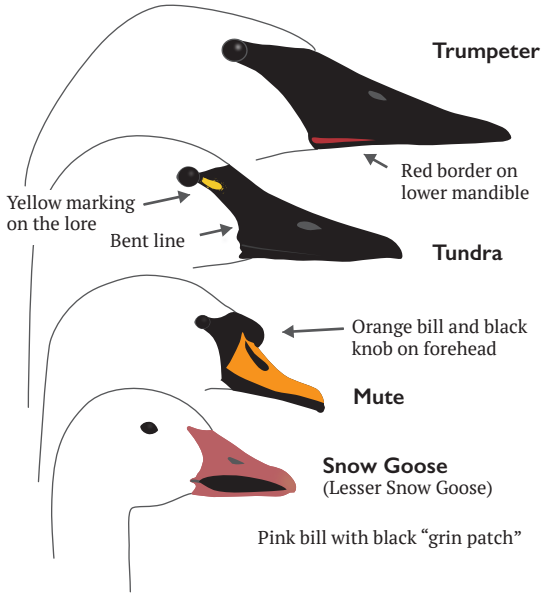
Mute: Generally silent but not 'mute'; hissing sounds are common and occasional snorting noises.

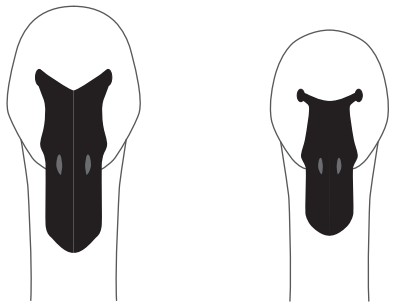
Canada Geese: Loud ha-lank, ha-lonk. Also barks and cackles.

Snow geese: High pitched awu-unk, awu-unk and kuk, kuk, kuk.

Reports from wildlife watchers and hunters help wildlife biologists to better understand swan population trends, habitat use, and provide better management for Trumpeter (*Cygnus buccinator*) and Tundra Swans (*C. columbianus*). Positive identification is important, as Trumpeters often mix with Tundra Swans throughout their migration and winter range.

The Mute Swan (*C. olor*) is an introduced Eurasian species that occurs in North America both in captive aviculture collections and in the wild primarily along the east coast, Great Lakes, California, and in other limited areas of the United States and Western British Columbia. It is included here for clarification in those areas where it occurs with our native Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. In Washington State it is important to report all Mute Swan sightings.





Trumpeter
V-shaped forehead

Tundra
U-shaped forehead

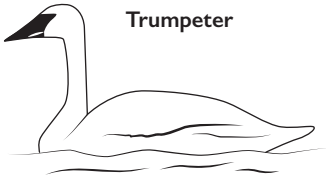
On the Water

Trumpeters, afloat, on shore, resting, or in a mild state of alertness, generally have the neck kinked back at the base so that it appears to rise from the forepart of the back forming a reverse angular C-shape (swimming swan) rather than from the very front of the body as in Tundra swans.

In general, body postures of trumpeters are angular and tundra postures are curved or round.

Mutes generally hold the neck curved gracefully and bill pointed somewhat downward. Wings may be arched over back giving a bulky appearance.

Note size comparison–especially the length of neck–between swans and geese. See flying, standing, and swimming graphics throughout this brochure.







HUNTERS

Please exercise caution while hunting Snow and Canada Geese. Swans and American white pelicans may mix with these geese and in the excitement of the hunt, shooting mistakes can occur. Trumpeter and Tundra swans are protected in Washington and many other states.

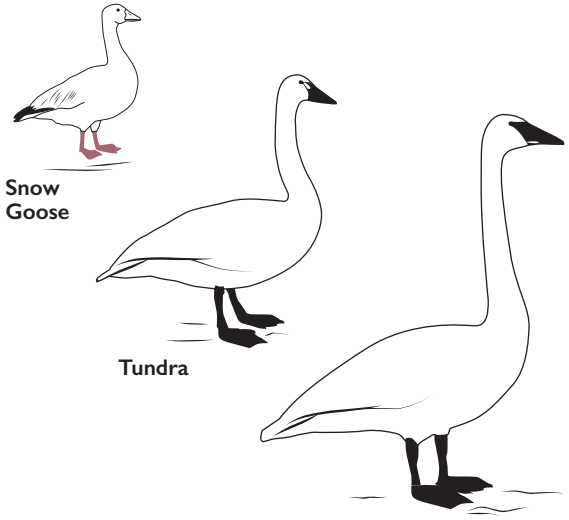
Use Non-Lead Shot While Hunting.

Proportions of the neck to body length

Trumpeter swans have longer necks in proportion to their body lengths than tundras. There is no standard ratio formula, but this is a noticeable characteristic when the birds are either standing or swimming. It is not reliable in flight. If you laid the neck of a Trumpeter back across their back, the bill would extend beyond the tail feathers. A Tundra bill will be shorter than their tail feathers.

SIZE INFORMATION

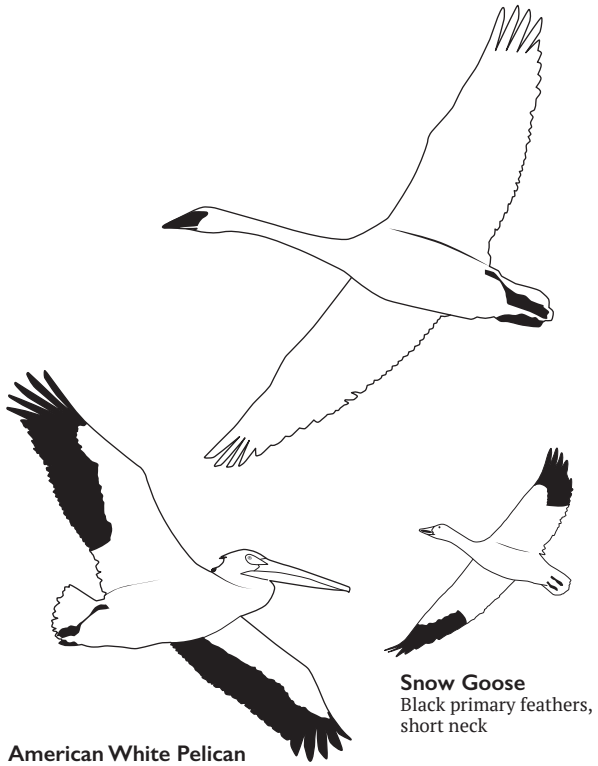
	Wing Span	Weight	Length
Trumpeter	84-100 in.	21-30 lbs.	60 in.
Tundra	72-80 in.	13-18 lbs.	52 in.
Mute	82-94 in.	20-30 lbs.	57 in.
Snow Goose	48-54 in.	4-7 lbs.	27 in.



Flight Profiles and Takeoff Behavior

All Swans must run to takeoff. Trumpeters need about 35-40 feet, Tundras a bit less.

All geese and dabbling ducks (mallards, etc) can jump up directly from land or water and take flight. Most diving ducks (bufflehead, mergansers, etc) need to run on the water to take flight.



Note the differences in size and color between swans, snow geese and white pelicans.

Swans are large all-white (adults) or gray (juvenile) birds with a wing span of 6 to 8 feet.

Snow geese of all ages have black wing tips and a wing span of about 4½ feet.

White Pelicans have black primary and secondary feathers and wing's trailing edge, and a wing span of 8 to 11 feet. Their bills are long, prominent, and vivid yellow-orange in color.

Canada Goose—black neck and head with a white cheek patch; dark body in varying shades of gray-brown with the rear 1/3 being white. The tail is black. They have a short neck, and a flight pattern similar to snow geese.

American White Pelican—All white with black primary and secondary feathers that extend along the trailing edge of wing. Black on wings visible only in flight. Bill is very large and long. Bill, legs and feet are vivid yellow-orange. Males have a flattened bill "horn" on top. Neck folded back in flight. Often fly in flocks. Size: average 11-20 lbs. Wing span: 8-11 feet.

CAUTION

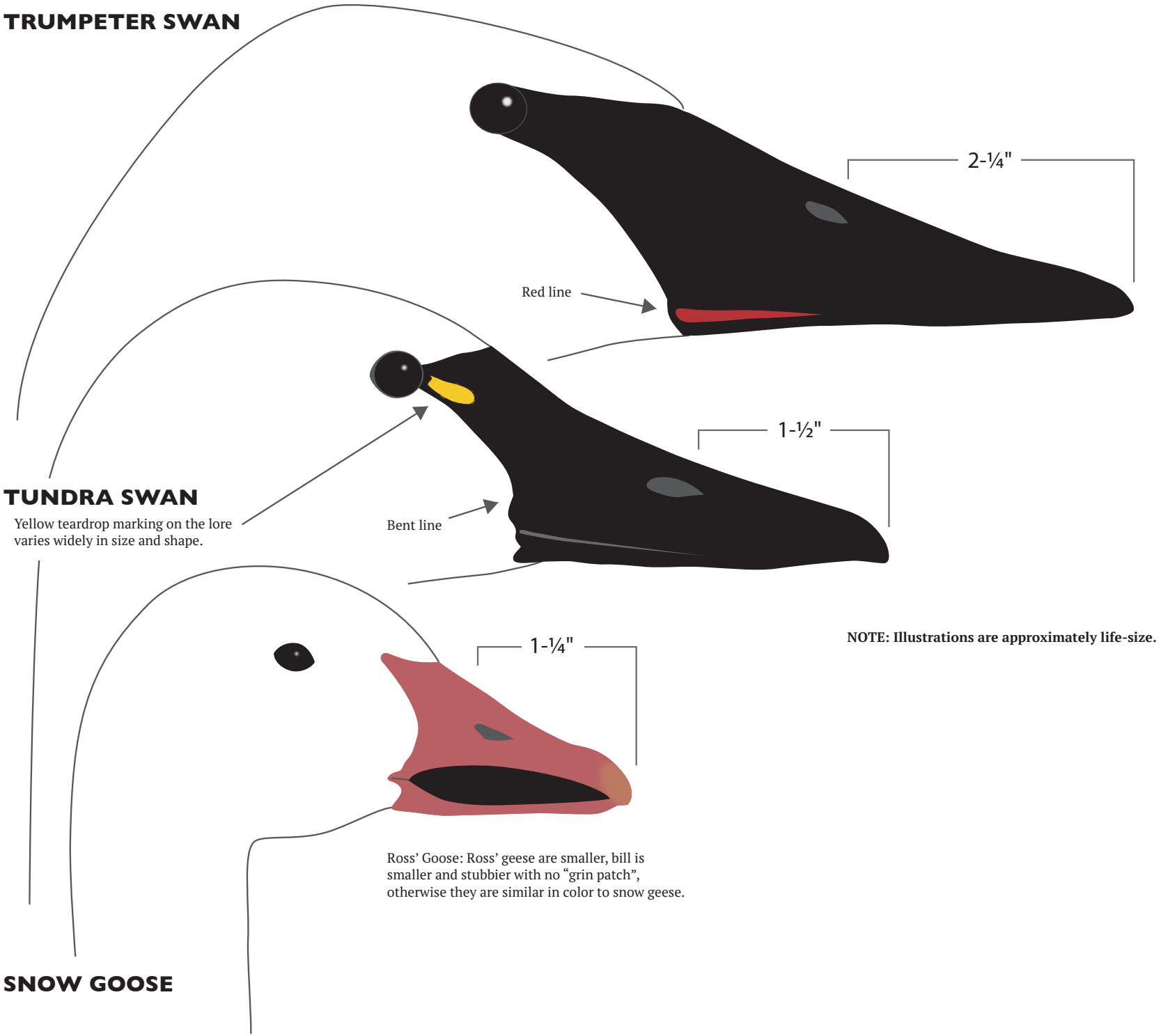
Exercise caution and respect while watching and photographing wildlife–For species like trumpeter and tundra swans and snow geese, continual disturbance during the critical months (winter and spring) can lead to increased deaths from stress-induced disease and can result in nesting failure on northern breeding grounds. Please leave feeding and resting birds alone.

Stay in your car–it is an excellent observation and photographic blind.

Move slowly and quietly–when you do get out to watch the birds car side, or hike, bike, in a boat, canoe or kayak. Please keep your pets in the car.

Use binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses–they allow you to sneak up on wildlife without leaving your car or disturbing their normal activities.

Respect private property–do not trespass onto farm fields or other private property to 'get a closer look'.


TRUMPETER SWAN
2-¼"
Red line
TUNDRA SWAN
Yellow teardrop marking on the lore varies widely in size and shape.
1-½"
Bent line
NOTE: Illustrations are approximately life-size.
1-¼"
Ross' Goose: Ross' geese are smaller, bill is smaller and stubbier with no "grin patch", otherwise they are similar in color to snow geese.
SNOW GOOSE

HEAD & NECK MOVEMENT

Trumpeter

They frequently bob their head and neck up and down (head bobbing). With this motion they also have a variety of vocalizations. This combined activity increases when the birds are disturbed and reaches maximum intensity just prior to the birds taking flight. This behavior may be brief or absent if the birds are suddenly startled and take flight.

Tundra

They only bob their head up and down. There is no defined preflight display as in the Trumpeter. While vocalizing they often hold their head and neck out at a 45° angle.

BILL COLOR

Trumpeter

Adult	All black bill with red line on lower mandible.
Juvenile	Black at base and tip with a pink middle, gradually turning black over the first year.

Tundra

Adult	Black bill, usually with yellow spot of varying size in front of eye (lore); the spot may be absent on some Tundras. Rarely they may have a red border line on the bill.
Juvenile	Usually mottled pink with black tip, with less black at the base than Trumpeters. Usually all black by the end of January.

Mute

Adult	Orange with prominent black knob at base, especially in males.
Juvenile	Black, then gradually turning to orange with a black knob as they mature.

Snow Goose

Adult	Bill shorter than swans, dark pink with black "grin patch" along the cutting edge.
Juvenile	Black gradually turns pink in their first year with “grin patch”.

HEAD AND BILL SHAPE

Trumpeter

Bill heavy in proportion to head with a straight profile. Angular head shape somewhat resembling a canvasback duck. Eye not distinct from the bill. Bill line from eye to mandible is curved.

Tundra

Bill topline more concave in profile, bill smaller in proportion to head compared to Trumpeter. Head smoothly rounded; eye usually distinct from bill. NOTE: bill line between eye and bill is bent at an angle. This is a key characteristic of Tundra Swans.

Snow Goose

Less than one-half the size of a swan; total bill length 2”; bill is shorter compared to head length; bill does not extend very close to eye. Neck length is about the same length and distance from tip of bill to back of head.

PLUMAGE

Trumpeter

Adult	White.
Juvenile	Sooty gray, darker than Tundra juveniles, especially on the head and neck area. Remain dark sooty gray through the winter with some body areas turning whiter and may appear blotchy. An area around the eye/bill line may turn more white.

Tundra

Adult	White.
Juvenile	Silvery gray, lighter than Trumpeter juveniles. Begins turning all white in late December, and by the end of February they are nearly all white. The head and neck may have slight gray or gray blotchy.

Mute

Adult	White.
Juvenile	White with brownish splotches.

Snow Goose

Adult	Both white and blue phases have rose-red feet and legs. Black wing tips.
Juvenile	Gray plumage with black wing tips. Gradually turns white (or blue on body in the blue phase) over the winter season.

LEG COLOR

Trumpeter

Adult	Gradually turns more black during the first three years, all black by 4 years of age. The leucistic form: rare–solid color red, pink, yellow, or orange.
Juvenile	Mottled yellow or pink with black.

Tundra

Adult	All black.
Juvenile	Mottled black with yellow/gray. Legs usually turn all black by late December.

Mute

Adult	All black, or rarely pale pink.
Juvenile	Mottled black with yellow/gray. Turns all black by early December.

Snow Goose

Adult	Both color phases have rose-red feet and legs.
Juvenile	Blackish or grayish-brown, turning to rose-red over the first year.

Read more about swan identification by following the QR code or going to:

nwswans.org/swan-identification

For more information on swans or for additional copies of this brochure, contact the NWSCA:

Northwest Swan Conservation Association
914 -164th St. SE, PMB 272, Mill Creek, WA 98012
phone: 206-713-3684
swaninfo@nwswans.org • www.nwswans.org

© Martha Jordan and NW Swan Conservation Association

v9.2