

The Connecticut General Assembly

House Democrats



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2016

Rep. Rosati Randall: DEEP releases new policy for Mute Swans

State Representative **Christine Rosati Randall** (D-Killingly, Plainfield) met with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to follow up on the Mute Swan that was killed by DEEP this spring in Killingly.

Rep. Randall delivered a petition from constituents to DEEP and requested information on any changes to DEEP policies that resulted from the Killingly incident.

“I wanted to make sure DEEP recognized the extraordinary impact this event has had on the members of our community and beyond,” Rep. Randall said. “DEEP’s actions upset many people who considered the swan a longtime resident of Five Mile Pond and who have had fond memories growing up with the swan.”

Rep. Randall learned that DEEP held an after-action meeting on May 19th attended by employees of DEEP’s Wildlife Division, Bureau of Natural Resources, and Commissioner’s Office.

At the after-action meeting, DEEP’s Wildlife Division determined it will implement a protocol to address mute swans they determine to be aggressive. The protocol, according to DEEP, addresses threats to public safety and swans manifesting signs of disease or injury. The protocol incorporates the use of social media to inform boaters and paddlers about known nesting areas to avoid.

“While I’m pleased that DEEP has developed a new protocol, I would like to continue the conversation to include something as simple as a warning sign in a swan’s nesting area. This step could protect the safety of boaters while averting the need to kill a bird and addle its eggs,” Rep. Randall said.

****DEEP Swan Protocol Attached

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Mute Swan Response Guidelines

SUBJECT: Department of Energy and Environmental Protection policy concerning public safety threats posed by mute swans.

PURPOSE: To establish criteria for determining conditions wherein mute swans pose a public safety threat, and to establish response measures. The primary response measures are public education and notification through social media, and direct intervention (i.e., euthanasia).

POLICY: It is the policy of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to control the invasive mute swan population to mitigate the ecological harm to native flora and fauna and to provide for public health and safety.

PROCEDURE: *Spatial Distribution Monitoring* - Department staff shall monitor the spatial distribution and abundance of mute swans in Connecticut using data collected during mid-winter waterfowl surveys. For reports of public encounters with mute swans, the Department shall compile and record reports submitted by email or telephone. The Department may correspond with the person filing the report to collect additional relevant information associating each interaction with a uniquely identified mute swan

- Time, location, unique physical characteristics of swan;
- Characteristics of interaction: e.g., persons boating, swimming, hiking, sunbathing.

Definition of Public Safety Threat –Mute swans, by virtue of their size, weight, behavioral patterns and dependency on navigable waterways pose a significant public safety threat to operators of small vessel (e.g., kayaks, canoes, jonboats). The probability of human fatality is directly related to the likelihood of small vessel capsize, hypothermia and drowning. Consequently, public safety threats shall be categorized as “Pending” or “Imminent” when the following conditions exist:

1. Pending Threat to Public Safety (Category I)

- a. Mute swans – Documented to have originated from a release in violation of Section 26-55-6 of the RCSA, or
- b. Mute swans – Origination not documented
 - Unconfirmed reports of a mute swan acting aggressively toward vessel operators, or
 - No more than one confirmed report within a two month period of a mute swan endangering the occupant(s) of a vessel,

2. Imminent Threat to Public Safety (Category II; figure 1)

- a. Mute swans – Origination not documented
 - Written complaint from a local (e.g., municipal, state police, regional authority) public safety official, or
 - Two or more confirmed reports within a two month period of a mute swan endangering the occupants of one or more vessels.

Response Measures –

1. **Public Notification** - Category I mute swans:
 - a. Wildlife Division staff shall:
 - Coordinate with the Office of Communications and the Division of Boating Safety to issue Mute Swan Public Safety Alert posts on social media (Facebook), and
2. **Euthanasia and Egg Addling**
 - a. Category I mute swans displaying neurological, physical or biomechanical symptoms (lameness, inability to swim/fly, loss of plumage) associated with injury, disease, or physiological distress likely to result in the prolonged suffering and death of the animal as determined by the highest ranking, on-site Wildlife Division staff member,
 - b. Category I mute swans documented to have originated from a release in violation of Section 26-55-6 of the RCSA and any and all eggs associated with such swans, or
 - c. Category II mute swan and any and all eggs associated with such swans.

Notification - In all cases that result in euthanizing a mute swan and addling of mute swan eggs, the highest ranking, on-site staff of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions shall collaborate to ensure that notification of the action is transmitted to Central Dispatch, and the Directors of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions, and the Director of the Office of Communications at the earliest possible opportunity.

Susan Whalen,
Deputy Commissioner,
DEEP, Environmental Conservation Branch

Susan Whalen

Date: June 8, 2016