

NW Raptor & Wildlife Center Reports Widespread Lead Poisoning of Local Swans

Local News

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Sequim -- The Northwest Raptor & Wildlife Center, the Sequim wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organization, has reported an unusually high number of fatal lead poisoning cases in local flocks of trumpeter swans. "We have personally treated at least six cases of fatal lead poisoning in Olympic Peninsula trumpeter swans just this winter, which is likely only a fraction of the number of poisoning cases in the wild," says the Center's Public Relations Director Matthew Randazzo. "All of these swans were shown to have ingested lead ammunition, which is poisonous across a wide range of species. If these swans had died in the wild, it's likely that their carcasses would have been consumed by scavengers such as bald eagles, who then could have been poisoned as well."

Trumpeter swans, which are migratory winter residents of the Olympic Peninsula, are on average the largest native species of bird in North America. Hunted to near extinction in the early 20th century, the swans have been successfully reintroduced throughout North America despite the widespread prevalence of lead poisoning within the species. Lead ammunition is poisonous to many avian species and is commonly ingested through the scavenging of shot animals or the accidental consumption of lead pellets on the ground or in the water. "The Northwest Raptor & Wildlife Center was founded by lifelong hunters and gun owners, and we are extremely thankful to all of the responsible sportsmen and women who make donations of venison, salmon, and grouse for our animals' diet," said Center director and founder, Jaye Moore. "We are not anti-hunter at all. We just

want to inform the public that there are many ammunition options available to all hunters, and we advise all gun lovers and sportsmen to avoid toxic lead ammunition completely and get it out of the food chain." "The side effects of lead ammunition use include the slow, painful, and pathetic deaths of unintended animals such as swans and eagles," said Randazzo. "That is an outcome that no one, from vegans to trophy hunters, wants to see." The Center encourages anyone who encounters an apparently poisoned or ill swan to contact the Center at (360) 681-2283.