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## **Unlicensed hunter kills trumpeter swans**

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NICOLLET — An unlicensed hunter might face criminal charges after he shot and killed two trumpeter swans on a Nicollet County lake.

Other hunters reported the poacher on Duck Lake early Saturday morning, which was the opener of the waterfowl hunting season.

A Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officer responded to the lake, which is part of the Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area north of Nicollet.

The 47-year-old male hunter was cooperative and directed the officer to the location of a dead swan, said DNR southern region information officer Dan Ruitter. Another mortally wounded swan was then found nearby.

The hunter reported he thought he was shooting at geese.

Trumpeter swans are significantly larger than geese, Ruitter said. They are a [threatened species](#) and it is illegal to shoot them.

The incident is being referred to the Nicollet County Attorney's Office for a potential gross misdemeanor charge of taking a protected species. The man also could be cited for several other hunting violations, including for not having a license and using lead shot in a prohibited area.

The DNR is not identifying the hunter because he has not yet been charged.

The state agency received the alert through its [Turn in Poachers tip line](#). Tipsters can make anonymous reports or can be eligible for a reward if the tip leads to charges.

“This is a good example of ethical hunters holding others accountable,” Ruitter said.

Otherwise the waterfowl opener went smoothly in southern Minnesota, he said. “Many of our conservation officers reported good numbers of birds out there, and a good number of hunters afield, but the success rates varied.”