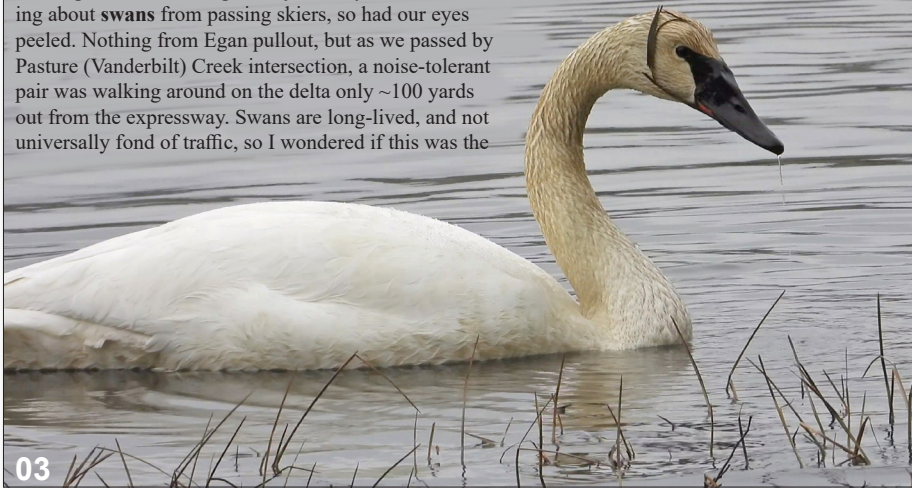


## 20260403 Aware swans

Coming home from the glacier yesterday we'd been hearing about **swans** from passing skiers, so had our eyes peeled. Nothing from Egan pullout, but as we passed by Pasture (Vanderbilt) Creek intersection, a noise-tolerant pair was walking around on the delta only ~100 yards out from the expressway. Swans are long-lived, and not universally fond of traffic, so I wondered if this was the



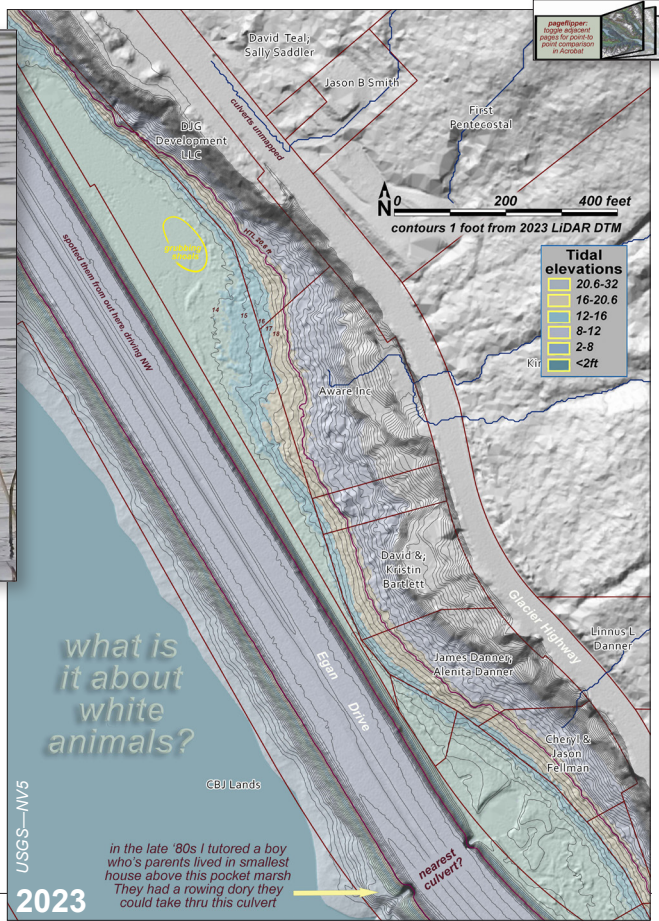
pair Bob & I [filmed & posted on 20240314](#), enjoying a multiday stopover on pullout tidelands. Spring conditions that year were way more welcoming for waterbirds.

Today in light drizzle, Cathy and I drove out from town with the plk in search of white things to film. Didn't even get to Pasture Creek (Vanderbilt) before spotting our same(?) majestic pair on the *inside* of Egan.

Traditional spring trumpeter waters at Twin Lakes & Pioneer Marsh are still frozen, so every patch of open, mostly-fresh water is a precious refueling puddle for migrants on tight schedules.

Swinging around to Glacier Ave 'upside', we glissaded & postholed down the Aware embankment to film through dense-forest foliage gaps at 75 yards. They occasionally looked at us, no doubt reassured by my staggering efforts to stay upright behind the tripod.

**03 POPE?** Though obligingly posed with pondweed wreath, I've never presumed to ID *Potamogeton* to species. [USGS lit-review](#) claims cosmopolitan



*pectinatus* is the only halophyte,

"Among *Potamogetons*, only sago leucates high salinity"

so let's go with that for now. It raises the most intriguing puzzle for me—tidal context—and why there's even open water here. Which of course requires a LiDAR-&-ortho flipper-pair with 1-foot contours.

Yellow's their foraging circle at the 14-ft contour. Slightly below mean high water, which admits enough salinity to exclude other submerged aquatics except maybe *Ruppia*. Salt exchange may happen through the expressway prism, but more through nearest culvert, 390 yds south—a dory-traversable arch.

CBJ's culvert layer is so far(?) mute on locations along Glacier Highway, but between bare earth & this recent summer CIR you can judge where hillside trickles feed this lagoon. My video-story shows one swan drinking, so we can guess there's a nearly pure fresh lens here, atop a brackish bottom layer we'd expect for intertidal, however barricaded.

Whatever the inputs & outputs, Aware's 0.8-acre stillwater puddle—fresh enough for pondweed, salt enough for antifreeze—is rare this week in Áak'w & T'aaǰú Aani. Otherwise, only flowing water is ice free. In fact, back home, Cathy found the above-right inset pic some nordic skier took of a probably pretty desperate swan on Kaǰdigoowu Héen (Montana Cr).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Dick Callahan's piece](#) on the Yukon spring stopover says trumpeters need "more than 300 feet of runway." Lay that across Aware pond from using scale bar on previous flipper. They couldn't have exited a much smaller lagoon. If we'd spooked em they'd only have gotten airborne in one, NW, direction. Dick also reported they can eat 20 pounds of pondweed per day, astounding considering they *weigh* about 23 pounds. Maybe that's salad wet-weight, with less required from high-carb roots?

Hungry country back there for an herbivore!

I've always wondered about pondweed's annual cycle. Swans are super-early migrants, known for dependence on this submerged aquatic during March & April journeys. But what *parts* of the plant? Seeds? Runners down in the mud? Could there even *be* edible stems and leaves this early?

What do ecologists say about this cosmopolitan genus and its seasonal relation to waterfowl? [Helen Hangelbroek's 2004 MS thesis](#) from Lake Lauwersmeer in the northern Netherlands answers some questions and raises others. Phenology varies latitudinally, in terms of available winter greens. Could the pondweed wreath in photo-3 be unwanted bycatch? Is all that tugging and muddy drool really for extraction of carb-rich tubers to fuel the next leg of their journey?



April 2nd Nordic Ski Club facebook, photographer uncredited, open water on Kaǰdigoowu Héen.



0403vid JuneauNature post. 2 min 19 sec

CBJ—NV5

2023

diameter 14 ft