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FOOD SELECTION BY *CYGNUS OLOR* IN CHESAPEAKE BAY, MARYLAND

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The food habits of non-native *Cygnus olor* in Chesapeake Bay were examined between 1975 and 1978 to determine their effects on the aquatic food supply of native wintering waterfowl. Swan food preferences and daily intake were determined by faecal and gizzard analysis, floral analysis of swan nesting and moulting areas and testing with captive birds.

Preference for submerged vascular vegetation by *C. olor* was demonstrated by

5 gizzard and 92 faecal analyses. In summer, approximately 83% of identifiable faecal matter was submerged vascular flora as opposed to 44% in winter. In pen tests with captive birds, freshwater species such as *Elodea canadensis* and *Valisneria americana* were preferred over the more common brackish water species such as *Ruppia maritima* and the pondweeds *Potamogeton*. However, only *Myriophyllum spicatum* among common submerged aquatics was not selected regularly.

Proximal analysis of these food species demonstrated a wider variability of nutritional content within than between species. Food selection may result from factors other than nutritional quality.

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