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Swans



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What is a swan?

Swans are large waterfowl that are famously elegant and have long, slender necks. While the majority of swan species are white, black swans have black plumage, and the black-necked swan has a white body and a black head and neck. All baby swans—known as cygnets—are grey when they're born.

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genus *Coscoroba*.

Typically, these birds live in temperate climates in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, though different species of swans live in different habitats. They inhabit a variety of natural and manmade bodies of water, including freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, canals, swamps, marshes, and coastal inlets. Swans are mainly herbivorous. They eat aquatic plants but sometimes also ingest small aquatic animals. As they paddle on the surface of the water, they use their long necks to reach the vegetation below.

Swans mate for life, and they perform an elaborate courtship dance to cement their bond. They typically breed during the spring or summer, with some species travelling to the Arctic in flocks to do so. They build huge nests at the edge of the water, where a female swan lays between three and eight eggs. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs. When hatched, cygnets stay with their parents for several months before joining a flock.

Swans play a vital role in maintaining the health of aquatic ecosystems. By eating plants and small aquatic animals, they help spread seeds and aquatic animal eggs through their faeces, supporting the growth of plants and the survival of animal species. While swimming, they also stir up sediment, which helps circulate nutrients around these bodies of water, supporting the health of the plants and fish that live below.

What is a swan's scientific name?

There are six species of swan in the genus *Cygnus*. One species of swan is no longer considered a true swan and is classified in the genus *Coscoroba*.

All swan species have unique scientific names:

- Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)
- Tundra swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)
- Mute swan (*Cygnus color*)

- Trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)
- Coscoroba swan (*Coscoroba coscoroba*)

It's worth noting that some scientists split the tundra swan into two species: Bewick's swan (*Cygnus bewickii*), which lives in the Palearctic of Europe, Asia, and North Africa, and the whistling swan (*Cygnus columbianus*), which is native to the Nearctic of Greenland and North America.

Are swans endangered?

All species of swans are categorised as least concern by the IUCN and have either stable or increasing populations. The tundra swan was hunted almost to extinction, but its numbers have now recovered.

Nevertheless, despite their healthy numbers, all swan species face challenges, including habitat loss, pollution, and avian flu.

Where do swans live?

Swans tend to live in lowland, freshwater wetlands. You can find them in shallow lakes, ponds, lagoons, marshes, reed beds, and slow-flowing rivers. You can also find them on artificial bodies of water, like reservoirs, gravel pits, ornamental lakes, and canals. Some swans venture into brackish and saltwater habitats too.

Different swan species live in different parts of the world. The mute swan, trumpeter swan, whooper swan, and tundra swan live in the Northern Hemisphere. The black swan, the black-necked swan, and the coscoroba swan live in the Southern Hemisphere. Specifically, you'll find black swans in Australia and black-necked and coscoroba swans in South America.

All swans live in temperate climates and are rarely found in the tropics. Most species of swan migrate. They travel to find food when temperatures [illegible]nd

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