

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Bird · Resident · here all year



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The familiar swan of the Nith, town ponds and the Solway margins: pure white, with an orange bill carrying a black basal knob that is larger on males. It holds its neck in a graceful curve rather than straight, which is the quickest way to separate it from the whooper swans that winter here. Young birds are dusky grey-brown with a dull grey-pink bill.

BEHAVIOUR

Mute swans feed by upending in shallow water to reach aquatic plants, and graze on grass and winter cereals as well. Despite the name they hiss, grunt and snort freely, and the loud rhythmic throbbing of the wings in flight is audible far off — a sound the other swans do not make. Pairs are strongly territorial in the breeding season and will drive off other swans, dogs and people from the nest.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Ducks, geese and swans (Anatidae)
SIZE	140-160 cm · one of the heaviest flying birds
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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