



Mute swans are one of the most common birds that live on the waterways and they're also very easy to spot. Read on to find out about them.



There are seven types of swans throughout the world. The mute swan is the only type of swan which lives in Britain all year round although the Bewick and Whooper swans sometimes spend part of their year here. The mute swan is the largest British bird.

For many centuries mute swans were used as a source of food in Britain. People used to mark the swans with nicks on their beaks or feet to show who they belonged to and these marks were registered. Swans which had not been marked belonged to the King or Queen.

In the past, swans were not just seen simply as a source of food. Swans' feathers were used as quills for writing, the leathery web of their feet was used for making purses and whistles could be made from the wing bones.

A male adult swan is called a cob, a female adult swan a pen and swans' young are called cygnets.

Fact File

Weight: Adult males - about 11kg
Adult females - about 9kg
Length: 1.5m
Wingspan: 2.25m
Food: Underwater plants, grasses, sometimes eat small frogs and fish.

Interesting features:

Mute swans eat about 4kg of plants a day.

They have two stomachs. The second stomach, the gizzard, contains the grit the swan has swallowed which it then uses to grind up the food.

Mute swans don't breed until they are at least three years old. Between March and May they build huge nests in quiet spots next to the water's edge. The females lay a clutch of 3 - 7 eggs. The eggs are laid at two day intervals and they take 35 days to incubate.

Cygnets are grey and downy when they are born. The down gradually turns into brown feathers, which turn white over the first twelve months.

