
Tundra Swan

Cygnus columbianus

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Characteristics:

Also known as whistling swans, tundra swans are large birds with heavy bodies, long necks, and entirely white plumage. The bill is usually black with a yellow spot at the base near the eye. They are slightly smaller than the trumpeter swan.

Behavior:

On water, tundra swans keep their necks up straight and when they fly the neck is outstretched. They forage like a dabbling duck, often dipping their upper body under the water. They group together in flocks, except during breeding at which time they pair-off. During breeding season, they sleep on land and in the winter they sleep on water ([Cornell](#)).

Reproduction:

Tundra swans nest on the arctic tundra and both sexes construct a nest on the ground made of a mound of plant material. The nest can be up to two feet in diameter. The female lays up to seven eggs and incubates about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time to the male's $\frac{1}{4}$. Both parents tend to the young, and may paddle their feet in the water to stir up aquatic vegetation for the cygnets (baby swans). Cygnets usually stay with the parents through the first winter and fledge around 2-3 months ([Audubon](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Plant material (including stems, seeds, and roots), algae and sometimes small invertebrates

Zoo: Greens, waterfowl pellets

Conservation:

The population is stable and large enough that hunting is allowed in some areas.

FYI:

Lewis and Clark were the first to describe the tundra swan in their written documentation during their westward journey. Meriwether Lewis called them "[whistling swans](#)" because of their whistle-like call ([Cornell](#)).



Range & Habitat:

Lakes and ponds



Lifespan: up to 20 years in captivity, 10 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Tundra swans may specialize their eating habits depending on the regions where they live.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

