

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Bird · Winter visitor · Oct–Apr



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A large wild swan that winters on the Solway in internationally important numbers. It differs from the mute swan in holding its neck straight and stiff, and in the bill pattern — a large triangular wedge of yellow reaching forward past the nostril, rather than orange with a knob. Whooper swans feed on flooded fields, merse and stubble around the estuary from October to April.

BEHAVIOUR

Whoopers are noisy and highly social, keeping up a bugling, trumpeting contact call in flight and on the ground — quite unlike the mute swan. Family parties stay together through the winter, with the previous summer's grey cygnets still alongside their parents, which makes it possible to count breeding success from a field gate. They graze grass, waste potatoes and cereals by day and roost on open water.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Ducks, geese and swans (Anatidae)
SIZE	140-165 cm
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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