

# Swans



Photo: © Robbie Murphy



Photo: Arlingstone

Photo: Rhon Pritchard

There are three different types of swan to be found in Ireland. The Mute Swan, the Bewick's Swan and the Whooper Swan.

## Mute Swan

Mute Swan is the largest bird in Ireland. It has white plumage, a long neck, a bright orange bill and a black "nose". This swan was introduced into Britain by the Romans and then spread across into Ireland. They are an elegant and beautiful bird and because of this they have been encouraged to nest on our waterways around towns and villages.

## Bewick's Swan

The Bewick's Swan is a winter visitor to Ireland, migrating from its Arctic breeding grounds. It arrives in large numbers to places such as the Wexford Slobs. The Bewick's Swan has a blacker bill than either the Mute or Whooper Swan, and is also considerably smaller - more like a goose.

## Whooper Swan

The Whooper Swan is also a winter visitor to loughs and reservoirs in Ireland. It is bigger than the Bewick's Swan and it usually holds its long, slender neck upright. It has black feet and a black beak, with a triangular yellow patch on it.



## Black Swans!

When we think of swans, we think of their gleaming white feathers. However Black Swans can be found in Australia where they live in salty and fresh waterways and wetlands.



## Children of Lir

Swans have a special place in Irish folklore. Legend has it that the children of Lir (Ireland's chieftain), were turned into swans by their jealous step-mother, Aoife. Aoife felt their father loved his children more than her. She allowed them keep their human voice, so they could still talk to one another. Their voices were so sad and beautiful that many people stopped to listen to them. For 900 years they lived as swans, spending 300 years in Lough Derravaragh, 300 years in the Sea of Moyle and three hundred years in the waters of Inish Glora. They were only set free when they heard a monk ringing a bell in honour of God. Having turned back into human form, they died from old age but soon joined their mother and father in heaven.

## DID YOU KNOW?

A male swan is a **cob**.  
A female swan is a **pen**.  
A baby swan is a **cygnet**.

