

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Anseriformes
Scientific Name: *Cygnus columbianus*

Family: Anatidae
Common Name: Tundra Swan

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):

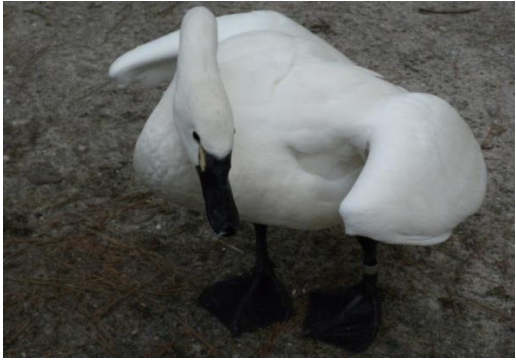
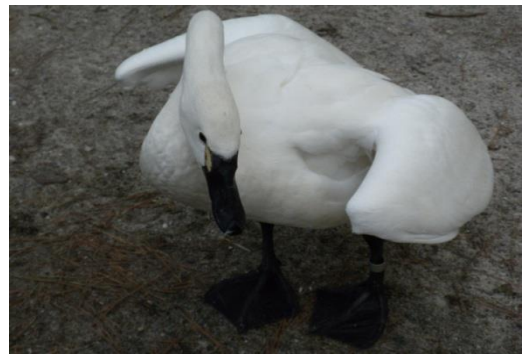


Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other [Very cold tolerant, can be maintained outdoors as long as they have access to moving water to keep their feet from freezing](#)

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other [Can be kept outdoors as long as water and shade are available](#)

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Captives can be fed commercial waterfowl diet, supplemented with greens, insects/worms, and vitamins and minerals.

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: 15-20 Years Females: 15-20 Years

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 20-25 Years Females: 20-25 Years

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BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 3-5 Years Females: 3-5 Years

Courtship Displays: Spreading wings out, calling loudly

Nest Site Description: The nest is a large bowl on the ground, formed from grasses and other vegetation. The inside is lined with a light layer of down. Nests may be 1.2-1.8 meters in diameter and 60 centimeters tall.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: 3-7 (average 5) creamy white eggs, 10 centimeters long by 6.5 centimeters wide, weighing 280 grams; eggs are laid 36-48 hours apart

Incubation Period: 31-33 days

Fledgling Period: Leave the nest immediately, fly at 60-75 days

Parental Care: Tundra swans will defend their nests against small avian and mammalian predators; if confronted with a larger mammalian predator, they will attempt to lead it away. Both parents share incubation responsibilities (though females tend to sit more than the males). Both parents care for the cygnets after they hatch. Parental care is provided until the cygnets are 2 years old, and some may remain with their parents for even longer.

Chick Development: Cygnets hatch fully feathers and with their eyes open; they weigh about 180 grams at the time of hatching. They leave the nest almost immediately, but are unable to fly until they are 60-75 days old. Sexual maturity is reached at 3 years, but birds do not usually breed until they are 4-5 years old.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Seasonally large flocks, pairs during nesting season

Social Structure in Captivity: Pairs

Minimum Group Size: Pair

Maximum Group Size: Pair or 0.2

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes **Comments:** May be combined with other waterfowl species or with ungulates

Optimal Habitat Size: 1000 Square Feet for a Pair, at least half of enclosure water.

Management Challenges: Due to their large size, tundra swans are often maintained in open, outdoor enclosures (on ponds or creeks) instead of in enclosed aviaries. This habitat set-up may attract Canada geese, mallards, and other native waterfowl, which could serve as competitors for food or vectors for disease. In some areas, it is possible that captive birds will attract wild tundra swans to a facility. Large social groupings can be difficult to maintain year round due to pair territoriality during the breeding season.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

The smaller of North America's two swan species, the tundra swan is sometimes considered conspecific with the Bewick's swan of Eurasia; they can be distinguished by the large yellow facial patches on the later. The tundra swan is also slightly larger than the Bewick's swan. They are also known as the whistling swan due to their vocalizations. The sexes are alike in appearance and size, with white plumage and a black beak. Juveniles have a dirtier-looking plumage with a pink bill and legs. Body length is 120-147 centimeters, with a wingspan of 168 centimeters; weight is 3.8-10.5 kilograms. There are no recognized subspecies.

Tundra swans spend their summers on the Arctic tundra, where they breed. Winter is spent on waterways in the continental United States, as far south as the US-Mexican border. During their winter migrations, they are often found in agricultural areas, as well as rivers, lakes, and bays. The diet consists of grasses, roots, and tubers, supplemented with aquatic invertebrates. Swans may feed by grazing or by dabbling; their long necks allow them to reach aquatic plants 1 meter below the surface of the water.

Although tundra swans can be very social during their migrations, traveling in large flocks, during their breeding season they become territorial and aggressive to rival pairs. Tundra swans are monogamous, forming pair bonds which may last for the duration of the birds' life. Pairs breed annually in late May or June, raising one clutch of 3-5 cygnets annually.

Tundra swans are not considered threatened – the species is listed as being of Least Concern by the IUCN – and some jurisdictions allow seasonal hunting. Factors which may threaten their survival include lead poisoning, chemical pollution, habitat loss and disturbance of nesting sites, and competition from the invasive mute swan.

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