Mute Swan

Habitat Hero





Seen in Ireland: Year-round

Common Name: Mute swan Irish Name: Eala bhalbh Scientific Name: Cygnus olar





Mute Swans are 1.25-1.6 m in length with a wing-span of up to 2m, and can be 1+ m tall, and they weigh between 11 and 14 kg.



Mute swans are very common and widespread throughout Ireland. They are found in wetlands such as lakes, rivers and estuaries across the country.



Swans mainly feed on water plants and invertebrates (like pond snails). They can use their long neck to reach deep into the water looking for food. They can also graze when they are on land, eating grass and other plants.



They live 11 years on average.

Mute Swan Life Cycle



The parents will then return to their breeding area in **Spring**. Swans can begin breeding when they are 3 years old

Swans will build their nest on the water's edge as a mound of dried plant material.

In winter, swans often move to a different area with greater food availability and cygnets often then leave the parents.



Breeding pairs (a mother and father) usually stay together all of their lives, and typically have one brood per year in late spring

After hatching, cygnets will stay with the parents for several months before leaving. Cygnets have a brown/grey plumage and spend late summer and autumn with their parents.

In April/May the female lays a clutch of 4-8 eggs. Both males and females incubate them for 5 to 6 weeks

Mute Swan



Some more Facts:

- Mute swans are very large, white birds with a long, curved neck, an orange beak and black, webbed feet.
- They are one of two species of swan in Ireland and the only species that live here year-round.
- In many species of bird, you can tell males and females apart based on their different colours. With swans however, it is based on their size (the male is larger) and the black lump on the top of the beak (again the male has a slightly larger lump).
- Did you know.... swans (and ducks) should not be feed bread? This is not a
 natural part of their diet and does not provide them with the nutrition they
 need.
- Too much bread is bad for them. If you enjoy feeding swans and ducks, try
 bringing lettuce or frozen peas instead. This is more similar to their usual diet,
 so it is better for them.
- Young swans (cygnets) are vulnerable to predation from foxes and large birds such as herons.
- They will generally stay close to their parents for protection.
- Despite the name mute swans are not silent! You may hear them making a few different noises.
- Adults make a low rumbling sound and will hiss when alarmed. Juveniles will make a high-pitched call to ask for food.
- Swans are strongly featured in Irish folklore. One of the most famous Irish legends is "The Children of Lir" which tells the story of 4 children being turned to swans for 900 years.





