

Bewick's Swan Information for Russian Press

How to report swan sightings

- If you **read a ring on a swan**, please send your sighting to bird.ringing.rus@gmail.com. Report the species, ring code, date and location (including the co-ordinates). If you find a ring, please send it to Centre for Bird Ringing, 117312, Moscow (www.ringcenter.ru) with the same information as stated above.

Information on the Bewick's swan

- Every autumn, Bewick's swans (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) **migrate** 3,000 km from breeding grounds in the Russian Arctic to sites in wintering sites in western Europe. During their journey, they stop off at 'staging sites' and may fly through or visit up to 11 countries. They fly back to Russia in the spring and spend the summer on the tundra.
- The **Nenets Autonomous Okrug** is critically important for the Bewick's swan, hosting the entire Northwest European population between May and September. The swans also stop off and over-summer in **Arkhangelsk Oblast**. Both regions include major moulting, breeding and staging sites for other migratory waterbirds, some of which are threatened.
- Bewick's swans have **yellow and black beaks** and are the **smallest** of three swan species that inhabit the Russian Arctic, residing alongside the whooper swan (*Cygnus Cygnus*) and mute swan (*Cygnus olor*). For further information on the physical differences between the three swans, see the identification guide [here](#).
- Bewick's swans can be identified as individuals by their distinctive black and yellow bill patterns. At WWT Slimbridge in the UK, scientists have been identifying and naming individual swans for more than 60 years in one of the longest running studies of a species in the world. This valuable research tool enables us to identify their habits, behaviours and ecological needs.
- The Bewick's swan is **endangered** and **protected** in Russia and throughout its range. It is included in the Red Data Books of the Russian Federation, Arkhangelsk Oblast and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and cannot be hunted.
- Staff from the Zapovednik and Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust have been catching and ringing Bewick's swans since 1966 in the UK and 1991 in the Russian arctic.

International Collaboration to save the Bewick's swan

- Numbers in the Northwest European population of Bewick's swan **declined by almost 40%** in recent decades, but with conservation efforts along the flyway scientists hope their numbers might be recovering.
- In **countries** along the flyway conservationists have been identifying the main threats to Bewick's swans in efforts to save them. Problems include illegal shooting, collisions with powerlines, loss of habitat etc. Reducing human-related causes of mortality should help recovery of the population.

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Authors: [Swan Champion Project](#)

- Birds are caught and X-rayed each year to determine whether they carry shotgun pellets in their bodies from **being shot at**. More than 1/3 of live birds are found to have been wounded when X-rayed. Bird reports and surveys of local people have shown that swans are shot in Russia and in other countries along their migration route. Of 232 hunters surveyed, 12% admitted to hunting a Bewick's swan in the previous three years and 15% admitted to accidentally hunting them. While most hunters in this survey understood that it was not permissible to hunt Bewick's swans, 18% thought that it was legal or did not know.
- In 2016 an international campaign called '**Flight of the Swans**' was launched to gather information and support for protecting the swans. WWT conservationist Sacha Dench flew with the birds on migration from the NAO to the UK, across 11 countries speaking to researchers, farmers, hunters, power companies and others along the way.

Swan Champion Project in Russia

- Russia is leading the way in Bewick's swan conservation in the Arctic – the [Swan Champion Project](#) was launched in Nar'Yan-Mar in March 2018 by concerned individuals representing conservation, hunting, education, community and tourism interests. They have joined forces to help secure the future of the endangered Northwest European Bewick's swan and their Russian Arctic breeding grounds. See here for the full range of planned activities.
- Members of the **Swan Champion Project** include: the Nenetskiy Zapovednik; Association of the Nenets People "Yasavey"; Secretariat of Barents Sea Program; Nenets local history museum; Historical, Cultural and Landscape Museum-Reserve "Pustozersk"; Federal Research Center for Comprehensive Arctic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Arkhangelsk); Committee for Tourism of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug; "Green Home"; Russian Research Institute for Environmental Protection; Institute of Geography - Russian Academy of Sciences; Center for Natural Resources Management and Environmental Protection; "Close Arctic"; Recreation Hanavjej hsia Camping; Krasniy gorod and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT, based in the UK). The group is co-ordinated by Sergei Kanyukov.