

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

BOU Category:	A (GB and site) †
Site status:	rare late autumn migrant and winter visitor; one mid-summer record
Devon status:	uncommon winter visitor † †
Conservation status:	BOCC3 (unlisted); SPEC (secure); IUCN European and Global (Least Concern) †
Conservation levels:	nationally important: ≥110 (winter); internationally important: ≥210 (winter) †

International

Now widely regarded as a separate species from its North American counterpart (Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator*), so monotypic, as validity of *islandicus* is uncertain.

Estimated 180,000 adult individuals; nests on islands or adjacent shallow waters with emergent vegetation, bogs and marshland in afforested tundra and taiga zones from Iceland to eastern Russia, arriving on breeding grounds generally in the second half of May. Virtually wholly migratory and influenced by freshwaters freezing over, they arrive at wintering grounds in Oct/Nov in lowland Europe and eastern Asia, favouring marshlands, floodplains, fresh and brackish lakes, estuaries, sheltered coasts and increasingly on lowland agricultural fields. Departure from wintering grounds is from mid-Mar to early-May. † †

Europe and Great Britain

Highly sociable in winter, over half of Europe's wintering population (total >65,000) from birds breeding in Iceland, Fenno-Scandinavia and W Russia, occur in Denmark and Germany, and thousands more winter elsewhere in Baltic and North Sea bordering countries. Smaller numbers winter elsewhere in Europe. † † Has increased as a wintering bird in the UK (max 16,502 in Jan 2010) † and Ireland (7,900 - 9,100) † over the past 25 years, predominantly receiving birds from Iceland (where 500 - 1200 remain to winter on the coasts). Much smaller numbers (200+) may winter in GB from Finland †

Its susceptibility to particularly harsh winters is not well understood, but GB may play host to extra visitors that normally winter in Germany and Denmark, presumably first moving to the Low Counties and then into GB, if severe enough.

Devon

Historically a rare visitor during severe winters and was unrecorded 1906 - 1940. Since 1941, it became more frequent, absent in only 9 of 69 years to 2010, appearing mostly Oct – Mar, and rarely Apr - Jun. Usually occurs as singles or small parties at widely scattered locations on floodplains and estuaries; the annual maximum for Devon is 35 individuals in 2002. † †

Dawlish Warren

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There are **11 records** involving at least **19 birds**:

23 Jan 1893	a young female shot in the Bight off Exmouth 23 Jan 1893". †
31 Jan 1954	"eight including four adults seen to leave lower estuary in a southerly direction". (R.G. Adams) †
11 Jan - 15 Mar 1970	one (R.G. Adams et al)
17 Dec 1973	one in the saltmarsh (B Gregory, A Rosier)
02 & 08 Jan 1974	no details for sightings, except from "Exe Est, wintering birds stayed to the end of Feb." †
14 Jan 1981	three (A Rosier)
15 Oct 2000	one adult with Mute Swans in Shutterton Creek (KRy et al)
11 Jan 2002	one (JEF)
05, 07 & 09 Nov 2002	one adult, roosted in Shutterton Creek leaving early each morning (JEF et al)
10 Jun 2007	one in estuary behind Golf Course (D Smallshire)
27 Jan 2008	one flew S down the estuary before landing on sea (LC et al)

Half of records have occurred within only the past decade, compared with the first five records, which took nearly a century to appear. This is likely a combined reflection on increased observer effort and that it has genuinely become more frequently seen in the SW since the mid-20th century. Although most likely of Icelandic origin, the increasing Fenno-Scandinavian and W Russian breeding population, and increasing tendency to immigrate from usual wintering grounds on the Continent could be an alternative source of records here. †

Seven records refer to only brief visits, but three singles have remained longer, one for two months. The only year with two records (2002) coincided with Devon's highest annual tally of individuals.

The mid-summer record in 2007 was probably the same adult present on the Otter Estuary 26 May to 19 Oct. †



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