



Swan

Peter Young

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Of more than 8,000 bird species, the swan is surely one of the most easily recognised. Airborne, the swan is a majestic sight: with its long, slender neck outstretched, it glides gracefully with slow, strong wing-beats. Its large webbed feet and short legs, which make it awkward on land, propel it serenely and effortlessly through water. Swan is a comprehensive natural and cultural history of this most dignified of birds. Peter Young relates the natural history of the swan: its elegant exterior concealing a lightweight frame; details of extinct species and the differences between the 8 surviving species; its power and endurance; its formation flying, which conserves energy and allows long-haul flights to be made at speed; its habitat and feeding habits. He also explores the extensive cultural history of the swan, from its frequent portrayal in painting, sculpture, porcelain and furniture; to its use in heraldry; the Greek myth of Leda and the Swan; Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*; and *Swan Lake*. The book goes on to examine the uses and abuses of swans; questions of conservation; of the swan as food; and its widespread use in logos and brand-names. Informed yet accessible, wide-ranging yet detailed, *Swan* will appeal to the wide audience interested in this graceful and beautiful bird.

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