

## 2021 Report

# IUCN SSC Swan Specialist Group



#### CHAIR

Eileen Rees  
Wildfowl & Wetlands  
Trust, Slimbridge,  
Gloucester, GL2 7BT,  
UK (retired)

#### RED LIST AUTHORITY COORDINATORS

BirdLife International  
(focal point: Eileen  
Rees)

#### NUMBER OF MEMBERS

315

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Website: <https://swansg.org>

### Mission statement

The Swan Specialist Group is an international network of swan specialists who undertake monitoring, research, conservation and management of swan populations. Its mission is to facilitate effective communication between members and others with an interest in swan management and conservation worldwide, in order to improve national and international links for cooperative research, to identify gaps in knowledge and to provide a forum for addressing swan conservation issues.

### Projected impact 2021–2025

By the end of 2025, we will have undertaken the 10-year review of the implementation of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) Bewick's Swan Action Plan, which will include: (1) assessment of the current conservation status of the Northwest European Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) population (found to be in decline in 2010), (2) evaluation of factors found to be contributing to the decline, (3) evaluation of the outcome of conservation actions, (4) identification of continued gaps in knowledge, and (5) identification of protection measures that should be maintained or put in place. The review will also indicate whether a new Action Plan is required, with updated priorities for

conservation action. For the other swan species, which are currently classed as Least Concern by IUCN, we will maintain our monitoring of population trends, or collect such information where the monitoring is being undertaken by other organisations, to identify any conservation issues that may arise for the swans.

### Targets 2021–2025

#### ASSESS

T-002 Population monitoring: Collate and publish results of the international censuses of migratory swan populations in the Northern Hemisphere.

#### PLAN

T-003 AEWA Bewick's Swan Action Plan: Convene Bewick's Swan Expert Group workshops.

T-004 AEWA Bewick's Swan Action Plan: Undertake the 10-year review of the AEWA Bewick's Swan Action Plan.

T-005 Technical advice: Provide information and technical advice in support of the programmes of IUCN SSC, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, Ramsar and others as necessary.

T-006 Technical advice: Provide information on the population trends, distribution ecology, habitat requirements and behaviour of swan species to address conservation issues as they arise.

#### NETWORK

T-007 Listserv: Maintain the Swan Specialist Group listserv.

T-008 Gap-filling: Improve knowledge of swan species in the Southern Hemisphere, increase Swan Specialist Group membership in the region.

#### COMMUNICATE

T-009 Newsletters: Publish *Swan News* annually: four issues in years 2021–2025.

T-010 Website: maintain the Swan Specialist Group website.

T-011 Swan Specialist Group Symposium: Convene 7th International Swan Symposium in Jackson, Wyoming, US.

T-012 Swan Specialist Group Symposium: Publish proceedings of the 7th International Swan Symposium in a scientific journal.

### Activities and results 2021

#### ASSESS

##### Research activities

T-002 (KSR 5)

**Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0**

**Result description:** A call was put out to National Count Coordinators, requesting Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) and Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) count data for their countries. The results of the



Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), in triumph display  
Photo: Margaret Smith

census for the Icelandic Whooper Swan population were published. Citation: Brides, K., et al. (2021). 'The Icelandic Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* population: current status and long-term (1986–2020) trends in its numbers and distribution'. *Wildfowl* 71:29–57.

#### PLAN

##### Planning

T-003 (KSR 8)

**Number of annual meetings of the AEWA Bewick's Swan Expert Group: 1**

**Result description:** A meeting was held online in August 2021. Key points addressed included: (1) updated assessment of the population status (census results); (2) new conservation initiatives for Bewick's Swans in Germany; (3) update on the Swan Champions project, to reduce levels of illegal hunting; (4) schedule for the 10-year review of the AEWA Bewick's Swan Action Plan.

##### Policy

T-006 (KSR 9)

**Risk to swan species reduced: 1**

**Result description:** The Swan Specialist Group joined other conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations in writing to the Acting Secretary for the US Department of the Interior, to express concern about the 'MBTA Rule', whereby former President Trump's administration aimed to redefine the scope of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) so that it protected birds only if a business or individual intentionally injures or kills birds protected by the MBTA. We were particularly concerned that the proposed change has the potential to reduce very significantly the effectiveness of the MBTA for conserving migratory birds in North America (noting that Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) recovered

from near extinction following protection under the MBTA), and that it would also affect relationships with treaty partners. Representations were successful, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule revoking the 7 January 2021 regulation. Thus interpretation of the MBTA returned to prohibiting incidental take and applying enforcement discretion, consistent with long-standing agency practice prior to 2017.

#### NETWORK

##### Capacity building

T-008 (KSR 2)

**Number of reports of swan species in the Southern Hemisphere in the Swan Specialist Group newsletter: 1**

**Result description:** Southern Hemisphere swans are still under-represented within the Swan Specialist Group, and this should be addressed during the 2021–2025 quadrennium. Abstracts from two papers on Black-necked Swans (*Cygnus melanocoryphus*) in Chile were however added to the Swan Specialist Group website and included in *Swan News* 16 during 2021.

##### Synergy

T-007 (KSR 2)

**Swan Specialist Group listserv operative throughout the quadrennium: 1**

**Result description:** Announcements were made regarding the publication of *Swan News* 16, the forthcoming international swan symposium and queries.

#### COMMUNICATE

##### Communication

T-009 (KSR 12)

**Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 1**

**Result description:** *Swan News* 16 was published in November 2021 (<https://swansg.org/2021/12/15/swan-news-16/>).

T-010 (KSR 12)

**Swan Specialist Group website accessible and updated with news items: 1**

**Result description:** Sixteen news items were posted on the website during 2021.

T-011 (KSR 12)

**Number of presentations delivered in scientific events: 0**

**Result description:** The Organising Committee was established. First Announcement and Call for Abstracts were circulated to Swan Specialist Group members.

#### Acknowledgements

We thank the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) for continuing to host the Swan Specialist Group website, and are particularly grateful to Nathan D'Costa for uploading news items and documents as the information comes in.

#### Summary of achievements

**Total number of targets 2021–2025: 11**

**Geographic regions:** 6 Global, 3 America, 1 Asia, 3 Europe, 2 Oceania

**Actions during 2021:**

Assess: 1 (KSR 5)

Plan: 2 (KSR 8, 9)

Network: 2 (KSR 2)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 12)

**Overall achievement 2021–2025:**

