



Whooper swan

Cygnus cygnus

Status

Amber listed: BR, WI, WL
SPEC 4^w (S)
Schedule 1 of WCA 1981
Annex I of EC Wild Birds Directive

National monitoring

Rare Breeding Birds Panel.
WeBS.

Population and distribution

One or two pairs of whooper swan breed in the UK each year. In winter, whooper swans have a predominantly northerly distribution. During the 1990–91 winter, the largest flocks of whooper swans were associated with arable land, although the majority of birds (68%) occurred on permanent inland waters (Rees et al 1997). The UK wintering population was recorded as 8,700 in January 1991 and 7,800 in January 1995 (Kirby et al 1992, Cranswick et al 1997).

Ecology

Whooper swans will roost and occasionally feed on water, including quite small lochs and ponds. They will feed on emergent and submergent freshwater plants, grass, farmland (cereals and stubble fields) and intertidal plants, eg eel-grass (*Winter Atlas*, Rees et al 1997).

Winter survey

WeBS.

See *National wintering swan census* and *Productivity of swans and geese* in the generic survey methods section.

References

- Cranswick, P A, Bowler, J M, Delany, S N, Einarsson, O, Gardarsson, A, McElwaine, J G, Merne, O J, Rees, E C and Wells, J H (1997) Numbers of whooper swans *Cygnus cygnus* in Iceland, Ireland and Britain in January 1995: results of the international whooper swan census. *Wildfowl* 47: 17–30.
- Kirby, J S, Rees, E C, Merne, O J and Gardarsson, A (1992) International census of whooper swans *Cygnus cygnus* in Britain, Ireland and Iceland: January 1991. *Wildfowl* 43: 20–26.
- Rees, E C, Kirby, J S and Gilburn, A (1997) Site selection by swans wintering in Britain and Ireland; the importance of geographical location and habitat. *Ibis* 139: 337–352.