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# Black Swan

*Cygnus atratus*

**Class:** *Aves*

**Order:** *Anseriformes*

**Family:** *Anatidae*

## Characteristics:

A large water bird and member of the swan family, the black swan's scientific name literally means, "a swan attired in black" as it's the only entirely black-colored swan in the world. As adults, both sexes exhibit black plumage with white primary and secondary feathers, a red bill with a white strip across the tip and red eyes. The legs and feet are black. Cygnets are born with grey down. In proportion to its body size, the black swan has the longest neck of the swan species, and it often holds its neck in an "S" shape. Females are slightly smaller than the males ([Arkive](#)).

## Behavior:

Black swans are one of just three swan species found in the southern hemisphere. They are strong fliers that fly together in groups and excellent swimmers but quite clumsy on land. They make a honking, trumpeting call. The males display threat behavior by raising their heads and flapping their wings while calling ([Animal Diversity Web](#)).

## Reproduction:

Pairs mate for life and together raise one brood per season. Clutch size can be up to 10, with the average being 5 to 6 eggs. The nest is made of reeds and grasses and usually placed either on a small island or floating on water. The cygnets are able to swim and feed themselves as soon as they are born ([Australian Museum](#)).

## Diet:

Wild: Algae and aquatic plants, feeds by putting its head under water  
Zoo: Waterfowl pellets, scratch grains, greens, lettuce, dog chow

## Conservation:

Destruction of wetlands is the largest threat to black swans but their populations are stable so they are listed as Least Concern by IUCN.

## FYI:

The black swan is the state emblem of Western Australia and appears on the state flag.



## **Range & Habitat:**

Permeant wetlands, large salt brackish or fresh waterways



**Lifespan:** up to 40 years in captivity and in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** As strong fliers with large bodies, black swans prefer open waterways as they may need over 120 feet of space to gain momentum to take off.

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Least Concern

