

Mute swan



I am a mute swan.

Male mute swans are known as cobs and females are called pens. Young swans are called cygnets.

I am a large white bird with an S-shaped neck, a pointed tail and an orange-red beak.

Can you see the S-shaped neck in the picture?

When I was a cygnet I was a grey-brown colour.

I like to swim, but you may also see me on land or flying.

When I take off from water, I run along the surface beating my wings up and down and then slowly ascend into the air.

When I am in the air I beat my wings slowly.

Try beating your arms up and down quickly as if you were trying to take off. Then beat them slowly as if you were flying through the air.

When I walk on land I waddle.

I like to eat plants found in water.

I will also graze on grass and accept food from humans.

My mother built a large nest on a small island near a stream.

It was built from rushes and reeds.

What do you think might happen to the nest if the stream floods?

She laid six eggs, but two did not hatch.

How many cygnets hatched?

When I was hatched from my egg, I spent the first two days in the nest with my mother.

I was soon drawn to the water and swimming with my family.



We cygnets would be given rides on the backs of our parents to keep us safe from pikes.

Pikes are capable of swallowing small cygnets whole.

By the end of the first week I could put my head under the water for a couple of seconds.

By the end of two weeks I could up-end, which means I could stick my bottom and feet in the air and put my neck and head under water.

After four months I learnt how to fly and had to be careful that I did not collide with anything.

What sort of obstacles might a mute swan collide with when flying?
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In September my parents chased me away from the family, and so I had to fend for myself.



See if you can find the following words:

Mute, swan, cob, pen

J	L	Q	S	P
I	M	U	T	E
C	S	W	A	N
O	P	A	Y	N
B	A	G	U	Y

How many points can you get?

Task	Tick	Points
Have you seen a mute swan?		2
Did you notice its orange-red bill?		3
Did you see it up-end?		4
Total points		

Please try to answer these questions:

What are male and female mute swans called?

How do mute swans take off from water?

What do mute swans like to eat?

What does up-ending mean?

Why do adult mute swans give cygnets a ride on their backs?