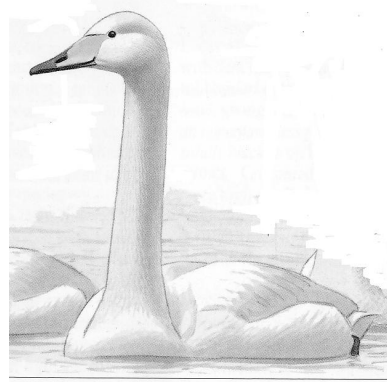


Swans – but not Mute

Has anybody noticed that there has been small flock of swans grazing on fields in the Kete area for the last month or so??

If you have noticed them, you may have wondered why they were feeding on grassy fields on the clifftop and not swimming around on a suitable pool, perhaps down at the Gann.



Well the reason is that these swans are not Mute Swans, which are usually found on or near water, but are a mixed flock of Whooper Swans (4) and Bewick's Swans (2). Both these swans have black and yellow beaks, unlike the red beak of the Mute Swan. The Whooper Swan is somewhat bigger than the Bewick's and they both have straighter necks than the Mute Swan. At this time of the year they spend most of their time grazing on grass, and do not seem particularly attracted by water, but in their summer haunts in the far north they breed in wet and boggy areas, or by lakes.

Both swans are winter visitors to the UK and relatively scarce visitors to Pembrokeshire. Much larger flocks of these birds can be found elsewhere in the UK for example at Slimbridge, on the Somerset Levels and at the Ouse Washes in East Anglia, where they are an impressive sight.

And incidentally, neither species is "mute"- they both have loud bugling and honking calls which they typically make in flight. But neither swan produces the distinctive sighing wingbeat sound which is produced by Mute Swans.

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