

mute swan

Cygnus olor

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Anseriformes
Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, nonnative

FEATURES

The mute swan is 56 to 60 inches long. It has white body feathers and black facial feathers. Its bill is orange, and there is a black knob at its base. This bird has an extremely long neck. The male and female are similar in appearance.

BEHAVIORS

The mute swan is an uncommon, permanent resident throughout Illinois and a migrant through Illinois. This bird lives on and around ponds and lakes. It feeds mainly on submerged, aquatic vegetation but also eats aquatic insects, crustaceans (crayfish, shrimp) and fishes. While resting, the neck of this bird is positioned in an "S" curve with its bill pointed downward. When the mute swan is swimming, the neck is curved, and the wings are raised. Mute swans migrate in long lines or in a "V" pattern. The flapping wings make a whistling noise that can be heard up to one mile away. Like the name implies, this swan is quiet but will hiss or snort when irritated. The male swan is known as a "cob," the female is a "pen" and the yearling is a "cygnet." Mute swans have permanent mating partners. The male mute swan incubates the eggs in the absence of the female. This species is native to Europe and Asia. It was introduced to Illinois (1971) and many other locations in the United States as a decorative bird for lakes. It has become established in the wild.

ILLINOIS RANGE



Permanent

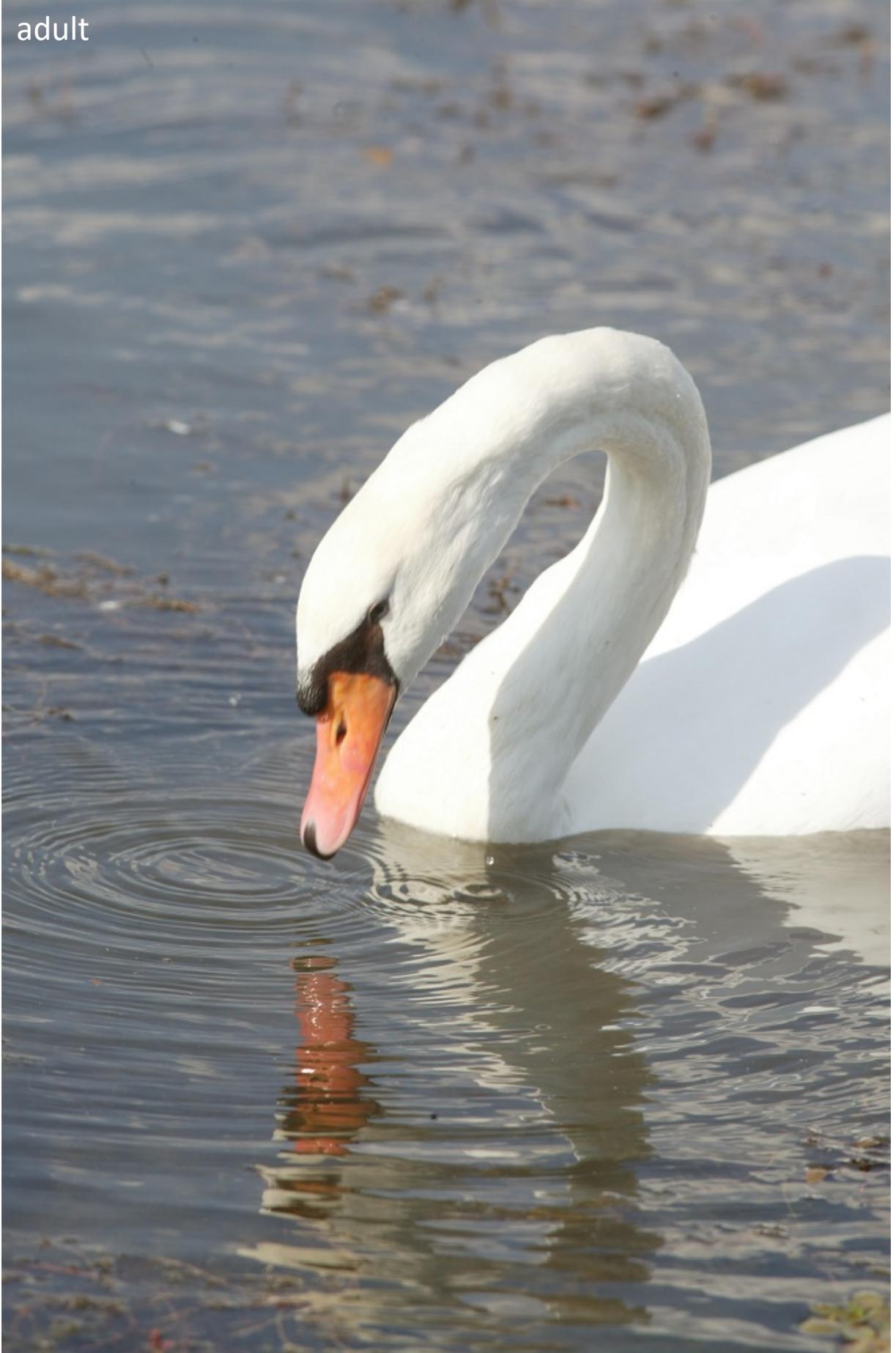


Migrating

adult



adult



adult with cygnets



adult



Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none