

DAWIN LAKE



# ROYAL & POLISH MUTE SWANS

**Cygnus (genus) olor (species) - a species of swan**  
**- member of the waterfowl family Anatidae**

**There are two types of Mute Swans and they are divided by a color variation.** As youngsters the two variants are easily to identify. As adults they basically look alike except the Polish variant will have pink or gray legs and feet instead of black like the Royals. Polish Mutes are from Eurasia, the Royals are from Great Britain.

Adult Mute Swans can live 30-40 years in captivity (one of our Dawn Lake swans is over 20 and another nearly 20!) and grow to be VERY large birds weighing 25 - 30 pounds and measuring 4- 5.5 feet in length, with a wingspan up to nearly 8 feet. These swans are the second largest waterfowl species in North America - slightly smaller than Trumpeter Swans.

## Swan Terminology - How to Speak Swan

**Females** – pens

**Males:** cobs

**Babies** – cygnets

**Maiden swan** – A pen that has not yet nested-generally first year to third spring.

**Brood** - to sit on eggs to incubate OR a number of young hatched at one time.

**Group of swans in flight** - a wedge or a flight.

**Group of swans swimming/grouped** - a bevy, a bank or a herd.

**Pinioned** – a procedure that prevents swans from flying.

**Great Website**

**All About Birds** - [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)  
Get details on the Mute Swan, listen to calls, and more.



"Pearl" Photo: Marcia Scholl

# DAWN LAKE SWANS

**Swans have been a part of our lake since 1984**

**Currently, we have three swans** on the lake and they are all females (pens). Our swans have been pinioned (When cygnets are 1-21 days old, one pinion bone bone is removed or a small piece of tendon is cut on one wing) and cannot fly so they are our permanent lake residents. They do lay eggs, but they are unfertilized.



## Swan Fact

**Usually swans will wag their tail when they like something or are happy or exited.**

**As with any “family” our swans can get testy** – like the times you’ve seen one racing after another with their wings lifted up off their bodies. When you hear them “hissing” they are upset or protective. They remember friends or foes. Our girls are clean birds who preen by pulling at their feathers and will “shower” under our fountains or bathe by submerging their heads and bodies under the water.

Our swans are a beloved addition to our Dawn Lake community – through the efforts of volunteers and the financial commitment of our homeowners our swans bring us beauty, joy and entertainment!



Photo: Iris Kovach

## Squeaky

At 20+ years old, she is our resident “grand dame.” She is always looking around for food and will eat out of your hand. She is a Royal Mute Swan.

## Snow

She’s around 20 years old. Strong willed, stately and a master at giving you an intimidating look. Like Squeaky, Snow is a Royal Mute.



Photo: Iris Kovach



Photo: Marcia Scholl

## Pearl

Our youngster was hatched in May of 2023. Her personality is still developing, but so far she’s feisty and athletic – she can fly over 4 feet vertically! Pearl is a Polish Mute Swan.

# LET'S DIVE IN!

## Important & Interesting Things to Know



### Swan Fact

A mute swan's typical swimming speed is 1.6 miles per hour.

## Only Ladies in this Lake

Historically, we've had unpleasant experiences with extreme aggression in male Mutes- attacking boats, kayaks, swimmers and killing their own cygnets.

Our swans are all pens and by-in-large they live fairly peacefully among themselves with occasional "spats." Our swans can be territorial - and at times have divided the lake among themselves into "west side" and "east side" ranges.

## We Might Need Some Space

You might think our swans are domesticated because they rely on us for food, but they are still wild animals. And like any animal they will behave aggressively when threatened or their territory is invaded. Swans show aggression by forming their wings into an arch to appear bigger and they hiss loudly- or they may give no warning. If you're confronted, simply back off.

Give them space when you see them nesting in their pens. When you're out on the lake let them come to you for food or a visit.

Kids should be supervised when feeding our swans and taught to be respectful. Don't ever try to capture or hold our swans - it traumatizes them and they will be aggressive. They are big, their wings are strong, and their clawed feet are very sharp.



### Swan Fact

Mute swans aren't mute, but their vocalizations are much quieter than other swans and they don't carry far. They usually snort or hiss when aggravated.

## Home Sweet Pen

Typically swans sleep the majority of the night on the water. They often tuck one leg up under their wing - it's like us crossing our legs, or they do it to control their body temperature or to simply dry their feet.

Our swans use their two swan pens (one at Paul Maye and Beverly Linnihan's home on Willow Pt and another at John and Iris Kovach's house on Whispering Lake Dr) for nesting, napping, protection and sometimes to sleep at night.

Please do not put food in the pens - it will rot and draw vermin.

# LET'S DIVE IN!

## Important & Interesting Things to Know

### YES PLEASE - Feed Our Swans!

Our swans don't shy away from a meal or a snack. – don't worry, you can't overfeed a swan, they stop when they're full.

Swans are vegetarians – they love leafy greens – romaine and iceberg lettuce, spinach and kale. You can also feed them peas, carrots and sweet potatoes (diced) coleslaw, and corn.

#### NEED SOMETHING TO FEED THE SWANS?

A fridge with lettuce and a bin with pellets (bring a bag for pellets) is located at the Hailey's house at 13801 N Crown Pt - through the gate that says "Swan Food," on the left side of their house.

Food is purchased with funds in our annual HOA budget.

## How to Feed Our Swans

The preferred way to feed the swans is to use a blue feeding float (you see them around the lake). The float keeps food buoyant and from fish and other birds. On a boat - toss them some treats!

Small tear/chop greens, dice tubers. Swans do not have teeth - they use their bills to tear their food and then drink water to move it down their necks.

Some people like hand feeding the swans - know that they may snap at your fingers or follow you if you're on the water.

#### NEED A BLUE FEEDING FLOAT?

Call/text Iris Kovach: 925-787-0948  
or email: [iriskovach@aol.com](mailto:iriskovach@aol.com)

Floats are purchased with funds in our annual HOA budget.



### Swan Facts

Swans don't have teeth - their beaks have serrated edges that look like tiny "teeth."

## Foods Hazardous to Our Swans

Swans cannot digest processed or "human" foods – ingestion can make them very sick or even cause death.

NO bread, cakes, sandwiches, pizza crusts – nothing with meat, butter, salt, sugar, fats or food additives.

Never feed the swans moldy or food that's on the edge of going bad – it can cause intestinal problems or botulism, which can be fatal to our swans.

# LET'S DIVE IN!

## Important & Interesting Things to Know

### Springtime is Egg Time

Once a year, in the spring (April – May) female Mute Swans lay 5-7 eggs. The eggs are about 4" long and 8-10 ounces. They are gray or blue green depending on what the swans have been eating. If you don't see our swans out on the lake as much as usual, they might be nesting.

In the past our swans have been prolific layers – output into double digits. Now, our swans are at various life stages: Squeaky is too old to lay and Pearl, as a one-year-old, is too young (she will start laying around 2-4 years-of-age). Snow is our single layer – 5 eggs this year and last. All eggs are unfertilized.

**WOULD YOU LIKE A SWAN EGG?**

Call/text Iris Kovach at: 925-787-0948  
or email: [iriskovach@aol.com](mailto:iriskovach@aol.com)

## Natural & Man-made Dangers

### IF YOU SEE A SWAN IN DISTRESS OR DANGER

call/text Iris Kovach: 925-787-0948

Although our adult swans are large birds and can be a force when threatened, they do have two successful natural predators in our area- coyotes and bobcats.

Our swans also live with man-made hazards: Lead fishing lures or sinkers are deadly if swallowed by the swans.

Unattended fishing rods are another real danger on the lake. If a swan gets entangled in a line or sets a hook it can lead to a painful injury and/or lethal infection.

**REMEMBER ON DAWN LAKE:  
LEFT ALONE LINES = BIG FINES  
\$50/per incident**



### Great Website

[Swanlovers.net](http://Swanlovers.net) - pictures of Royal & Polish Mute cygnets from birth to adulthood – they grow up fast!

## Let's Give them a Hand!

### Join the Dawn Lake Swan Committee!

If you would like to help make decisions about the Dawn Lake swan program; if you could help catch / monitor swan when needed; and/or if you are handy and can help with the swan pens– the Swan Committee could use your help!

For more information  
call /text Iris Kovach: 925-787-0948  
or email: [iriskovach@aol.com](mailto:iriskovach@aol.com)



## SOURCES & RESOURCES

Individual sources and these sites were referenced when creating this document - thank you. URLs below will take you directly to pages specific to Mute Swans. Double click on any underlined text on this page or throughout this deck (Great Website buttons in this deck are also direct links!)

**All About Birds** - [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mute\\_Swan/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mute_Swan/overview)

**Swanlovers.net** - <https://swanlovers.net/category/mute-swans-royals/>

**Audubon Society** - <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/mute-swan>

**Animal Diversity Web** - [https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Cygnus\\_olor](https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Cygnus_olor)

**The Swan Food Project** - <https://theswanfoodproject.co.uk/feeding-tips/>

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Created by Marcia L. Scholl, Dawn Lake, May 2024.

### Members of the Dawn Lake Swan Committee

**Chair**, Iris Kovach, **Co-chair**, Bill Hailey **Members**: Cindy Beltz, Suzanne Chamberlain, Carolyn Haven, Margaret & Fred Holland, Margie Jasosh, Patty Jedlicka, John Kovach, Joe & Lisa Leschke, Mark & Rosemary Mayers, Charles Niday, Judy Olausen, Cathy Paneno, Sue Purdy, Holly Ruggles, Brian Sundstrom, and Sue Worthen.

**Cynthia Broze** - Read her article the "[History of Swans on Dawn Lake](#)" on the [Dawn Lake HOA website](#).

**Dawn Lake Homeowners and the Dawn Lake HOA Board of Directors** for their continued commitment to the swans through the Dawn Lake HOA annual budget (and for keeping their blue feeding floats full!).

**Iris Kovach** for her assistance.