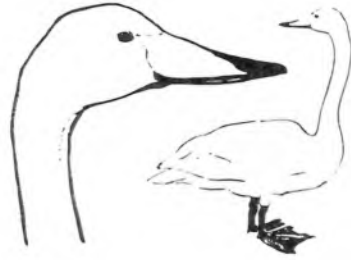


The current status of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* and Bewick's Swan *Cygnus bewickii* populations in the Prichankayskaya Lowland, USSR



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Two species of swan currently inhabit the Prichankayskaya Lowland, USSR; the Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus* and the Bewick's Swan, *C. bewickii*. Only the Whooper Swan breeds in the area. The Mute Swan, *C. olor*, which used to nest in Primorye at the end of the last century is no longer found at Khanka Lake.

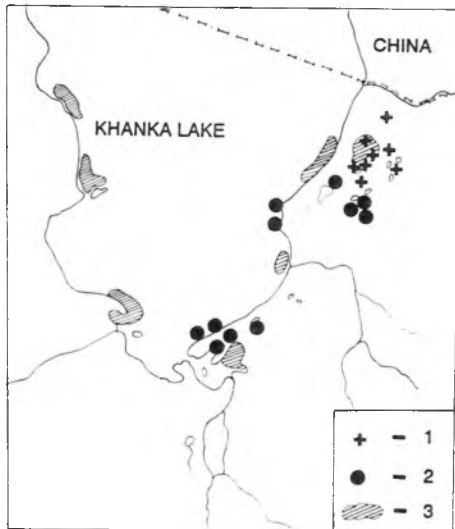


Fig.1. Distribution of Whooper and Bewick's swans in Prichankayskaya lowland.

- + 1 Whooper Swan nest sites in 1976-88.
- 2 Whooper Swan flock sites in summer.
- /// 3 Whooper and Bewick's swan flocks during migration period.

Breeding

In 1980-88 the number of Whooper Swans nesting varied between one to six pairs. Nesting success was relatively low; in 1987 five breeding pairs raised seven young to the second half of September. An additional 20-25 non-breeding Whooper Swans summer in the area. Their numbers decrease with

deteriorating feeding conditions on Khanka Lake, as the water level rises in late summer.

Migration

Both swan species are recorded during migration but relative numbers have only been recorded twice, when 6-14% of all swans counted were Bewick's Swans. For the remainder of this paper the numbers of swans on migration will not be divided by species.

Spring migration occurs between March and May and is most intensive during April. Relatively few swans are seen migrating during the day; an average of 3-5 flocks per day with under 50 birds per flock. Large numbers of migratory swans, of over 1,000 birds congregate on Khanka's Shoal and other lowland lakes. In 1987-88, four aerial surveys were made by helicopter, when 375 (2-3 April), 1,133 (11-12 April), 585 (17-19 April) and 3,689 (21-23 April) swans were recorded.

The number of migratory swans decreases rapidly during May until by mid-May most birds have left the area. An aerial survey on 23-25 May 1987 counted only 35 Whooper Swans. However, over 100 swans were counted in May 1986 on Lake Cascade in the eastern part of Khanka Lake. During the day the swans dispersed onto small lakes but congregated on a larger lake overnight.

By mid-September part of the summer Whooper Swan population leaves the lowland, although not all the young have fledged by that time. Autumn migration occurs between October and early November. Aerial surveys conducted on 9-12 and 28-29 October 1987 recorded 192 and 1,138 swans respectively. In the second count, 19% of the swans were first-year birds. As in the spring, relatively few swans are seen migrating during the day. Overall, Khanka Lake is an important site for migratory swans, although it is in the extreme southeast of the present Whooper Swan range in Eurasia.

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