

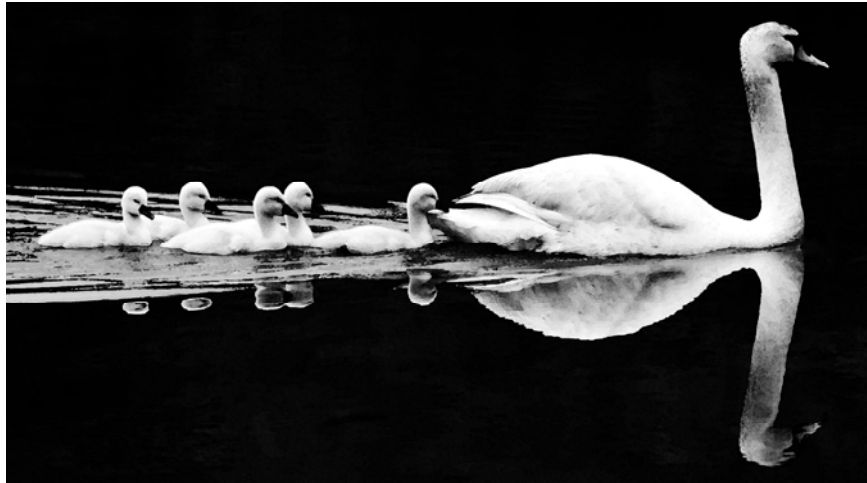
NATURE'S WAY

The Mute Swans of Lake Logan

Bud Simpson

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The Mute Swans of Lake Logan, Ohio
(Cygnus olor)



By Bud Simpson

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Dedication and Thanks:

This small book, as was my previous book, *Nature's Way: The Great Blue Heron*, is still dedicated to all who love nature and all its creatures, but in particular, its feathered creatures ... even the beautiful, but falsely excoriated, Mute Swan. It is also dedicated to Big Boy and Baby Doll (AKA Annabelle and Gertrude). If they had never entered my life, I wouldn't be writing this small book.

Many thanks to Suzane Johnson, widow of Shell Johnson, for the use of the photos of the swans' early, pre-Lake Logan life. Thanks also for filling in the facts to make my narration more complete. I'm very grateful. Any mistakes in that area are my own.

Thanks must also go to, including but not limited to; my wife Margo, for enduring my absence for hours while I was down in my dungeon putting this book together. Plus, thanks to literally hundreds of people from near and far who came to Lake Logan to see and photograph the Mute Swans and learn about their lives as they raised their family there. In particular, thanks to the residents at Lake Logan who feel deeply the loss of these beautiful birds. Thanks also to the Regal Swan Foundation, Inc. who took a deep interest and offered education and encouragement to those of us concerned about this truly regal bird.

*But now they drift on the still water
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes, when I awake some day
To find they have flown away.*

W. B. Yeats

Bud Simpson

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The Olio Folio

Nature's Way: The Great Blue Heron

Nature's Way: The Mute Swans of Lake Logan

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INTRODUCTION:



IN THE HEARTS OF MANY people around the world, the swan; in particular, the Mute Swan, has always been a visual symbol of love for many reasons. Mute Swans mate for life. They show great affection for their mates. They will each protect their mates and their cygnets even if it puts their own lives in peril. Their mating ritual is a thing of beauty to behold. At some point in this ritual, they often strike the pose as seen above, which resembles a heart, another universal symbol of love. After the mating act, they sometimes intertwine their long, flexible necks as if hugging each other. If there are any wild animals which truly show an overt, human-like version of love and affection, Mute Swans are the ones.

Unfortunately, this protective affection towards family members is construed by some to be aggression. In actuality, this particular trait is shared by nearly all birds and wild animals to one degree or another. Even the tiny hummingbird will go into battle to drive away a perceived threat to its territory. Blackbirds have been known to

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attack people walking under or near their nests. Fortunately, hummingbirds and blackbirds are not as large as swans. If they were, instead of being an annoyance, in a short time most bird species would be extinct if humans were to make the decision.

That is why this book has come about. The perception of "aggression" has been attached to Mute Swans, especially here in the United States. Reading some of the descriptions of these birds makes it sound as if they should be in a horror movie. If you do research on the Mute Swan in the United States, the evil sin of aggression is nearly always included in their description. Plus, their second deadly sin is that these swans feed on the same "natural resources" as other "native" swans, geese, and waterfowl. It is claimed that the Mute Swan eats daily about eight pounds of "natural resource" which some claim could and should be used to feed other native species. In relation to the Mute Swan, the other species most mentioned is the Trumpeter Swan. The Trumpeter Swan, the largest of the world's swans, eats eleven pounds of the same resource. Apparently, it's even more of a glutton than the Mute Swan.

Another deadly sin of the Mute Swan is that it is sedentary. In naturalist speak, that means it doesn't migrate. It tends to stay in or near its own territory. Therefore, it eats all year round in the same area, exhausting "natural resources", otherwise known as food which could be consumed by other species. When lakes freeze over, Mute Swans, geese and other waterfowl don't have ready access to their seasonal foods. They eat much less in the winter months. At times, they don't eat at all. I have seen Mute Swans, Canada Geese, and other waterfowl, curl up on the ice cover into the equivalent of an avian fetal position, tuck their heads under their wings, and not move for several days while conserving body heat and energy. They appear to be able to go into a state of torpor to get through periods of cold and a scarce food supply.

Topor is akin to hibernation. Bodily functions slow down. The heart beats at a much slower rate. Breathing slows. A bird or animal can survive in this state for long periods with very little or no nourishment at all. Even hummingbirds can bring this state about when cold weather arrives too soon and the nights are long and cool. While in this state, birds do not use up external "natural resources." They use up body tissue and fat, as do other animals. A question which comes to my mind is this: Which swan eats more "natural resource" in a year? The sedentary Mute Swan, which eats eight pounds of food "daily" except in winter and during its topor states, or the migratory Trumpeter Swan which eats eleven pounds of food every day of the year because it migrates to where food is readily available? You figure that one out.

A very good characteristic of the "natural resource" swans and other waterfowl consume is this: It re-grows! Amazingly enough, each year, as soon as the water temperatures warm up and conditions become right, new growth appears. If it didn't, Mute Swans would actually eat themselves out of house and home no matter where they lived. Even in their native countries in Europe or Asia. Of course, that doesn't happen. Ask the Queen of England. Wow! Newly re-grown "natural resources" for