

21/11/2023

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Slimbridge Bewick's Swans make latest-ever return

The latest-ever returning Bewick's Swans have arrived to winter at Slimbridge WWT.

A pair of swans, nicknamed 'Maisie' and 'Maifield', returned to the famous Gloucestershire site on Thursday 16 November, with two juveniles. Three more birds had arrived by Saturday.



Bewick's Swan is an iconic wintering species at Slimbridge WWT (Tim Salkeld).

The return date marks the latest arrival of the species since 1965, when conservationists started monitoring the returning flocks. The prior latest-ever return came only last year, when a pair returned on 10 November 2022.

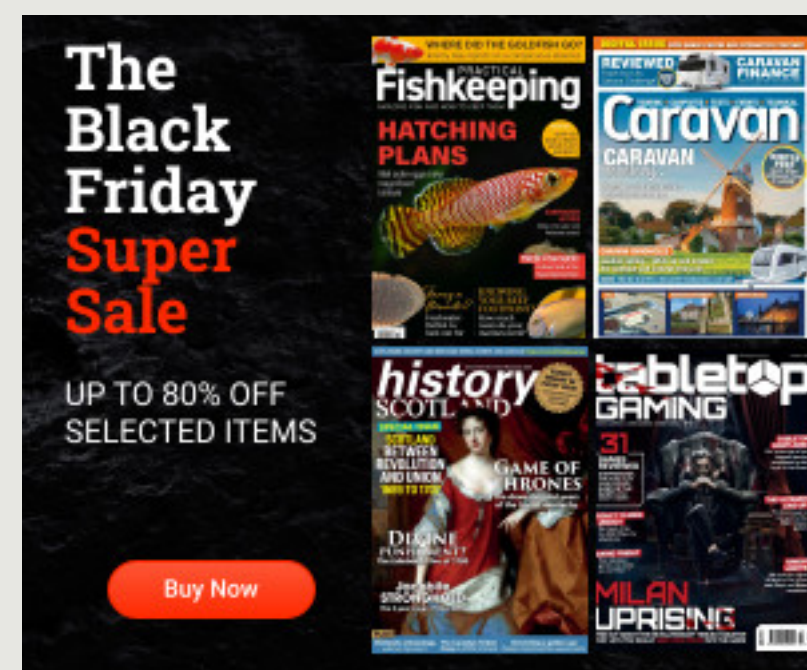
It is part of a long-term negative trend when it comes to wintering Bewick's Swans in Britain and Ireland. Numbers have dwindled at Slimbridge from an annual flock of 700 to little more than 100 these days.

Kane Brides, senior research officer at the WWT, said the "saddest fact" was one day the swans may never return to winter in Britain.

"This is happening right in front of our eyes," he said. "Climate change is playing its part here."

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