

# Flight of the Swans has started...

29 September 2016

Russian Federation



Sacha photographed on the first day of her 7,000 km journey

Sacha's epic 7,000km journey following the Bewick's on their migration from their breeding ground in arctic Russia has started. Early on the morning of Monday 19th September, she took off with her paramotor.

A light tailwind gave Sacha the ideal conditions to start her journey from the Pechora Delta on Russia's northern coast. Over the next ten weeks she will fly across northern Europe and then cross The Channel and continue to the swans' most westerly destination: Slimbridge Wetland Centre in Gloucestershire, UK.

During her journey Sacha will stop at nine Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) which are internationally important breeding, wintering and passage sites for Bewick's swan and thousands of other migratory birds.

- Mid-October: [Matsalu Nature Reserve Ramsar Site](#) (Estonia)
- Mid-October: [Lubana Wetland Complex Ramsar Site](#) (Latvia)
- Mid-October: [Nemunas Delta Regional Park Ramsar Site](#) (Lithuania)
- Mid-October: [Biebrza National Park Ramsar Site](#) (Poland)
- Late-October: [Vadehavet \(Wadden Sea\) Ramsar Site](#) (Denmark)
- Early-Nov: [Lauwersmeer Ramsar Site](#) (Netherlands)
- Early-Nov: [Zwin Ramsar Site](#) (Belgium)
- November: Welney, which is a part of [Ouze Washes Ramsar Site](#) (United Kingdom)
- Slimbridge, part of the [Severn Estuary Ramsar Site](#) (United Kingdom).



At each point along the journey she will spend time with the people who live along the swans' path, who may have clues as to the decline of the swan population.

Over the last two decades, the number of Bewick's swans making the journey back across northern Europe has almost halved. Researchers have identified several dangers that the swans face, but the exact reasons behind their decline remain a mystery.

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Sacha Dench said: "I'm so excited to finally be off. I've been planning this expedition for two years. It's going to be a real adventure. I love flying and I'm fascinated by wildlife. I'm filming the whole trip and I can't wait to share my swan's eye view with the world."

"But my biggest hope is that we gain a better understanding of what is going wrong for the Bewick's swans. They each first make this long journey at just a few months old, and they return here to their birthplace every summer for the rest of their lives. It's an extraordinary lifestyle, but sadly fewer and fewer are surviving.

"We're doing all we can as conservationists to get to the bottom of this problem, but it's not happening fast enough for the swans, so it's time to get on the road and in the air, to see the places and meet the people that might hold the key to this mystery."

Her progress is being tracked by satellite and you can follow her progress [here](#).

And twice a week she will broadcast video diaries, detailing her progress and encounters with the swans and the people along the way.

She is also collecting signatures to show the level of support for helping the Bewick's swans. Make every kilometre count. Sign the petition [here](#).

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### \*Latest updates

Sacha has now completed the main part of her tundra crossing and has joined the Ground Crew in Mezen. Our colleagues at the Nenetskiy Zapovednik report that large numbers of Bewick swans are now gathering in the Korovinskaya Bay, preparing for take-off. Temperatures in the Russian Arctic are expected to fall this weekend which could trigger their mass-migration so Sacha and the team will now continue their journey to Arkhangelsk. The first two Bewick's also reached Estonia last week so things are moving quickly!

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