Flight of the swans

Flying with Bewick's swans through the wetlands of Europe

The Flight of the Swans expedition will be the first ever attempt to follow the migration of the Bewick's swan from the air. Setting off this September, Sacha Dench of the UK's Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) will fly a paramotor from the Bewick's swans' breeding grounds in arctic Russia 7,500km across 11 countries.

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 others migratory birds. Public educational events, festivals and celebrations will take place at these Sites:

Biebrza National Park Ramsar Site (Poland); Matsalu Nature Reserve Ramsar Site (Estonia); Lubana Wetland Complex Ramsar Site (Latvia); Nemunas Delta Regional Park Ramsar Site (Lithuania); Vadehavet (Wadden Sea) Ramsar Site (Denmark); Lauwersmeer Ramsar Site (Netherlands); Zwin Ramsar Site (Belgium); Welney, which is part of Ouze Washes Ramsar Site (United Kingdom); Slimbridge, part of the Severn Estuary Ramsar Site (United Kingdom).

The paramotor is a fabric wing, from which Sacha will dangle with a propeller strapped to her back. Flying at the same speed and height as the swans, she will experience storms, sea crossings and extreme cold along with the swans. She will share their view in real time using cameras and satellite communication, and highlight the importance of Ramsar Sites and the need to help maintain these stepping-stone locations for the Bewick's swan and their wealth of wildlife. (Main photograph to right is a composite picture).

More about the expedition at www.flightoftheswans.org