

Cygnus

In Greek mythology, Cygnus has been identified with several different legendary swans. Zeus disguised himself as a swan to seduce Leda, Spartan king Tyndareus's wife, who gave birth to the Gemini, Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra; Orpheus was transformed into a swan after his murder, and was said to have been placed in the sky next to his lyre (Lyra); and the King Cyncus was transformed into a swan.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, there are three people named Cygnus, all of whom are transformed into swans. Alongside Cyncus, noted above, he mentions a boy from Tempe who commits suicide when Phyllius refuses to give him a tamed bull that he demands, but is transformed into a swan and flies away. He also mentions a son of Neptune who is an invulnerable warrior in the Trojan War who is eventually defeated by Achilles, but Neptune saves him by transforming him into a swan.

Cygnus, together with other avian constellations near the summer solstice, Vultur Cadens and Aquila, may be a significant part of the origin of the myth of the Stymphalian Birds, one of The Twelve Labours of Hercules.

Cygnus is also known as the Northern Cross, one story goes Emperor Constantine looked at the night sky before the great battle against Maxentius and saw the great cross of Swan in the night sky, and decided to fight under the sign of the Christian Cross. *In Hoc Signo Vincas* or "with this sign, you will conquer".