



Issue 8

NEWSLETTER

October 2017

WELCOME

It has been a busy summer for us at Swan Support – so much so we didn't celebrate the fact that we have been going now for over two years.

We may not have a lot of funds but we have been extremely successful in responding to rescue requests, rehabilitating the majority of admissions, and supporting other organisations in the care and monitoring of the health of our swan population. There is much to appreciate.

This issue shares the following stories:

- Cygnet update
- Henley Royal Regatta
- Swan Upping
- From youngest to oldest
 - Scaling the Heights
 - Superboy to the Rescue
- Far and Wide
- RIP to some of our oldest friends
- Alert
- And finally

Enjoy!
The Editor

CYGNET UPDATE

The family at Arlington continue to provide us with antics as they do every year.

If you remember, 8 cygnets were born and for the first week, all was well. Unfortunately, 3 disappeared early on – taken either by pike or heron.

The five remaining cygnets were thriving – that is until the adults did their usual and took the family on a walkabout. This happened several times and unfortunately in the process, 2 more cygnets disappeared.

The remaining three are doing well and they are already practicing their flying.

Meanwhile, the editor is celebrating the return of cygnets to Caversham for the first time in several years. If you recall the image of the swan with a tent next to its nest from our last newsletter – she hatched four cygnets, all of whom have survived up until now (including running the gauntlet of Reading Festival and the increased boat activity along the river).

HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA

The beginning of July heralded in another successful year at the Regatta. All the swans were removed prior to the start of the racing and a team of volunteers took to the water in boats, to shepherd the flocks of geese away from the course.

It truly is quite the art to know how to read the behavior of the geese, anticipate when they are about to break out and head somewhere we don't want them to go. It is even more of an art to persuade them to turn around and head back to safety.

The most challenging day was Saturday, when our teams at the finish had to contend not just with the geese, but with a plethora of pleasure boats coming up for the fireworks in the evening.

At one point there were so many boats queuing up to go under the bridge, there was nowhere to cross from one side of the river to the other and the geese took full advantage, breaking ranks and making a dash for freedom.

I'm still not sure how we managed to keep them safe. And we did.

SWAN UPPING

Wendy was again part of the annual Swan Upping this year and it was a great week. Numbers of cygnets have increased from 72 last year, to 132 (with a couple of families raising 8 cygnets). Hopefully this is an indication of a strong and healthy population and speaks to the health of the river as well.

SCALING THE HEIGHTS

Wendy rang me early one hot morning; there was a report of a large cygnet trapped in an electricity substation enclosure by Theale.

On arrival, I could see the cygnet pacing about behind a 10ft high, close-barred metal fence with vicious spikes on top. A KEEP OUT sign gave out a number to ring in an emergency, but it was no longer in service and there was no forwarding number.

I looked around and saw a building supplies shop across the road and thought I could borrow a stepladder to get over the fence. Two very helpful chaps came across with some tall steps and gave me a hand up and over, one coming with me to assist. It was quite a big enclosure with heaps of rubbish and rubble, buddleia bushes as well as thickets of brambles – where the cygnet now found itself doubly trapped.

I had just grabbed him and was detangling him from the brambles when a man from the Electricity Board arrived and unlocked the gate. He had been informed that vandals had broken into the enclosure.

A quick explanation ensued and all was well. I was glad not to have to scale the fence with a large cygnet tucked under my arm. A quick check of the cygnet revealed just a few scratches from the brambles and he was good to go.

I never thought I would be considered a vandal at my age (if you check back in previous newsletters you'll know how old I am).

Diana

SUPERBOY TO THE RESCUE

Our youngest rescuer, Harry, son of Wendy and Steve, came to the rescue recently at West Drayton. The swan had flown into a field behind some high security fencing and appeared to be injured. As Steve was contemplating how to get a ladder, Harry said, 'I can get it', wriggled under the fencing where there was just enough room for a 7 year old to pass, walked quietly up to the swan, picked it up and brought it back, handing it back under the fence to his dad.



He does have experience, having handled swans in a controlled environment, at the treatment centre, but even so it was a surprise to his parents, and has guaranteed his spot as youngster rescuer ever.

FAR AND WIDE

We pride ourselves on being available 24 hours a day, covering an extensive area of the South of England. A look at the rescue records for August shows just how far and wide we travel.

Milton Keynes is not even on the Thames Valley map (hint, it is in the north eastern most corner of the map way above Aylesbury). We do try to find local rescuers or other wildlife organisations that can help out, but sometimes no one is available and in that case we will do our best to arrive in a timely fashion to effect the rescue.



Banbury – to pick up a cygnet that had stopped eating and had been separated from its family as it weakened.

Milton Keynes - a swan on the bank all day, When our rescuer picked it up at 10.30pm at night (after a two hour drive), it was dehydrated, and keeled.

Oxford – a swan had landed in the dark in the Park and Ride. Two helpful security guards managed to pen it until our rescuer, Joanne, got there, picked it up and released it by Donnington Bridge.

Woking – a swan on a cricket pitch not moving. By the time our rescuer got there it had flown off and three hours later it was found on the river, dehydrated and being attacked by the resident male, defending his cygnets.

Newbury – Two cygnets abandoned by the family. One found above the lock, one below. One of the cygnets was significantly smaller than the other, meaning it may not even have been part of the original family.

This is of course in addition to our more usual areas of Windsor and Eton, Reading, Uxbridge, Slough and of course Datchet.

.RIP

This year we lost two of our favourite swans (not that we have favourites). Both have been a part of our lives for a long time.

North Lake, Bracknell. Willow – the female swan was attacked and killed by a dog. She leaves her mate Prince and four cygnets.

Heathlake, Sandhurst. The male was attacked by a dog and died at the treatment centre a few weeks later. He leaves his mate and three cygnets.

Subsequently a pair of swans flew into that territory, but the female was determined to defend her family and territory and has resolutely seen off all unwelcome arrivals.



Once again we would ask everyone to be mindful of walking dogs off lead near wildlife.

We have had far too many incidents this year of dog attacks – most of which have been fatal. They could all have been avoided had the dogs been kept under control, particularly during the breeding season.

ALERT!

If you have been following us on social media, you will have heard of the tragic shooting of four swans in Slough, on the Grand Union Canal. Three died, and a fourth one was seriously injured.

If anyone has any information on this incident, please contact us, or Crimestoppers.

AND FINALLY

As we look towards expanding our operation, your donations are vitally important. Please support the realization of our plans, which we will share more of soon, by texting a donation to 70070 of between £1-10 using the code: FC0040 £(amount). Or by sending in a cheque.

Thank you in advance.

The Editor

Wendy Hermon

Operations Director and Founder

Swan Support

Queen Mother Reservoir

Horton Road

Datchet

SL3 9HN



@swan_support



Swan Support

Website: www.swansupport.org.uk

Email: info@swansupport.org.uk

For any swan rescue call:

07968 868172 or

07572 450967
