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# Swan Lifeline Newsletter

Issue 68

[www.swanlifeline.org.uk](http://www.swanlifeline.org.uk)

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### Editorial

The various regattas passed with predominantly fine weather. The numbers of swans at Henley were down but the Canada goose population constantly increases as do the Egyptian geese. We also had a couple of practice 'runs' on Dorney Lake. The first was to clear the lake for the Junior World Rowing Championships and the second for the kayak trials. The Olympics will no doubt be challenging for our team of rescuers to keep the swans away for the duration - added to which the traffic around Eton will be disrupted.

Our struggle to engage with all the modern technology continues, the speed at which everything moves forward is quite astounding to the older ones amongst us, but we have made a start with **Facebook** and **Just Text Giving** so those of you who are so inclined can see what we are doing there.

We also applied for a grant with **Nat West Community Force** which encourages people to vote on line for projects. I was not quite up to speed when I sent out the first e-mails about it, but a couple of people helped tip me off which meant that subsequent e-mails showed the link and details. With this, as with the newsletter, so that your details are not passed on to a lot of other people I send the e-mails to [elizabethkwebb@btinternet.com](mailto:elizabethkwebb@btinternet.com) with the recipients as BCC. I realise that nothing is foolproof but it does help eliminate some of the inevitable SPAM. Our next project is to update the database and the mailing list. Do please let us know if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or if you can accept it by e-mail, also if any of your details are incorrect. It is no good us creating a new list and finding that you have moved or that the information we have listed is wrong.

### Fundraising/Just Text Giving

Our first campaign on Just Text Giving is for new rescue vehicles; in particular we need a replacement for our main rescue van. The Vivaro van has broken down several times recently and the bills have been hefty. If you feel you can help we are asking for donations of £2, £5 or £10 which can be sent by texting **70070** with the message **NAWS12 £** (you specify the figure). **Texts are charged at your mobile phone operator's standard rate. The Charity will receive 100% of your donation. You must be 16 or over and please ask the bill payer's permission. For full terms and conditions and more information, please visit [www.justgiving.com/info/terms-of-service](http://www.justgiving.com/info/terms-of-service).**

We had a stall at the Eton College Fair at the end of September, luckily the weather was reasonable as we were out in the Quadrangle, having usually been in the fives courts. The atmosphere there is always good. **Val Barker** sold costume jewellery there as well as at the Open Day. Val relies on donations of unwanted jewellery and often boxes items up etc if you have any unwanted pieces do please let us know. Val also accepts broken silver and gold items which she sells for scrap and then donates the money to us.

Unfortunately this newsletter is running too late to promote the stall at the Chertsey Charity Fair and no others are scheduled for the near future although the programme of talks continues. We generally request that we be allowed to sell goods after a talk as often when people enjoy the talk they like to take away a memento. Our tea towel which has been going for probably twenty years illustrates the Swans of the World and is always popular. We are also in need of another laptop as one of those used for the projectors is causing problems.

We have not produced a new Christmas card this year but possibly some of the newer supporters will be able to use one of the previous ones that we still have in stock. The lack of a calendar is also disappointing for some; but it proved not to be a viable proposition although the pictures were delightful. What we have done is produce our own cygnet toys - they are very similar to the ones we have had before and we are certain they will be just as successful - added to which

the label promotes the charity. We would also remind people that we do have several different tee- and sweat-shirts available at reasonable prices.

**Brian Butcher of Whitchurch Lock** has supported us for many years and recently recommended us to **Waitrose Caversham** for the Community Funds scheme resulting in a most useful donation of £500. If you are a **Waitrose** shopper, particularly in Berkshire, do keep an eye on their Community Boxes as we have been fortunate to be featured in several of the stores. They feature three charities each month and like a variety of charities to cater for their customers interests. The funds received are very welcome and we are able to apply more than once to each store.

We are interested to read the "Legacy 10" proposals, which if implemented may encourage people to leave a sum to charity in order to lessen their inheritance tax bill. Legacies are of enormous value to us and certainly help to keep us afloat. **Kay**

### A new trustee

We are delighted that **Fran Williams** has agreed to become a trustee - she has already given much support with fundraising and input on the IT side. As previously mentioned we are always interested to hear from people who would like to become involved.

"My background is in financial services but I have always had a keen interest in wildlife and conservation - doing volunteer work for the National Trust and working in Africa on conservation projects. As such, following my retirement, after thirty years working in London, I was keen to assist and share any expertise that I might have with a local charity involved in conservation. Through its valuable work in rescuing and protecting swans, Swan Lifeline offered an ideal opportunity to do this and I am grateful for the chance to be involved."

**Fran Williams**

### Cuckoo Weir News

The construction of the new pens has continued and visitors to the Open Day had an opportunity to see what we have been spending so much money on. It does make viewing the swans a little more difficult but the benefit in long term durability and prevention of vermin invasion are more of a consideration. We had a full set of The **Mayor of Eton**, The **Mayor of Windsor** and The **Mayor of Slough** to the Open Day - they were really lucky in arriving and departing before a two hour torrential downpour. We finally managed to raise about £2000 and everyone is to be congratulated on their efforts in difficult circumstances - not only on the day but in the drying out of the goods and stock afterwards. One thing that cheered us all was that **Patron Mark Hunter** and his rowing partner **Zac Purchase** won a gold medal in Bled that morning.

**Wendy** has been delighted to welcome quite a number of new volunteers. The short daylight hours in the winter can make life very difficult for us. We are

particularly keen to hear from people who are available as Rescuers; shift workers can sometimes help during the day. Naturally we cannot have people walking along river banks and the like after dark and have to ensure that our rescuers are safe at all times.

In July we had a visit from BBC's **Escape to the Country** and they filmed **Wendy** with **Jules Hudson** - the programme was due to be shown in November. The piece was part of their usual theme to give people an idea of what happens in their proposed new locality.

The trip to follow the Swan Uppers along the Henley stretch was once again a success with some support from the River Thames Society. The shortage of swan families to 'up' was a disappointment. The serious outbreak of disease along the Thames, early in the year, had taken its toll in splitting up some of the breeding pairs. It was also apparent that some of the pairs that did nest failed to hatch their eggs. The scientists have been checking some of the failed eggs to decide whether a vaccination programme would be beneficial.

I was delighted and honoured to be invited to **The Worshipful Company of Dyers** Swan Dinner. This was held in Goldsmiths Hall with many distinguished guests - another old tradition. **Kay**

### The Queen's Swan Marker

For many years, David Barber was a Swan Upper to Her Majesty The Queen and has held the office of Queen's Swan Marker since 1993 when the original role of Keeper, or Master, of the Monarch's Swans (which had existed since the twelfth century) was divided into two; the other role being that of The Queen's Swan Warden, which is currently held by Professor Christopher Perrins.

The most public of the tasks carried out by The Queen's Swan Marker is that of Swan Upping which takes place annually during the third week in July. Although Her Majesty The Queen can exercise the prerogative right ownership of all mute swans in the UK, this right is mainly exercised on certain stretches of the River Thames between Sunbury and Abingdon. At Swan Upping, six traditional skiffs proceed up river, two for The Crown, two for The Worshipful Company of Vintners and two for The Worshipful Company of Dyers. As those of you that have seen Swan Upping will be aware, it is a very colourful event and draws many spectators and press from all round the world.\*

Other work that takes up much of his time is liaising with Natural England on the necessity to move swans from a particular area for their safety - during regattas and other events. It is illegal to move swans and their nests or to assume ownership without the necessary permission. David works closely with the team at Swan Lifeline who rescue injured swans and assist with movement when required. If, after treatment at Cuckoo Weir, swans are unable to be returned to the wild we check proposed sites and then seek

permission for the birds to be released. In these cases the landowners are advised that should the swans breed, any offspring may remain the property of The Crown.

Naturally David does at times give talks about his work and very kindly donates the proceeds to Swan Lifeline. He has stated publicly how pleased he is to work with our team and the support we are able to give him.

\* I was interested to receive a newspaper article from Cyprus about Swan Upping. It shows how much interest there is in this old tradition. Each year there is usually a large contingent of photographers and journalists following its progress.

### Be prepared

Saturday morning and I had taken the traumatised loser of a territorial swan fight in Goring into Swan Lifeline for recuperation. On my way home I had just driven past Hurley Village when my mobile rang. I pulled into the next lay-by and as I stopped saw there was a small car already there with two smartly dressed girls screaming and shouting and beating at something in the front of their car. Was it on fire? Before I could get out, one of the girls rushed up to me shaking alarmingly. "Can you help us please? Can you deal with spiders? There's a HUGE one in our car creeping across the dashboard!" I am not exactly intrepid in the spider department but I reckoned if I can deal with an irate cob, I ought to be able to help. I grabbed a large towel and steeled myself. As I cautiously approached their car the other girl yelled "It's gone down the air vent at the front - have you got a spray or something?" I nipped back to my car and looked in my 'rescuers general purpose bag'. All I could find was a spray can of 'Waspeze' - well it was worth a try! We sprayed the vent and lifted the bonnet but there was no sign of what I assumed would be a large wolf spider (surely not a tarantula, though that was what they indicated size wise).

Then my mobile rang again my husband with another swan problem - "ring you back" I shouted as the shrieks began again then "I think I got it" one of the girls yelled. "Its under the mat" I gingerly picked up the mat but couldn't see anything. "There! There it is" she cried. On the floor was the tiny crumpled body of a harvestman spider. "What can we do with it now?" I bravely used a paper hanky and popped the remnants into a litter bin. "Thank you so much" they said "honestly it was HUGE when it was walking about."

Phone rang again - my husband - "A friend has reported a serious territorial fight below Cleeve Lock on the Thames Path; a swan looks as if it is dying". It was possibly the mate of the cob I had just left at CWI. So I phoned it in as attending and we all went off to our various destinations. I had a 20 mile drive then a hectic dash along the path to the location on Cleeve Reach. There was no sign of the collapsed swan apart from a trail of feathers on the path and after an extensive search of the area, mercifully no dead body. The one that got away? N.B. to self - more Waspeze required!

**Diana Davies**

### On the wire

We received a call from a member of the public to say that there was a swan caught up on some barbed wire fencing next to the river, the MOP managed to free the bird but had unfortunately put her back on the river. The bird seemed to be losing a lot of blood. **Bob** answered the rescue call immediately and went to rescue the bird, but when he arrived the bird was in the middle of the river refusing to come in even for food, Bob called CWI for re-inforcements and requested the boat, and **Steve** promptly arrived with the canoe. The bird was very lethargic and didn't want to be rescued. Steve slowly directed the bird to the bank where Bob **Jo** and **I** were waiting with hooks! I managed to hook the bird without any difficulty as it didn't even put up a struggle; it wasn't until we got back to CWI that we saw the extent of the damage. The wing had a large tear that was so severe that it had severed a main artery. I noticed that the swan's bill had become very pale in colour since rescuing the bird; this confirmed that she had lost a lot of blood. Putting into practice what I had learned from observation I managed to stop the bleeding by clamping the artery with forceps. I immediately took the bird to Alma Vets where she was seen straight away by the duty vet **Victoria** who said that it was in severe shock. I was in shock myself especially when Victoria said that I had saved the birds life by clamping the artery. I was amazed when Victoria said that I had clamped the artery in the right place, I did say that it was pure luck not skill that I did it in the correct place! Thanks to Alma Vets the bird is now on the mend.

**Wendy**

(Ed: It was lucky that the MOP called us but a pity that they didn't remember what we have all seen from medical dramas: "Do not remove the 'weapon' or obstruction from the wound as this will probably increase the bleeding often with fatal consequences". Wendy told me that it looked rather incongruous when she arrived at the vets with a large pair of forceps attached to the swan but it was obviously what was needed.)

### Drip dry?

One Sunday afternoon I was called out to the river Thames at Purley. One of the 9(!) big cygnets there had been tackled on her right leg. When I arrived the cygnets were all happily feeding together while the cob was dealing with a territorial incident. The informants pointed out the cygnet with the problem. I scattered corn into the river and while they were all 'dipping' for it quickly hooked out the one with line round its leg. She had tough line wound round several times above her BTO ring and a mass of dirty thread and weed trailing behind. When I removed it I found a tag attached - we were surprised to find it was a fabric care label for "100% pure cotton, except for trims, wash at 40°C"! She was soon back with her siblings thanks to the observant "swan feeders" while her parents concentrated on the intruder on their territory.

**Diana Davies**

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Website by SafireX Consultancy Service

### Membership Rates for 12 months

Individual: £ 10.00      Family: £15.00      Under 16s & seniors: £ 8.00      Groups: £25.00

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Name.....

Address.....

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I enclose: £..... subscription and/or donation £.....

If you are a taxpayer and have not yet completed a Gift Aid donation please fill in above and then sign and date below. If you have already completed one, there is no need to re-send it.

This declaration covers all donations I have made since 6 April 2000 and all donations I make hereafter.

Signature .....Date .....

Please remember to notify Swan Lifeline if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donation (from 6 April 2011, 25 pence for every pound you give).



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