

Swans on Swanland Pond

An enquiry was passed to the SPP from the Parish Clerk regarding the potential re-introduction of swans to Swanland Pond. I understand the gentlemen in question had also very kindly offered to donate a pair of swans if this was agreed. Whilst it is a very generous offer and it would seem idyllic to have swans on the pond, the SPP have researched the issue and concluded that Swans should not be re-introduced as it would be detrimental to their welfare.

The pond is not a suitable environment for swans for the following reasons:

1. Being aquatic birds, swans source most of their diet from the ponds and lakes where they live. Most of a swan's diet is made up of aquatic plants such as pond weed. They take the molluscs that cling to the vegetation, and also eat small fish, frogs and worms. Swans will also graze big grassy fields where they also forage for insects and invertebrates. The pond does not contain any submerged pond weed and the only grass readily available is the small area in front of the Swan and Cygnet Pub. The swans would have to cross a busy road to access the grass risking injury to themselves and car drivers which is not acceptable. Even if the swans were fed entirely with grain (from villagers) they would still want to wander with the same risks.

The female swan we had previously had to be rehomed when it lost its mate due to an accident; the RSPCA said at the time that the pond was an unsuitable environment for swans. On this basis the RSPCA would not support re-introduction.

2. It is easy for wild swans to fly between bodies of water in search of new sources of food but Swans raised on the pond would effectively be "captive" birds as the pond is too small to allow them to take off safely. It's estimated that it takes a swan at least 30 yards (27m) to become airborne (from land) **AND** the same distance again to reach a safe height to clear surrounding obstructions. When those obstructions also move (i.e. cars and buses on the road) the distance is even more problematic.
3. If introduced swans did breed successfully they would drive their young away when they were able to fend for themselves. This behaviour can be very aggressive and could lead to injured birds as the young would find it difficult to leave. We would then be faced with vet bills and rehoming issues.
4. We have large populations of Mute swans that are both resident and visitors in the locality. Bewick swans also visit the region in the winter. The Humber Estuary and Welton Waters are just a few of the feeding grounds that are popular with these birds. If wild swans recognised the pond as a suitable environment they would surely fly in themselves. Their absence suggests this is not the case.