

or too expensive, they are likely to be less active. In order to gain proper coverage of the population, it should be observed constantly throughout the season because the birds are constantly moving through the area, especially in the early part of the fall migration from November to December and again from February to early April. This means that constant, steady viewing is required in order to get accurate results. One way to maintain the interest of volunteers is to make sure that they are provided with an easy-to-use recording form which requires little time to fill out and return. This way, the volunteer is not spending large amounts of his time doing paperwork. It also helps to maintain interest if the volunteer is supplied with plenty of information as to the progress of the research programme, including banding and other return information from faraway locations. This enables the volunteer, if he wishes, to keep and maintain his own records and appreciate the value of his work in reaching the overall goals of the project. Care should be taken to meet often with the volunteers, most preferably before the beginning of the season, for a luncheon or dinner meeting, and then again towards the end of the season. It may also be helpful to award prizes for the person who reports the most collars. However, lest the prize rather than accuracy become the most important goal, this device should be used with caution.

Summary

'Swan watching' is a most fascinating form of recreation. Other bird-watchers and groups interested in birds can, if properly trained, equipped and motivated, provide a considerable saving in the cost of swan research done by live sightings through neck-collars and other markings. This work will be extremely enhanced if the suggestions and principles presented in the paper are followed.

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THE SWAN SUPPORTER SCHEME AT SLIMBRIDGE AND A PROPOSAL FOR AN AUDIO-VISUAL PROGRAMME ON SWANS

M E EVANS

History of the Swan Supporter Scheme

The Swan Supporter Scheme, by which a member of the public could take an interest in the *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* flock in general and one individual

swan in particular was started in 1966. If, in a subsequent winter, there was no news of 'his' swan, he was given another to replace it. If, later on, the original bird returned, the Swan Supporter was allowed to support both it and the replacement bird.

The original concept was for rather an 'expensive' scheme, costing £5.00 per annum, which in today's terms is equivalent to £18.40. Cost of membership of the scheme has not kept pace with inflation and now costs only £7.50 (increase made in 1975). As the number of Swan Supporters grew, they began to exceed the number of swans available. A two-tier system of support was therefore introduced: 'Exclusive' — a particular swan was issued to one Supporter only; and 'Share' — a particular swan was issued to more than one Supporter. Exclusive Supporters paid a double subscription for their privilege.

This, however, still 'tied up' too many swans, especially because of the replacement policy for non-returning birds. An Exclusive Supporter might, through this system, have three or four of 'his' birds return in a particular winter, none of which could be allocated to anyone else. Therefore, the Exclusive category of Supporter has been discontinued and existing Exclusive Supporters are being phased out.

Present arrangements

Supporters are sent:

- A hand-coloured portrait of their swan plus details of its history on a record card on which subsequent news can be recorded.
- An Arrival and a Departure Report covering the *C. c. bewickii* herd at Slimbridge.
- An individual report when their swan is first seen and another at the end of each season about its activities.
- A portrait of a new swan if their bird is not seen. If in a subsequent season there is news of their original swan they will support both birds at no extra cost.
- All issues of the Wildfowl Trust's magazine during the period of their subscription.

Supporters are allowed:

- During the *C. c. bewickii* season (1 October to 31 March) free admission, with one guest, to the grounds and Tropical House at Slimbridge.
- Free admission, with one guest, to the Welney Refuge.
- Free admission, with one guest, to the Observatories (when open) at Slimbridge and Welney.

- Overnight accommodation in Wigeon House, Welney, at the reduced rates applicable to Members of the Wildfowl Trust.
- To purchase the Wildfowl Trust's annual scientific publication 'Wildfowl' at the Membership discount rate.

Schools, firms, hotels, etc

Any organisation may support one or more swans, though each Supporter's card must be made out in the name of an individual nominated by the organisation. One card is issued for each swan supported and the individual nominated has the privileges of a Supporter.

Recent numbers of Swan Supporters in each January are as follows:

1973 – 281	1977 – 419
1974 – 368	1978 – 441
1975 – 393	2979 – 514
1976 – 403	1980 – 733

This last figure provides a useful gross income of £5500 per annum.

Proposal for an audio-visual programme

It is clear that many private citizens are interested in, and involved with, swans, and now may be an appropriate time to produce an audio-visual programme on these birds.

The World Wildlife Fund Education Project specializes in producing audio-visual programmes on wildlife subjects, particularly on endangered species. To produce a special swan programme pack of 40 slides for even only half of the current 733 Slimbridge Supporters would cost relatively little, about the same price as an unused 36 exposure colour film.

A cassette tape (with swan sounds, music and vocal commentary) could be produced to complete the programme. This would be 'pulsed', so that, on suitable equipment, the programme would play entirely automatically. Origination costs may vary according to the amount of editing and mixing necessary, but each finished tape would not cost more than half the slide pack.

The Swan Supporter Schemes could sell the programmes at whatever price they like – possibly at bargain prices to existing Supporters. It could be distributed further through WWF Education Project, who are prepared to add the programme to their current catalogue.

Summary

For an annual fee, interested members of the public may become Swan Supporters, enabling them to receive information about *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* wintering at reserves of the Wildfowl Trust in the UK and to visit the wintering sites. The paper describes the scheme and develops a proposal for a cheap audio-visual slide programme on swans, intended for wide distribution.

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AROUND THE YEAR WITH A DANISH SWAN AMATEUR

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Introduction

Research on swans in Denmark is organized by the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen and previously also by the Institute of Game Biology. However, most of the work is done by a group of amateurs supported by the Zoological Museum.

From its very beginning, the swan project has been managed by P Andersen-Harild, who has succeeded in gathering around him a group of enthusiastic amateurs. The present paper describes the events of a year, from April 1978 to March 1979, as experienced by the author.

The Kingdom of Elleore

The Kingdom of Elleore is an islet in the Fjord of Roskilde, only 15 000 cockstrides from the Danish border. The strange Elleorian folk live there for one week in August, while Elleore is populated only by birds for the rest of the year. As most of you have probably never before heard of Elleore and its brave inhabitants, I will offer a short description before returning to the swans. The inhabitants live in exile in Denmark most of the year but early in August the kingdom is established with bureaucracy, military (land militia, navy service and corps of drakes) and a court. The people are extremely fond of uniforms and decorations. Philatelists are familiar with their famous stamps, among which bottle message stamps with the gumming on the front are unique in the world. I could go on with this ethnographic lecture for a long time but I have to return to the swans.