

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 117



Swans

I saw in the news today that a swan had landed on Kingston Bridge.

“Swan brings traffic to standstill on Glasgow’s Kingston Bridge during rush hour”



This brought back a lot of memories.

I was shown how to catch a swan by the absolute expert, Andy Christie of the Hessilhead Wildlife Centre in Bieth. Andy is wonderful, and many a time when a boat was required to catch a trapped or injured swan Andy and I worked together. <https://www.hessilheadwildlife.org.uk/> Swans trapped in Lock Gates, on ice covered ponds, caught by old fishing lines and hooks



Often a swan would fly in, try to land, misjudge the distance, and instead of landing in the water, they landed on a Bridge. Having “crash landed” they were frightened. They were out of their natural habitat. Quite a number clipped the uprights of the St Andrews Bridge and we had only to guide them off the bridge to a position on the river bank from where they could enter the water, and they swam off happily, no doubt getting their heart rate and their blood pressure back to normal.

If they landed on a motorway. They were terrified. Not only out of their natural habitat, but the traffic noise, and of course scared of people who thought they could just run at them, shout and “shoo” them away.

Calm them down, talk to them, let them know that they have nothing to be scared of and also that you are not scared of them. Animals smell

fear. They actually seem to like to be caressed and cuddled, and they are so cuddly, so soft, so downy, warm and you can feel their little hearts beating.

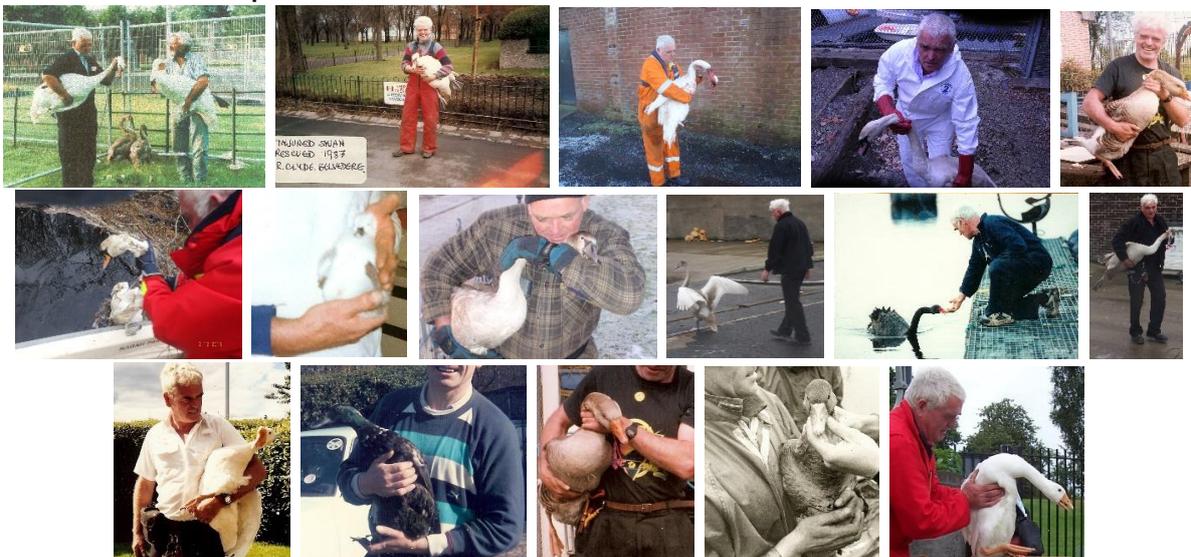


Yes, of course a swan wing can give you a nasty whack, they are immensely strong, especially if they think you are going to hurt them, so you have to take the fear away from them and catch hold of them carefully and correctly. Swans have no teeth and cannot bite you though they can give you a very nasty nip, so you learn to hold them with their beak pointing away from you.

On a roadway, if you do not crowd them or scare them, give them enough road, a runway for a clear take off, they will fly away. It is great to see such a large bird, trying to walk rocking from side to side, gradually breaking in to some form of running, then it takes off wings beating so slowly and so powerfully. A wonderful sight, but they need plenty of room.

Achieving that was better than catching them (even though I did love cuddling them). I have lost track of the number of roadways from which I have caused swans to fly away or removed them. Rutherglen Road, Kings Drive, Carntyne Road, Saltmarket.

Here are a few photos of swans we have had to deal with.



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