

Lincoln



Swan

Project

Newsletter May 2022

Dear Data Collector,

Welcome to the first Lincoln Swan Project Newsletter! We aim to send these out occasionally, to give you some examples of how your swan sightings are providing insights into the behaviour and whereabouts of the Lincoln Swans, along with practical ways in which the colour ringing programme and your sightings are helping the birds.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter, and please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at swanrings@lincoln.ac.uk with any comments or feedback.

Jenny, Teresa & Laetitia

The Lincoln Swan project: a brief history

Mute swans *Cygnus olor* are an important symbol of the city of Lincoln, dating back to the rebuilding of Lincoln cathedral in 1185, and St Hugh – the patron saint of swans. Historically, large juvenile groups would over-winter on the Brayford Pool in the city centre, with a Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) high count of 111 swans in 2007/07. However, recent surveys suggest that these numbers are declining, with WeBS counts in the low teens since 2016/17. Many environmental factors may drive this apparent decline, such as a decreased food availability, fishing lines or lead weights in the waterways leading to



either a reduction in survival of adult or juvenile swans, or competition between swans for territories, leading to the relocation of young swans from the city centre to other areas.

Photo: L021 and L046 with three cygnets on the Brayford © Lincoln Swans data collector

In 2017 we started a programme of colour ringing swans on the waterways in and around Lincoln, funded by the University of Lincoln and with assistance from Kane Brides of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and Dan Sidley of the Yorkshire Swan and Wildlife Rescue Hospital, to allow us to look at the movement and dispersal of individual birds in the population. Each swan has a BTO metal ring on one leg, and a yellow colour ring on the other with the letter L (or Y, in a year when our colour ring delivery was late and we had to borrow some Yorkshire rings!) followed by three numbers. We have now ringed over 200 swans in and around Lincoln and are starting to get some great data on resightings, both from within Lincoln and from further afield.

From May 2020, when we launched the App, to now, we have received over 3,100 sightings via the App. This is intended to be a long-term project examining the ecology, behaviour, health and welfare of the Lincoln swan population, so the more volunteer data collectors who use the App to report their sightings, the more we can use the data to understand the needs of the swan population. We are interested in every sighting of the birds, even if they are in the same place every day.

Please keep an eye out for any colour ringed swans you see, and report any yellow colour rings starting L or Y to us! If you see these birds regularly, please do report each sighting if you can! More information about the project is available on the Lincoln Swan project website: <https://lincolnswans.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/home-page/>, and you can follow the swans on Twitter @LincolnSwans, Facebook (The Lincoln Swan Project), or contact us at swanrings@lincoln.ac.uk.

Interesting resightings



L167 was first ringed as one of seven cygnets in August 2020 on the River Witham near Webb St. His parents were L013 and L020 (now L235), who nested near Firth Road this year. L167 was last recorded with his family at the end of January 2021, after which he turned up in Cheshire, near Middlewich, in Feb 2021, where we had two separate reports of him! He hadn't yet finished exploring, and was reported to us from Fillingham Lake just north of Lincoln in September 2021. We're not sure how long he stayed in Fillingham, but in May this year he appeared at Toft Newton Reservoir, where he seems to be staying (for now!). If you are further afield and see any swans, please do check them for rings, as you never know where Lincoln swans might turn up next!

Photo: L167 as a cygnet © Lincoln Swans data collector

L120 was first ringed as one of eight cygnets on Rydal Close in August 2019 – we caught the family as they were walking between two lakes. In February 2021 he joined a juvenile group of swans on the River Witham (photo right, © Lincoln Swans data collector), where he stayed until April 2021. In July 2021 he was spotted at Toft Newton Reservoir (which seems to be a popular spot for Lincoln-ringed birds!), where he stayed until August 2021. Sadly, at the end of April, L120 was found dead under power lines near South Carlton, aged only 2 years. Power cables are a hazard for swans, but in this case Western Power distribution were swift to act, and have now placed reflectors on the lines, which should hopefully prevent any more swans flying into these particular cables.



Photo: L120 under power lines (left); new reflectors on the lines (right), which will hopefully prevent incidents like this recurring here in the future. Both photos © Lincoln Swans data collector.



The last two weeks have seen us carry out health checks on many of our breeding birds. We have been working with University of Lincoln students from the Department of Life Sciences, the School of Psychology, and the School of Film and Media, and we hope to be able to update you on some media-related developments in due course! Many of the birds we are able to monitor - with your help - have already hatched cygnets, and many more are incubating eggs. Thanks to your help, we are able to monitor these birds closely as they grow.