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Jet-setting swan takes off for blind date

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[CBC News](#)



Swans are social creatures that often mate for life. (Winfried Rothermel/Associated Press) An injured swan from Alberta will soon be flying across the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver to hook up with a potential new mate, but it's not clear what sort of matchup could come from the unusual avian blind date.

Fortunately for the injured swan, it won't have to work too hard to cross the mountains — it will be flying Air Canada, after the airline volunteered to fly the recovering bird, and a staff member from Edmonton's Wildlife Rehabilitation Society, to British Columbia.

Cheryl Feldstein helped nurse the swan back to health after it was found with a broken shoulder in a field in northern Alberta, and will be on the flight with the bird on Wednesday to Vancouver.

She will hand the bird over to staff at the Wildlife Rescue Association of British Columbia in Burnaby, just east of Vancouver, who were planning to eventually release the lone bird into the wild in the hope it might find its flock again.

Single white swan, seeks same

But then on Monday, wildlife workers on Vancouver Island called to say they have a potential partner for the feathery traveller — a young swan found abandoned last month in Victoria.

So the rescuers hatched a plan to bring the two birds together in Burnaby, hoping they might strike up a friendship in time for their release.

"Usually they're more than happy to be with others of their kind," said Feldstein. "They're much more comfortable because it's very odd for a swan to be alone. They feel very exposed."

'Let's hope that they're from the opposite sex.'

—Cheryl Feldstein

Swans are social creature and the two will likely fare better together than if they were to be released on their own, according to Lani Sheldon, the Wildlife Rescue Association's leader of wildlife rehabilitation.

"Swans do much, much better in pairs or small groups — they're very, very social ... so we'll have a small flock of two at our facility and they'll be released together," said Sheldon.

Pair's potential unknown

Swans also often mate for life, but it is still not clear what sort of bond these two might form, because nobody knows the sex of either one.

But Feldstein hopes things will work on this most unusual of avian blind dates.

"Let's hope that they're from the opposite sex because I know that swans sometimes they'll mate for life — so this could be really cool," she said.

No matter what their genders, in the end it will be up to the swans to determine if they really like each other enough to form a long-term bond.

"It'll be quite obvious if they don't. Geese and swans, you've probably seen geese in the parks being quite aggressive — there will be a lot of hissing and honking. It usually just takes time, just with any other type of animal," said Feldstein.

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