

Fractured wing is healed but swan needs free flight to get to the West Coast

BY HANNEKE BROOYMANS, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE DECEMBER 3, 2009

A tundra swan left behind in Edmonton during the annual migration is looking for a free flight to Vancouver.

The swan arrived at an Edmonton shelter with a fractured left wing that is now healed. It can't stay at the shelter for the winter, though.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton treated the swan and has it swimming in its pool, but generally the species doesn't do well in captivity, said Cheryl Feldstein, the society's executive director. The society wants to send it to the West Coast, where a number of its kind spend the winter.

The swan came to the shelter through a couple from Cold Lake, about 225 kilometres northeast of Edmonton. They kept it for 10 days, not sure where to take it. Eventually, they heard about the rehabilitation society and took it there on Oct. 16.

Ideally, injured birds are brought in as soon as possible, Feldstein said. That's because if they have broken bones, they could begin to set in incorrect positions without veterinary guidance.

It was also dehydrated and underweight, at just 3.5 kilograms. It's not possible to tell just by looking at it if the bird is male or female, but a male adult would normally weigh 7.5 kilograms and a female 6.3 kilograms. This is a juvenile bird, born this year. Feldstein said its weight is up to 4.9 kilograms now. She said she'd like to get it out of the shelter as soon as possible, now that it's healthy.

Although the swan is feisty and appears to be doing well, they generally don't survive long in captivity, Feldstein said.

The non-profit society is hoping an air carrier that can provide a space in a heated cargo hold will step forward to fly the bird to Vancouver.

Feldstein said a Fish and Wildlife permit is ready and the Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. will be at the other end to pick it up.

"If someone gave us the green light, we could go today or tomorrow," she said. "And the sooner the better, because they start to go a little nutty in captivity after a while, to put it nicely."

A direct flight would be ideal, because it would reduce the stress on the bird.