

Abandoned swans from B.C., Saskatchewan to become migration buddies

BY JUDITH LAVOIE, VICTORIA TIMES COLONIST DECEMBER 7, 2009

VICTORIA — A tundra swan, recovering after being picked up dazed and hungry in downtown Victoria last month, will be joining another rehabilitated swan from Saskatchewan this week in hopes the two will become migration buddies.

The young Saskatchewan swan, which was sent to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton after being found lying in a field with a broken shoulder, will be flown to Vancouver by Air Canada Wednesday and taken to the Wildlife Rescue Association in the nearby city of Burnaby where it will be given time to recover from its unusual flight before it is released.

The Victoria swan, which is also young, will be taken to Vancouver Wednesday by volunteers and staff from the SPCA's Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre who have been nursing it back to health.

The swan, born this year, would normally be with his parents and siblings for the long flight south from the summer ranges in Alaska, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon, said Wild ARC wildlife rehabilitator Christina Carrieres.

"My guess is he was migrating and he got weak and tired. He has lost his family and that's what's really nice about having this other swan," she said.

"When they are ready they will both be released in an area where there are other tundra swans."

Tundra swans are extremely social and will usually stay in a large flock, said Carrieres, who is not worried about the two swans disliking each other.

Some tundra swans winter around Vancouver, but others head to warmer areas such as Southern California, Virginia or North Carolina, and it is not certain whether the two rehabilitated swans will stick around, although Carrieres suspects they will remain in the B.C. area.

Once tundra swans have spent the winter in an area they will return to the same place every year.

The Victoria swan was thin, hungry and suffering from parasites when he was picked up but, after a steady diet of aquatic plants and fluids, he has gone from 3.4 kilograms to 4.2 kilograms in 10 days.

It is still well short of the average tundra swan weight of 6.6 kilograms, but the bird is now livelier and looks much healthier, Carrieres said.

"He'll probably be ready to be released in a week or two, depending on how he does," she said.

Victoria Times Colonist