

Black swan spotted at nature reserve

A rare black swan has taken up residence on a Scottish nature reserve – more than 9,000 miles from its native home.

The black swan has been spotted with a herd of mute swans at Loch Leven National Nature Reserve (NNR), near Kinross.

The species is native to Australia – some 9,500 miles away as the crow flies...

Black swans, easily identified by their black feathers and red bill, are occasionally spotted in the UK after being introduced as ornamental birds in the 1800s.

The Loch Leven bird is thought to have escaped from a UK private collection and found its way to the loch, which is an international hub for birds including ducks and geese.

Jeremy Squire, NatureScot's Loch Leven reserve manager, said: "There were sightings of a black swan in the autumn, but then it disappeared and now it seems to be more resident.

"It has been spotted mingling with native swans, feeding and swimming, in pretty much all quarters of the loch.

"We think it's probably an escaped cage bird. They are incredibly long lived in captivity so it may have been kicking around Scotland or England for many years.

"It seems to have settled on Loch Leven for now as its latest place trying to find a mate."

Mr Squire said it was not known whether the non-native bird is male or female as they are similar in appearance.

However, he said it was highly unlikely the bird could mate with a resident mute swan, as they breed at different times of the year.

He added: "It obviously knows Loch Leven, and knows it's safe here. It will probably hang around until it gets the urge to fly away and look for a mate again."

Loch Leven is a haven for birds and other wildlife. It has the most breeding ducks of any inland freshwater body in Europe and is an important stopover for tens of thousands of migrating geese and ducks.

Its seven islands provide nesting sites safe from predators for tufted ducks, gadwalls and mallards, burrow-nesting shelducks and rare breeding birds like teal and shoveler as well as the resident mute swans.



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Black swan at Loch Leven



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