

Obituaries: Black Swan

A look back over the life of the University's deceased male black swan



By [Gary Holland](#), Chief Sub-Editor (2013/14)
Tuesday 4 March 2014

A black swan, who has died at the age of 17, was a prominent figure in the campus waterfowl rights movement.

The swan lived on the University's Heslington West campus from 2001 and had a greater impact on its political landscape than any other individual bird in the last 20 years.

Any student who has lived on campus will be familiar with birds protesting by pecking kitchen doors, walking slowly along footpaths at times of peak student traffic, and defecating in huge numbers at particularly inconvenient locations such as the entrance to the Biology buildings.

These protest tactics have been employed for a myriad of reasons since the swan organised the first demonstration over a decade ago, but perhaps the most memorable cause was the campaign for improved living conditions for the waterfowl around Derwent College.

The fact that so many ducks and geese also partake in the protests is testament to the swan's oratory skill and ability to bring different groups together.

It is clear that the swan's legacy will live on in the work of other feathery activists. He will be remembered for his belief that if something is worth complaining about, then it is worth flapping your wings, charging at students and covering a walkway in poo about.

He is survived by one other black swan on campus, leaving just eight mating pairs in the country.

Friends and family of the black swan are invited to attend a memorial service on the 8th of March. Location TBD.



3 comments

Member of the aggrieved

4 Mar '14 at 11:00 am

Did he have a name?

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Martin Hathaway

4 Mar '14 at 4:01 pm

He had an "official" name, Malcolm, that was given to him by the groundsmen when he arrived in 2001. He had two mates during his time at Heslington. The first, who he arrived, with was Matilda (also named by the groundsmen). The union produced two broods. Of the first all the cygnets died within a few weeks. Of the second brood just one survived, a pen named Mindy. (She was named by a secretary in the physics

department.) Matilda died just six months after her second brood hatched. The following spring he paired with and mated with Mindy (his daughter!) who was with him until his recent death. There is another black swan that occasionally visits Hes. East and Hes. West lakes. Amongst the uni birders it is believed that she is "Mayfair" the sole survivor from his 2010 brood.

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Winner

28 Jan '15 at 5:22 pm

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