



The only solution to the disappearance of fine swans such as these is poaching. They kept to the water, could not fly, were too big for predators, but could be easy to trap at night with a net.

# Swan-Swipers?

by Grover Brinkman  
Columbia, Illinois

Back in 1972, Illinois Power Company placed eight gorgeous white swans on newly-completed Baldwin Lake, near the power plant in its third stage of building. The wings of the birds had been clipped, and it was the opinion of conservationists that the birds would be in their prime on the large lake, to multiply, and be part of the wildlife environment here, already the home of many Canadian honkers and wild ducks of all species.

Within months the huge birds had mysteriously disappeared. They could not fly off even if they had wanted to. The birds always were water borne, and there were no predators to destroy them. So it was assumed they had been stolen and taken to some distant market.

Now the same thing has happened at Memorial Gardens, the beautiful cemetery north of Belleville, Illinois, on the four-lane leading to Fairview Heights. There are several fine lakes here, and the swans were part of the garden decor. Their wings also had been clipped to keep them from flying off. Now they have mysteriously disappeared, evidently stolen.

Two of the four swans stolen here were rare black Australians, worth about \$400 each, according to a spokesperson at the gardens. Swans have been a fixture at Memorial Gardens since 1952, and have been fed and photographed by tourists in great numbers.

The black swans were acquired by a Washington County, Illinois, dealer, and it was hoped they would breed. The swans, always on water regardless of temperature, were last seen on Christmas day.

The eight swans at Baldwin Lake mysteriously disappeared soon after they were placed on this 1,200 acre lake back in the spring of 1972. No carcasses ever were found, so it was presumed they were stolen. The photo, taken soon after the birds were placed on Baldwin Lake, shows how the flock always kept together as they enjoyed the choppy water.

There are other swans on southern Illinois lakes, including the birds on a wooded lake near Mitchell Museum at Mt. Vernon.

Will they turn up missing as well, one of these days? ●

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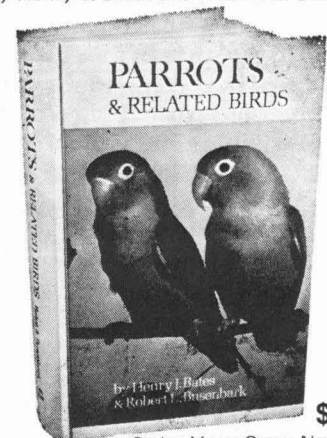
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