# Marine and Wildlife Rescue halts swan calls in East Suffolk after council row over bird flu response



A troubling incident has occurred in Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, following the discovery of two dead swans near the Commodore Pub. The situation escalated into a public outcry after Marine and Wildlife Rescue, which had been notified about the birds' condition, decided to stop responding to swan-related calls in the area. This decision came after a council officer allegedly discouraged the pub from contacting the charity for assistance, implying that outside intervention was unwelcome when it came to dealing with avian issues.

The sequence of events began when Dan Goldsmith from the Marine and Wildlife Rescue received a call from a concerned citizen about a swan behaving abnormally. Upon investigating, he was made aware of the two dead swans and took it upon himself to inform the East Suffolk Council. Test results later confirmed that both swans succumbed to bird flu, a life-threatening disease for waterfowl that has been wreaking havoc across the UK. Goldsmith noted that previous experiences with bird flu had cost many lives, pointing to an earlier situation where a swan exhibiting troubling signs did not turn out to be infected, which raises the stakes whenever a distressed bird is reported.

As the crisis deepened, the council's response became increasingly contentious. Goldsmith recounted that an officer visited the Commodore Pub and allegedly instructed the manager to rely solely on the council for handling avian-related issues in the future. This initiative raises questions about the protocols in place for managing wildlife health, particularly in light of strict biosecurity measures imposed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) following what has been termed the worst avian flu outbreak in the UK's history. Since late 2022, wildlife groups, including the RSPCA, have undertaken the grim task of euthanizing birds that exhibit flu symptoms, reflecting the seriousness of the situation and the council’s position in mitigating risks to local bird populations.

The East Suffolk Council has since stated that it is satisfied with the integrity of its staff's communication, asserting that the conversation was informal and held in good faith. Nevertheless, Goldsmith expressed his frustration at being misrepresented, leading him to register an official complaint with the Animal and Plant Health Agency. The council's investigation concluded that no misconduct had taken place, remarking that the staff member had been misinterpreted, though Goldsmith remained unconvinced.

In light of these incidents, Marine and Wildlife Rescue has opted to refrain from taking calls related to swans in East Suffolk until the complexities surrounding their involvement can be properly addressed. Goldsmith maintains that while they will not halt their efforts completely, the council's stance has made collaboration untenable. He has called for an apology to restore professional integrity and rectify the narrative surrounding their vital work, which stands at the brink of deterioration.

Throughout the ongoing avian flu crisis, instances of avian death have surged, underscoring the need for effective wildlife management and communication. As the prevalence of avian flu intensifies, both local councils and voluntary organisations must cooperate to safeguard the wellbeing of affected species, ensuring that all parties are adequately informed and supported in their efforts to protect wildlife.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-63250606)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-63250606)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-64387678)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/swansea-avian-flu-bird-flu-swans-dead/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/boston-esplanade-swans-bird-avian-flu-euthanized/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170078.marine-wildlife-rescue-row-swans-oulton-broad/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-63250606> - In late 2022, wildlife groups, including the RSPCA, began euthanizing swans suspected of having avian flu on the Norfolk Broads. Teams from Marine and Wildlife Rescue (MWR) and the RSPCA used vessels to search the waterways for severely ill birds. Approximately 35 bird carcasses were found on a five-mile stretch of river between Horning and Wroxham. MWR's Dan Goldsmith stated that these birds had to be euthanized because they would not recover, and taking them to a rehabilitation center could spread the disease. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) declared East Anglia the epicenter of the UK's worst-ever avian flu outbreak, imposing strict biosecurity measures, including keeping birds indoors across Norfolk and Suffolk. Over 170 avian flu cases were found across England in the past year, resulting in the culling of 3.2 million poultry and captive birds. Wildlife groups called for more action from Defra to address the wild bird contagion. Goldsmith noted the unprecedented number of dead swans on the Broads, with many not easily accessible. He mentioned that dead birds were found on waterways, banks, and private quays, stating, "I have never seen it this bad before."
3. <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/boston-esplanade-swans-bird-avian-flu-euthanized/> - In June 2022, two swans on Boston's Charles River Esplanade were euthanized after exhibiting bird flu symptoms. Multiple calls were made to Animal Control about the sick swans. An officer, with the help of Boston firefighters, captured the adult swans and brought them to the city's animal care facility, where they were humanely euthanized. On Wednesday morning, five swan cygnets were rescued from the Esplanade and taken to the Cape Wildlife Center for evaluation. The CDC states that swans are natural hosts for bird flu viruses. While the danger to humans is low, people with jobs or recreational exposure to birds may be at higher risk of infection. Last week, animal control officials said a highly contagious strain of avian flu could be responsible for hundreds of dead birds washing up on Martha's Vineyard. The public was warned to stay away from any birds appearing sick.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-64387678> - In February 2023, two dead swans in Kettering, Northamptonshire, tested positive for bird flu. The mute swans were found in the Ise Lodge area and were tested as part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) Wild Surveillance programme to detect the spread of avian flu in the UK. North Northamptonshire Council urged all bird keepers to monitor their birds closely for signs of disease and maintain good biosecurity. Bird flu can be fatal for wild, poultry, game, and captive birds. Symptoms include a swollen head, running eyes, lethargy, breathing difficulties, fever, and egg production problems.
5. <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/swansea-avian-flu-bird-flu-swans-dead/> - In March 2023, the town of Swansea, Massachusetts, launched an investigation into an outbreak of bird flu after several wild birds—24 swans and one goose—were found dead throughout the month. After testing, six swans and the goose tested positive for avian flu. No reports of the avian flu being detected in humans, pets, or domestic livestock in Swansea or Bristol County were found, but officials advised residents to avoid unnecessary interaction with wild birds to prevent infection. Residents with domestic birds were also advised to ensure good measures were in place to protect their flock. The CDC states that the risk to humans of avian flu is low, but infection can occur if the virus is inhaled or gets into the mouth, eyes, or nose.
6. <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/boston-esplanade-swans-bird-avian-flu-euthanized/> - In June 2022, two swans on Boston's Charles River Esplanade were euthanized after exhibiting bird flu symptoms. Multiple calls were made to Animal Control about the sick swans. An officer, with the help of Boston firefighters, captured the adult swans and brought them to the city's animal care facility, where they were humanely euthanized. On Wednesday morning, five swan cygnets were rescued from the Esplanade and taken to the Cape Wildlife Center for evaluation. The CDC states that swans are natural hosts for bird flu viruses. While the danger to humans is low, people with jobs or recreational exposure to birds may be at higher risk of infection. Last week, animal control officials said a highly contagious strain of avian flu could be responsible for hundreds of dead birds washing up on Martha's Vineyard. The public was warned to stay away from any birds appearing sick.