

## Toby - Lucky Ducky

We were called to rescue a duck on the Kennet and Avon canal at Honeystreet near Pewsey. It was reported to have a stick caught between its wings.

We sent our volunteer Penny Mead from Pewsey, but as the duck was by now very wary of people trying to catch it, Penny had no luck. We began to get more calls about the duck via members of the public, but could only tell them we were aware of the situation and assured them we were still trying to catch the duck.

After a couple weeks, we received a call from an anxious gentleman who said he was with a group of children from Honeystreet who had taken their canoe onto the canal and caught the duck!

We were relieved to hear the news and sent Chris and Penny off to collect it. When they arrived back at Newton Tony with 'Toby' as the children had christened it, we were horrified to see that this poor duck had in fact been shot with what looked like a cross bow. The arrow passed down through its back and the point was clearly visible coming through the underside of its body.

Toby was taken to our avian vets, Strathmore, at Andover. We were seen by Naydine who informed me she'd had a bad morning and I informed her I was just about to add to it. Our vet was horrified that somebody could do such a thing to a poor, defenceless animal. Toby's prognosis was questionable: depending on where the arrow was lodged, it could have been near vital blood vessels, or interfere with the duck's air sacs which surround every bird's body. We all hoped Toby would come through his terrible ordeal and awaited Naydine's call.

The call came through the next morning. The bad news was that my swift that had been taken in at the same time as Toby had sustained a serious injury to its shoulder and would never have full use of that wing, so it was put to sleep.

The good news was that Toby came through his operation and escaped death by millimeters, the arrow just missed a main artery and his thigh bone. Our vet was as relieved as we were. The awful reality of Toby's ordeal was that this act was cold and calculated. He was in no doubt probably lured in by food and then shot at point blank range from above with a high velocity crossbow. The matter is now in the hands of the RSPCA and the local Police but it's doubtful this thug will be caught.

As for Toby, he's staying at Strathmore for the weekend. We will pick him up on Monday. Naydine said when he got back to his kennel, he was preening his feathers, always a good sign. All I can say is he was a very lucky ducky!