

Reflections for the LAAMB

While on our holidays, Lore and I had the privilege of seeing our annual tundra swans which we found thirty minutes off highway 6 going towards Hanover. We spent over an hour watching and listening to them. We counted twenty-nine of them.

For the last fifteen years we have found these amazing swans. We start looking for them near the end of March each year. Our first experience of them was five minutes outside of Wingham down the old school road in a flooded farmer's field that looked more like a lake. There were hundreds of them. Lore and I with our binoculars feasted our eyes on them while we heard their trumpet sounds.



Lore with the help of her bird books discovered that there are seven different types of swans: 1. Bewick's Swan 2. Black Swan 3. Black-necked Swan

4. Mute Swan 5. Trumpeter Swan 6. Tundra Swan 7. Whooper Swan



We have only seen the Tundra and the Trumpeter swans. Let me give you a little background information about the tundra swan.

The tundra swan begins from North Carolina, when winter comes to an end, and makes their annual migration to their summer homes near the Arctic Circle. In preparation they stop several times in a ritual known as staging. Staging is a time when thousands (up to ten thousand have been seen at once) will stop, rest and eat gathering strength for the 4,000 mile migration. Their first stop from North Carolina is the great lakes which is why we often see them in our areas of Southern Ontario. They will make several staging stops along their way to the Arctic Tundra's of Canada and Alaska. When they arrive, spring is in the air, it is breeding time. Tundra's like all swans, mate for life and produce between 3-5 young each year. The baby chicks are called Cygnet (pronounced Sig-nit) the name in Latin "cygnus means swan, the "et" at the end implies "little swan". Even during migration swan families are close knit and fly together till the young have travelled both the North and the south migration. Finally the tundra swan flies almost 50 miles an hour and 2 miles high.

Lore and I really enjoyed seeing them this year on our way to visit Lore's mom in the hospital twice a week. Lore tells her mom how we stop during our trip to Hanover to catch another glimpse of the tundra swans. We have seen them four times at the same place. When they leave they will head out together



on another leg of their long trip north.



One of the things that Lore and I enjoyed seeing this time is the way the swan sits on the ice with just one leg holding herself up while

sleeping. We saw several of them sleeping while facing the beautiful warm sun. As I thought about the Tundra swans two lessons came to mind for me. One is that they take time on their long trips to stage, stop, rest and eat. Something we have all been forced to do during this pandemic. But the other lesson the swans taught me is to look beyond the long journey, beyond the dark clouds and look at the big picture, the beautiful spring weather to fly towards. I need to remember through this challenging time that it may feel like dark clouds looming over us every day but I need to see beyond this pandemic, that we will get to a newer life where signs of spring and new life will once again give us hope for the present and the future. Thank God for that bigger picture!

Pastor Perry

P.S.

Lore and I wondered if global warming would have an effect on these migrating swans. However, Lore and I were relieved to read this on the computer.

“Nesting on Arctic Tundra and migrating long distances to favored wintering areas, this native swan was less affected by human settlement than was the Trumpeter Swan. Destruction of southern wetlands has reduced its former food sources in wintering areas, but it has adapted by shifting its habits to feeding on waste products in agricultural fields.”

This was certainly true in our experience of the Tundra swans as we have often found them in farmers field that are flooded with water.

Pastor Perry