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Death of swans still up in the air says OSPCA

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It's still not known what caused the death of four swans at Collingwood's waterfront last week according to an official with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA).



WILMA REID PHOTO

The fate of the swans pictured here at the Collingwood waterfront recently is unclear after the bodies of four birds were discovered by police.

Police said they were contacted by a Collingwood District Humane Society member after a badly injured swan and the body of a second were found on the shoreline near Birch Street last Wednesday. A third and fourth were discovered, also near the waterfront, Friday and Sunday.

Dori Butler of the Collingwood and District Humane Society (CDHS) said the first swan later died at her home.

Kristin Williams, public relations manager with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA), said Tuesday that two of the swans are in the SPCA office in Midland and will be undergoing autopsies.

Reports that autopsies had taken place are not correct according to Williams.

"The allegations of animal cruelty may have been premature," she said. "As of yet, we have not determined the cause of death."

However, Butler and Pat Longmire from the CDHS both say they believe the deaths were a result of trauma to the head.

"When you look at the damage and the indent, this wasn't natural," Longmire said.

Butler was on scene when the first two were found.

"One of them was still alive and it was quite bloody," she said. "Its eye was quite smashed in. The second one that the OPP picked up was bloody, frightfully bloody."

Longmire said the first swan also had an indentation on the top of its head. She said it appeared it had been struck with a sharp object.

Butler said the third bird appeared to have a neck injury.

"It wasn't a dog, I will tell you that," Butler said.

Williams said if it is determined that the birds were murdered, the OSPCA will conduct any investigation.

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"Our officers and only our officers enforce animal cruelty laws," she said.

Adrian Philpot, stewardship and education manager at Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre in Midland, said the swans were mute swans, which aren't native, but were brought to Canada from Europe.

Wilma Reid, a resident of Telfer Road in Collingwood said she regularly visited the waterfront to feed the swans with her daughter.


"They are very tame," she said. "They will eat out of your hand."

Reid said she, along with her daughter, was on scene when the first dead swan was found.

"I was just horrified," she said. "She was horrified."

Reports have suggested there might be a fifth swan, but Williams said they have no record of it and they haven't seen a body.

Incidents of animal cruelty can be reported to police, the Ontario SPCA office in Midland at 705-534-4459 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

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