



in a brood are unusual enough in Argyll to be worth recording.

Most swan pairs failed in 2005, but a pair with just one large cygnet appeared in Dunstaffnage Bay, near Dunbeg. None of the immediate locals had bred successfully except one pair with a lone cygnet at Ganavan, a couple of kilometres down the coast - these might have come from there.

It was then that a flock of eight monstrous birds flew into Dunstaffnage Bay, such a sheer volume of feathers that for a moment you couldn't see a ninth bird flying with them, a single adult Mute Swan. This was a female with her brood of eight airborne youngsters.

After swimming round the yachts at the marina, unsuccessfully looking for yachts' people to feed them, all nine flew off again towards Oban, probably hoping for food in the bay. But not before vital information had been retrieved from the adult's ring number.

She was a female with ring F11, one of many numbered rings applied to Mute Swans in Argyll over the last 15 years by Doug and Elaine Trigg, and enquiries revealed that she had bred this year at Angus's Garden at Barguilean, near Taynuilt. For several years there had been a nonflying 'rescued' male there. In January 2005, F11 had flown in with another male, no doubt looking for territory. The resident drove the incoming male away and then bred with F11. The resulting

brood of eight was so unusual that they were pictured in *The Oban Times* on 2 June. Now F11 had flown with her brood, leaving the disabled male parent behind. Normally both parents would fly with the young and stay with them for the winter, so F11 may now be finding life difficult for two reasons. Finding food for eight fully-grown young will be difficult enough. But without a male, they may all be driven off by other swans from areas with good natural food.

So, if you see F11 and her eight hungry young over the winter, please try to feed them (bread or grain would be fine; a cheap Tesco loaf would do wonders). Also, a photograph of the family would be good for the record. And, of course, a count - to see if all eight survive the winter.

They may turn up anywhere, as adults with flying young can move fair distances. In 1998, a pair, which had been recorded in May nesting on an island off Fort William flew into Dunstaffnage Bay on 31 October with four young (and were driven off by the resident male, who had young of his own). This was a distance of about 50 km and, again, it was only because of Doug Trigg's colour rings that identification was achieved.

The late Doug himself, with all his experience of swans, would have been pleased to see F11 and her octuplets. Doug's colour rings live on, and they are still proving invaluable in identifying individual swans like these. To keep Doug Trigg's good work going, we would be very pleased to keep records of all sightings of colour-ringed swans, past and future (including F11 and family if you see them). Please let Clive Craik know the ring number on the plastic (usually red) leg ring, together with date, place and any other information, such as how many adults and young were present.

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Douglas Trigg, who died in April 2005



A teacher in Tobermory asked a wee boy in her arithmetic class: 'If you had three pounds in your left trouser pocket and two pounds in your right trouser pocket, what would you have?' Without pausing for thought, the wee boy answered: 'Someone else's trousers!'