

Swan in love with paddle boat

Where: The city of Munster, Germany

April 10, 2007: Some call it Petra. Others call it Black Peter. But everyone in Germany agrees on one thing -- Petra or Black Peter, is one rare black swan.

The story begins when Petra or Black Peter fell in love with a pedal boat shaped like a swan. This happened at Aesee Lake in Munster city, in north-western Germany. The black swan had been brought to the lake some time last year to attract picnicking crowds. It was an attraction, for the swans in Germany and other countries of the European continent are white. The black swan comes from Australia.

No one could have guessed what an attraction Petra or Peter would become. (Names apart, this Australian bird is thought to be a female.)

Swans, as we know, have only one partner for life. Talk about confusion! Soon the bird started circling the white pedal boat. It would stare at it for a long, long time and make soft noises. It would also hoot angrily at anyone who came near the pedal boat. Biologists say this is how swans in love behave.

As the lake froze in winter, the black swan refused to do what it is supposed to do -- migrate to a warmer climate where rivers and lakes are not frozen, so it could find food.

Our lovesick black swan refused to fly alone. There was no way the pedal boat on Aesee Lake could fly with it. Had the swan remained on the frozen lake, death would have been its only end.

But officials of the local zoo took pity on the Australian bird's plight. They made space for the black swan and her beloved pedal boat in a sheltered pond in the elephant's enclosure.

Winter has ended and the couple is back on Aesee Lake. The lake has become a pool of clear water once again. The number of people who want to have a picnic on the lake has risen greatly. T-shirts and key rings with the picture of the Australian lover bird are a common sight. At least in this German city when people think of charming love stories, they now think of the black swan.

But the biologists are worried. They know that swans choose one mate in their lifetime. But they are hoping that this Australian [bird](#) falls in love again -- with a real swan so it can have a family life.

What do you think are its chances?

In a world of celebrity relationships gone bad, it's good to know that some limelight loves survive.

Take Petra, for example. Last year, the beautiful black swan from Münster in Germany made headlines across the world after she fell head-over-heels for a gigantic, swan-shaped peddle-boat. No matter what park officials at the Aesee lake tried, Petra would not be separated from her true love.

One year later, the couple is still together, with Petra having spent her summer blissfully following the boat as it was peddled around the lake. What's more, Petra is getting a brand new, winterized hutch so she can spend the cold months near her oversized, plastic sweetheart



Biologists in Muenster, north-western Germany, say the rare Black Australian Swan has been showing all the typical signs of love for its species, circling its plastic lover, staring endlessly at it and making crooning noises.

The swan now refuses to fly south for winter without his mate.

Park keepers say that 'Black Peter' as the lovesick swan is known, refused to leave the boat on the Aasee Lake - which also should be taken off during the cold weather.

Boat-owner Peter Overschmidt has agreed not to lock his boat away for the winter.

He said: "When you see how Peter circles the swan boat you know there could be no other option, it's the centre of his life."

Hearing about Peter's plight Allwetter Zoo then agreed that both Peter and the boat could spend the winter on their pond near the elephant enclosure, which is more protected from the elements than the lake.

Zoo director Joerg Adler said: "This arrangement could go on for ever because the animal now firmly believes he has found a partner for life."