

Swans addicted to chips raid bins to get their fast-food fix

Swans are waddling into a town centre from Windermere to raid bins for food after an unofficial ban was placed on feeding them.

Tourists used to toss bread and chips to them from the jetty and beach at Bowness-on-Windermere, until signs were put up telling them not to. Visitors have apparently heeded the request, made by an unknown person, so many

mute swans have started to travel into the town centre to try to get food from people there or to rummage through bins.

One swan went a mile and a half into the town centre and had to be taken back to the lake in a car.

Ian Wilkinson, who works at Windermere Lake Cruises, which is based next to where the swans used to be fed,

said: "The problem was that everybody was feeding them and now the swans are not getting what they want."

A Tourist Information spokesman confirmed that the signs had nothing to do with the South Lakeland council or Lake District National Park Authority.

A number of residents have expressed fears that the birds could be hit by traffic or attacked by dogs in the

town centre, or that they might intimidate small children.

Marian Jones, a ranger for the Lake District authority, advised people to resist the temptation to offer the birds food. "One of the reasons swans and other birds are attracted to Bowness is because they're being fed," she said. "Unfortunately, this can cause health problems for the birds and make them

tame, which can put them at risk from traffic and dogs. To protect these birds and reduce the risk of accidents, we advise people to not feed them."

Annabel Rushton, of the RSPB in Cumbria, said: "Just like us, swans need a variety of food. A swan's natural diet is made up of water plants and grass as well as small insects and snails. Fast food should not be fed to swans."

MARTIN HARTLEY

Ice queen gets back in pole position



Lianne Kolirin

The most endangered natural sight in the Arctic isn't a seal or a beluga whale. It isn't even a polar bear. It's a particular kind of ice.

Because somewhere, drifting amid the dwindling winter floes of the North Pole, is ice so rare that it may soon not exist at all — the kind of ice that makes it through the summer thaw to see another winter anew.

That is why next year Ann Daniels is heading out to document and photograph the forms made by these layers of "multiyear ice" before, as many fear, they disappear for good.

The Devon-based polar explorer will next year be the only woman on the team, which has been organised by the professional photographer and explorer Martin Hartley.

With support from Nasa, the European Space Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the team will photograph the "last ice sentinels" and install satellite trackers to monitor their progress.

"The Arctic Ocean used to be full of it but now there is very little left and that is expected to disappear completely in the next few years," she said.

The first challenge will be to locate the constantly drifting ice. "It's an unknown from the very beginning," Ms Daniels, 55, said. "Every year there's less and less."

"Climate change is wrecking the whole fragile system. We are all more educated now about the environment but being out in the Arctic, I have seen it with my own eyes. It's a place where humans

Ann Daniels will go back to the Arctic to document rare "multiyear" ice



don't live and yet it's full of plastic, and disappearing."

Polar exploration was not an obvious career path for her, growing up on a Bradford council estate.

"I wanted to get a job, get married and have children," said Ms Daniels, who left school at 16 to become a bank clerk. But in 1995 she was a full-time mum to 18-month-old triplets and her marriage was "dissolving". After seeing a newspaper advert seeking "ordinary women", she attended a selection weekend for an all-female North Pole expedition.

"I turned up in Dartmoor and they were all outdoors instructors and had climbed every mountain on the planet. I was absolutely out of

my depth. I had never had a rucksack on my back, never owned a pair of walking boots and had never skied in my life.

"If they had chosen the team that weekend there's no way on God's earth I would have been chosen. The only thing I did was put one foot in front of the other and I didn't give up."

Fortunately the women were invited to return nine months later, giving Ms Daniels the opportunity to train to become fitter and faster than she imagined possible.

Bowled over by her determination, the organisers offered her a place, changing her life for ever.

Having never previously ventured beyond France and Spain, she said: "It blew my mind away and I just fell in love with the whole place and expedition life. It was the first time I experienced being with people who weren't from my strata of life. Everybody was different to me but actually on the ice it doesn't matter. It spoke to me in ways I hadn't imagined."

She went on to conquer the South Pole and in 2002 Ms Daniels became the first woman in history to ski to the North and South Poles as part of all-women teams. Next year she will lead an all-female fundraising expedition to the North Pole.

"Women are not good at saying, 'I can do this', whereas men find it easy to say, 'I want to go, how can I make it happen?' We think of all the barriers of why we can't do it," said Ms Daniels, who is a mother not only to the 24-year-old triplets but to a 15-year-old daughter.

"It's all about mindset," she said. "I might not be able to pull as heavy a sledge as a man, but I'm absolutely amazing at navigating. We have a lot of skills, some that men don't, and if you add it all together you have a great team."

Pioneer sipped champagne as she scaled Matterhorn

Tom Whipple Science Editor

There are many reasons why the Victorian alpinist Lucy Walker seemed unlikely to reach the top of the Matterhorn.

It was the most difficult climb yet achieved in the world and she planned to replicate the feat in a skirt. In addition, her idea of suitable expedition supplies was champagne, asti spumante and sponge cake.

Yet in 1871 she stood victorious on top of the most fearsome peak in the Alps, and in doing so both scandalised and intoxicated Victorian society.

These days Walker is barely remembered, but a new play, set to be performed in the shadow of the mountain that was her greatest conquest, aims to change that. Because even if the British have forgotten Ms Walker, the Swiss have not.

Livia Anne Richard, 50, said she wrote *Matterhorn: No ladies please!*, which will premiere on the slopes above Zermatt in July, because of her admiration for the early female alpine pioneers and her belief that they have been unjustly forgotten.

"For a woman caught in the conventions of the English aristocracy, mountaineering was quite a rebellion in those days," she said. "Apart from cricket, every sport was not only frowned upon, it was forbidden. I was fascinated by the

fact that Lucy came to the Swiss mountains to fight for her freedom there."

By the time Walker, a Liverpudlian, arrived in Zermatt and announced her intention to climb the Matterhorn she had already made a name for herself as a climber, having ignored the strictures of British society and reached the top of the Jungfrau, the Dom, the Monch and the Aiguille Verte.

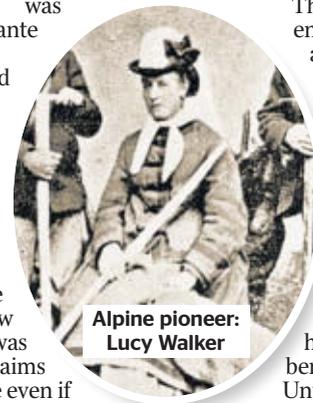
This mountain was different. A sheer pyramid of ice and rock, it required technical climbing the whole way. The first ascent had happened only six years before, and most of that party died on the descent. Walker made it to the top and back without incident, her success making a mockery of the refusal of the Alpine Club back home to grant her membership.

Until this point, unlike her famous male colleagues she had stayed largely out of sight. With the Matterhorn, inevitably, Walker's profile changed, although she still did not gain membership of the Alpine Club.

However, Walker did gain fame. Although many disapproved, others felt differently.

Once news reached Britain, *Punch* magazine honoured her with a poem, which ended: "Give three times three cheers for intrepid Miss Walker, I say, my boys, doesn't she know how to climb!"

Tickets: www.freilichtspiele-zermatt.ch



Alpine pioneer: Lucy Walker