

Bird can't take flight from land

Loony bird rescued after landing on road

By DARLENE STINSON

The bird must have been crazy to think the road it landed in was a river, but then again, it was a loon.

The speckled black and white bird that landed in the middle of Canton Township one morning last week looked as if it knew its hour of death was near.

The aquatic bird, which is unable to take flight from land or even walk on the ground without floundering, is probably on its way north right now thanks to the efforts of Canton resident Doug Dinkins and two township officials.

The bird was released in Newburgh Lake by township Clerk John Flodin and animal control officer John Swalley where it emitted the plaintive "loony" cries that has given the goose-sized creature its name.

Dinkins was only sorry that he couldn't see the bird attain freedom in the water after he moved the creature from the middle of Canton Center Road to

a field near township hall where it sat quietly for 2 1/2 hours.

FLODIN INSISTS that the bird would have died from starvation or on-coming traffic if not for the rescue.

Although loons can fly at speeds of 60 miles per hour, the birds can take flight only from water after flapping their wings and performing an unusual "walk-on-water" routine.

The birds migrate poorly on land, where they use feet and flapping wings to slowly inch forward. But in the water where the birds live on fish, loons can dive to depths of 200 feet and stay underwater for up to five minutes.

Flodin theorized that the bird thought Canton Center Road was a river in the early morning light. Dinkins was on his way to work about 7 a.m. Thursday when he spotted the bird sitting in the middle of the road near township hall.

"It was a pretty bird," Dinkins said, "and people were driving around it."

Dinkins stopped his car and moved the bird to an open area in front of township hall. He later returned to the site where the loon still sat and informed Clerk Flodin of the creature's plight.

Flodin immediately contacted animal control officer Swalley and devised the rescue scheme.

"I think he knows we're trying to help him," said Flodin.



Canton Township Clerk John Flodin placed the lost loon in Newburgh Lake. (Staff photos by Gary Caskey)



The loon looks apprehensively about when it finds itself grounded.

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