

Swan Bake

Asylum Seekers steal the Queen's birds for barbecues.

Callous asylum seekers are barbecuing the Queen's swans, *The Sun* reveals. East European *poachers* lure the protected royal birds into baited traps, an official Metropolitan Police report says. The swans are *plundered* from rivers and parks around London and Southern England. They are then cooked and eaten. Hundreds of the graceful creatures have been killed. A police spokeswoman confirmed last night: "We are appealing for information over the disappearance of swans."

The *slaughter* first came to light three months ago. Since then swan numbers have *plummeted* and the crime is causing serious concern. The Met report confirms: "There have been incidents of swans being killed. It appears to be the work of Eastern European *gangs*." Steve Knight, of the Surrey-based Swan Sanctuary, said: "To these people they are a perfectly acceptable delicacy." He then added that all swans belong to the Crown and injuring or killing one means a 5,000 pounds fine or six months in jail.

Asylum gang had two swans for roasting.

Police *swooped on* a group of East Europeans -and caught them red-handed about to cook a pair of royal swans. The asylum seekers were barbecuing a duck in a park in Beckton, East London. Two dead swans were also found -concealed in bags and ready to be roasted. The discovery last weekend confirmed fears that immigrants are regularly *scoffing* the Queen's birds. A Metropolitan Police report explained: "European gangs attract them with bait, thus luring them into traps."

The scandal comes after reports by *anglers* who fish in the area and who complained that hungry asylum seekers were stripping our rivers of fish. Steve Knight, of Surrey's Swan Sanctuary, said: "Poaching of swans is becoming a serious problem. It is happening mainly around London but we have also had reports from Wiltshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.

"Sadly it seems that some people coming into the country have been ignoring our custom of leaving these beautiful birds alone. "There has been a noticeable drop in swan numbers." In Enfield, North London, police and a wildlife liaison officer are patrolling the River Lee after swans disappeared.

Tragic

A police spokeswoman said: "The local community say the swan population has decreased considerably." A spokesman for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said: "There has been a drop in the number of swans in the River Thames and there is a suggestion they are being stolen. It seems there may be a connection with people from Eastern Europe. We no longer eat swans in this country. But people from various other parts of the world still do".

Swans are totally protected and have been for hundreds of years.

Andy Fisher, head of the Met's wildlife investigation unit, said: "We have reports that swans are being taken from various parts of London and eaten. It is a criminal offence. They are the property of the Queen." Swans belong to the Crown under an ancient *charter* and are also protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act. A police source said: "It's tragic that people from abroad don't respect our traditions."