

*There is a harmony in Autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been.*

— Percy Bysshe Shelley

Friends of Hall's Pond Sanctuary Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2016

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And To Think That I Saw It Off Beacon Street

Deborah Stone, Board member

HALL'S POND SANCTUARY is way too urban to work: a smidgeon of forested land, crimped between two busy Boston thoroughfares; a small pond clogged by algae bloom and oils from ancient white cedar trees and used as a receptacle for Brookline's storm water; and a boardwalk that invites litterbugs along with appreciative strollers. With all that, I wouldn't be surprised to



see an occasional rat from the Powell Street dumpsters out for a drink at the Hall's Pond Bar.

Then one day last March, a large rodent glided toward me, showing its liquid brown eyes before it dove underwater near some hanging branches. It was, I learned, neither a giant rat nor an otter as I'd hoped, but a muskrat, and like everything else I see at Hall's Pond, it filled me with awe.

In May I brought a friend to the sanctuary. Standing on the observation deck at the northern end, we noticed a pair of dragonflies flying around attached, obviously mating. I'd seen the dragonfly mating flight many times before, but never what soon followed because I'd never been close enough or waited long enough to watch. The pair landed on a lily pad and gradually the one on top pushed the other one backwards off the lily pad until she (we presumed) was about to go into the drink. Is he drowning her, we wondered? It sure looked that way, but she didn't struggle against him until it was almost too late. Then she climbed back up on the pad, with his apparent permission.

This same backward-drowning-dance happened twice more over twenty minutes or so, while my friend and I fumed about domestic violence in the animal kingdom. Finally, the male left the female sitting safely on top of the pad, but continued to fly circles around her from a few feet above. Intrigued and baffled, we Googled "dragon fly mating" and learned what we were watching. A male dragonfly pushes on the female after mating to force her ovipositor under water and make sure she deposits his future progeny on the bottom side of a leaf. Mission accomplished, he hovers over her for a good long while to make sure no other males can get to her.

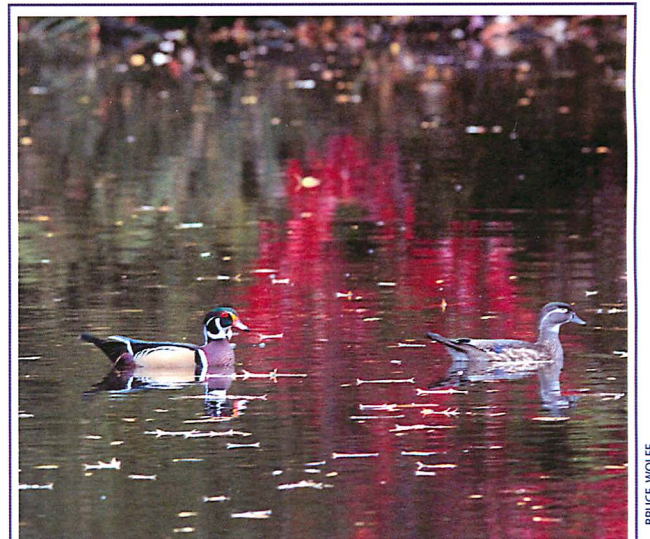


DAVID DIEHL

Deborah keeping watch over a beaver pond in New Hampshire.

At Hall's Pond I've seen Great Blue Herons, sometimes one, sometimes a pair, and once I saw one catch its fish dinner in the cattail reeds. I've seen a Black-Crowned Night Heron, but haven't yet seen the Green Heron that reportedly shows up once in a while. Last spring I watched a cormorant dive for its dinner, and after seeing it down eight 5- or 6-inch fish within a few minutes, I marveled at the stomach capacity of the bird, not to mention the fecundity of our pond.

And then there are the turtles. On a sunny day you can see them all stacked up on the dead branches. When the turtles are out, you know life is good and they remind you to savor what the universe offers.



BRUCE WOLFF

Wood Ducks — right here at Hall's Pond!

In a rare, but not unprecedented, sighting, a male and three female Wood Ducks (if not more) rested here at Hall's Pond for several days during their annual fall migration. We are thrilled that these exotic birds were attracted to our modest Sanctuary.