

ASK JAN



Q. Why doesn't the water in the duckpond freeze during the wintertime?

A. Good question! The short answer is: Because the water doesn't get cold enough to freeze. But why, when other ponds are frozen solid, is there open water at the duckpond?

Take a walk about halfway around the duckpond to find the answer for yourself.

Most of the water that flows into the duckpond does *not* come from the big tunnel underneath the steep bank of the Cochituate Aqueduct, as you might expect. Most of the water comes from the Aqueduct itself, through a pipe nearby at the water's edge. You can't see much of the pipe, but you can hear the sound of water and see the current making ripples on the surface of the water.

The Cochituate Aqueduct is one of the oldest structures in town. Once it carried drinking water. In fact, that's what "aqueduct" means—water carrier. But now the aqueduct is used to drain rain water away from the streets. Because the aqueduct is buried deep in the earth, winter cold cannot penetrate. That is why water pipes to your house are buried four feet deep in the ground, so you can have running water in the wintertime.



Fall 1998

DID YOU EVER WONDER why Wellesley has a duckpond close to the small pink castle we call Town Hall? Here is the story—

Early Days

Back in 1833 Charlotte Kingsbury wrote about the pretty stream running through the land we now call Town Hall Park. In 1845 a dentist named William T. G. Morton bought the land and buildings, which at that time included a "gingerbread" cottage, a barn, poultry houses, and a duckpond.

Etherton

Dr. Morton's home, called Etherton Cottage, stood where the eastern half of Town Hall stands today. A giant oak tree grew outside his window where he could climb into its branches. That oak lived until a few years ago. The young oak tree growing there now will be a giant when you bring your grandchildren to visit the duckpond.

H. H. Hunnewell

After Dr. Morton died, Horatio Hollis Hunnewell bought the place and began to transform the farm into an English estate. He built Town Hall in two stages. First the Library half was built. People alive today remember its glass floors. Mr. Hunnewell filled the library with 5000 books. When the present Library was built in the 1950's, schoolchildren carried the books across Washington Street to the new library. If you look above the Town Hall bell, you will see the words "Wellesley Free Library."

The Town Hall half of the building was built with its own entrance. Mr. Hunnewell kept a wall between the two halves of the building because he didn't want readers to be disturbed by political discussions. He knew how noisy politics can be, because, before Wellesley

separated from Needham in 1881, the legislature had to tell the two quarreling towns to pay some attention to the Civil War Between the States!

If you look up under the great clock on the west end of the building, you will see the words "Wellesley Town Hall." Have you ever seen another building with two front doors facing in different directions?

Mr. Hunnewell's true love was making beautiful landscapes with plants brought from all over the world. He walled the duckpond with beautifully cut and fitted stone and surrounded it with trees and shrubbery. His rhododendrons still bloom there every spring. In 1897, when he had finished his work, he gave the building, the land and the duckpond to the town. That is why we honor him today.

The Ducks

In time the duckpond changed again. Wild mallards flew in and settled down. Bright-colored wood ducks built nests about the water where their babies could jump Splash! into the water for their first swim.

The white barnyard ducks were added by people who bought fuzzy yellow ducklings for their children at Eastertime. When the tiny peepers turned into scraggly half-grown ducks, they were taken to the duckpond. Other people added exotic ducks and geese from faraway places. The Muscovy ducks—big black birds with fleshy red heads—are the last of these. ■

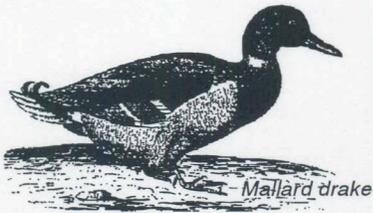


Can you identify the ducks & geese?

THE BIG WHITE DUCKS are barnyard ducks called White Pekins because they originally came from Peking, China. They cannot fly very well, but one flew high enough to fall down a chimney! Did you ever see a black white duck?

Some of the white birds are not ducks at all but geese. You can recognize the White Chinese geese by their pointed beaks and the knobs on their heads.

The green-headed ducks with the white ring around their necks are male mallards. (Male ducks are properly called *drakes*.) Female mallards are speckled brown with a green or blue patch in their wings. Mallards are wild birds and can fly away



Mallard drake

whenever they like, but they stay here because they are fed. Mallards can mate with white ducks. When they do, the

children have brown and white feathers in different patterns.

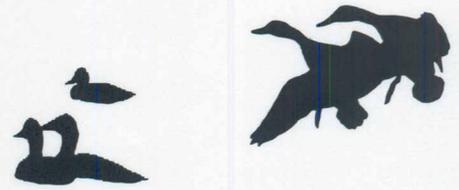
Have you noticed the large black ducks with fleshy red heads? These are Muscovy ducks, and probably the oldest ducks in the pond. Don't confuse them with the dark Toulouse geese, sometimes called Indian Roadrunners for the way they stand upright. Look closely at the beaks—duck beaks are flattened with rounded tips; goose beaks are more triangular with pointed tips.

Twenty years ago there were wood ducks at the pond, but it became too crowded for them. Wood ducks are beautiful birds of many colors with sweeping head feathers. Unlike other ducks, they live in holes in trees. You can still find wood ducks in Wellesley, but you will have to look for them near quiet ponds.

One very common kind of goose is missing from the duckpond. What kind of goose is missing?

The Canada goose.

Can you guess why it isn't here? ■



Guess Who!

HERE ARE TWO SILHOUETTES of another bird that lives at the duckpond. Do you know its name?

If you said you are right. Notice how different the wings, feet



“seagull,” you Notice how seagull's beak, and tail are

from the duck silhouettes above. Bird scientists, called ornithologists, can recognize birds by their shape alone.

Seagulls used to live at the seashore where they ate mostly fish and shellfish. Nowadays they live all across the United States, feeding at garbage dumps and wherever people feed waterbirds. Seagulls are greedy, aggressive birds who will snatch at any food. This is how they look when they quarrel and scream—



Do you ever look or sound like a seagull? ■

Food for Thought

In the wild, ducks eat mostly pond weed for vitamins and lots of crunchy small crustaceans, mollusks and insects for protein. But there isn't enough wild food in the duckpond to feed so many hungry birds. They depend on visitors to fill them up.

To stay healthy, the ducks and geese need snacks like cracked corn, whole grains, or popcorn without oil or salt. They will eat bread or cookies, but

these do not build strong bodies. Too much salt is not good for people or birds.

If you can't come to the duckpond on a snowy day, don't worry! The ducks get a big breakfast of cracked corn every morning from the Public Works department.

The 3 R's—

REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE
PLEASE TAKE ME HOME
OR PUT ME BACK IN THE RACK!



Kids' Korner



The hungry duck eats bugs and weeds
I guess that's all the food he needs
But if you had to eat that yuck
How would you like to be a duck?

—Chuck Everly, age 11

Send or bring your poem, short story or black and white drawing to:



Kids' Korner, Natural Resources
Town Hall Lower Level
Wellesley, MA 02181

Please include your name, address, age and school. Contributions will be included in coming issues of *Ducktails* as space permits.