

Magnetic Pond

by Andrea Duggan, New York

Have you ever noticed how having a pond in your life creates such enriching experiences? It becomes a magnet for a variety of incidents. Some of you might remember an article I wrote for MAKC four years ago about living in the wilds of Center Moriches, NY and the nocturnal visit of a long hairy creature, which scared the daylights out of me. We later came to find out that it was a muskrat dislodged from its home by the building that was going on across the street on the waterfront.

Since that time I have been blessed with many different visitors, and most of them have been welcome! There are two ducks



that return each spring and paddle in my water lily garden for a few weeks. We call them Daisy and Donald. We do not feed them, we do not encourage them, but we do not discourage them either. They are our official sign that spring is here once again. On the other hand, the two GEESE that came to visit were NOT as welcome and we did everything to chase them out. They eventually “got the message” and stayed over at the neighbors. Lucky them!

I am always amazed at the variety of birds that are attracted to the pond and when an unusual one comes I usually throw an apoplectic fit trying to convey to my family that something unusual is out by the pond, and then I run around looking for the camera. In the last incident, there was what looked like an archaeopteryx flying past my living room window, low over the pond. It turned out to be an Oyster Catcher...but I was close

— they DO look alike when in flight!!!! Then there was a Night Heron perched on the pool railing watching some poor female koi who’d had enough of the nasty males trying to spawn and jumped out of the pond into the water lily garden. I felt sorry for her and left her in the shallow water for a while. The heron must have realized he was the same size as the koi because he didn’t bother to eat and off he flew. Then, I live on Egret Way, aptly named, as dozens fly by daily. In Mythology, cranes are supposed to be messengers or gifts from God. I can believe it, as their grace and beauty are gifts! When a 4-foot Egret lands not ten feet away perched on top of the pergola, I have a fit of wonder and try not to breathe too loudly so that I can just gaze at the close magnificence of the bird. The Great Blue Heron has landed a few times too but since the pond edges go straight down and my koi are skittish near anything that moves, they have not become prey. The Osprey that lives across the street flies over, but so far so good.... I hope it realizes the bay has more fish than I do! We also have a little puffy bird that comes...it looks like a penguin almost and I do not know what it is, but he is cute. Comes maybe once a year- I guess on his way to vacation, takes a quick swim, preens, and then is off to the wild blue yonder. I know quite a few pond owners who have not been as fortunate with the large predators in their yard and they see heartbreak when an egret or heron fly by. I can relate to that as well.

We used to have raccoons in the old house. They were attracted to the sound of the waterfall and the fact that we had a pond maybe two feet deep. Of course this was twenty years ago, so we were naive pond owners then. I remember waking up and seeing the scales of our beloved Shadow scattered around the pond. I bought an electric fence that night and I have to admit I smiled in sweet revenge when later they were stung by the current and screamed in pain. I still pray we do not get raccoons at this newer home, although the 5-1/2 foot depth would make it hard for the raccoon to be successful this time around.

We had two bullfrogs that I named Andrea and Joe, but they were very loud serenaders. Sadly, a couple of years ago they did not make it through the winter. I had fought cancer and decided to grow an organic garden so the dead bullfrogs were rototilled into my garden. I hope that they appreciated that I donated their bodies to benefit mankind!



The prettiest creatures (besides our koi) are the lovely dragonflies that flutter above my pond all day long. They are like little gifts, almost like the first snowflake that makes you smile during the winter. Well,

I smile in wonder every time I see one of those dragonflies.



Our pond is a magnet to so many, as I am sure yours is too. We have people stop all of the time and gaze at it from the road. If Joe

or I are near the road doing yard work they usually question us, and more often than not Joe gives them a "tour." We also have a small collection of neighboring children who stop by now and then to help me feed the koi. And my friends, they just sit on the deck or hang over the railings and enjoy the calming effects of the pond and the soothing trickle of the waterfall. They rarely want to leave, which is usually OK with us! At night, with the blue landscape lights and the underwater light it is easy to think I am back in Hawaii!

Our pond recently attracted another strange occurrence...we received a request to have the pond put on News 12, the television station for Long Island, New York. Our friend Doc Tepper, whom many of you know, was doing a segment and since we live nearby, they came here to simulate a house call. It was an exciting afternoon, and I was even on TV for a few moments!

So many of you must have similar stories to tell about what has been attracted to your pond. I know it is a thrill to have built the pond and then have had the blessing to hold our grandchildren in our arms as babies, helping us feed the fish, and then as they grew they became partners in caring for the pond. I think that the interesting people we meet because of our pond are one of the nicest bonuses of owning a pond. I truly adore the MAKC members I have met along the way, and we are really glad to see each other at the meetings. The camaraderie is so comforting and the congenial atmosphere always makes for a pleasant afternoon well spent.

Just stop and think a minute the next time you sit gazing at your pond and admiring its beauty. Think of the magnets that have been attracted to your pond...how special they are (usually) and how fortunate you have been.... All for the love of koi! ❖