

Contact:

Elaine Igneri
516-305-7469
liforcefitness@yahoo.com

Alternate Contact:

Richard Brummel
(516) 238-1646
rbrummel@att.net

Dead Turtles and Low Water Levels Concern Manhasset Valley Park Users

Great Neck, April 21, 2014 -- Several long-time users of Manhasset Valley Park are trying to raise the alarm about dying and disappearing wildlife and possible risky planned-dredging of the pond there -- which already has what appears to be a troublingly low-water-level (see photo, attached).

Elaine Igneri of Great Neck, who has been visiting the pond for about 40 years, went so far as to present a photograph of a large dead turtle she found in November at the park to officials of the Town of North Hempstead, which now owns the park, at their April 1 meeting.

Ms. Igneri found another dead turtle there in the past month.

But Ms. Igneri, who frequents the park with her small white poodle, said she has not received the answers she was promised from calling or visiting with the offices of Town Councilmember Anna Kaplan, Assemblywoman Michele Schimel (who is based in Great Neck), or the Town Department of Public Works.

Recent emails with the Office of Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth have resulted in sympathetic assurances but no promise of action yet (see attached email).

Another park user and Great Neck resident who was at the park Sunday, April 13th with her adult son and small dog said she too had found dead turtles -- two of them, each over 2 feet in length (see photo of large iving turtle, attached).

She said the turtles, who people used to feed, died around the time that new soccer field and ball-field of artificial turf were being constructed about a year ago. The woman said she preferred not to give her name publicly.

On April 13th, then the warmest Sunday so far this year, a short 40-minute visit to the park's roughly half-acre to three-quarter-acre main pond revealed a surprisingly large variety of wildlife. To the passing observer, that partly dried out pond would seem a lifeless, desolate and neglected body of water, but to many animals it is essential as a home.

In the course of forty minutes, a six-inch long fish jumped out of the water, at least two 8-inch long Painted turtles were visible swimming and sunning themselves on a large partly submerged branch, a roughly two-foot long apparent snapping turtle was cruising mostly-submerged but for its periscope-like head, a pair of Canada geese appeared nesting in a small island, a half-dozen other Canada geese were seeking food and swimming in the stream up from the main pond, a small group of ducks was placidly paddling around, and an assorted shore-birds were flitting around the water and the banks.

But all was hardly well with this watery habitat. The water level was quite low based on the watermarks on the banks and the exposed muddy flats, a sheen of apparent petroleum was on the water along the shore, and the water appeared muddy and opaque.

Ms. Igneri said the water level seemed low for some weeks, and she worried what would happen to all the animals in the water if dredging were undertaken.

Those unanswered issues, added to the run-down appearance of the park around the main pond caused her to express serious concern about the management and future of the pond, which she said is an oasis of tranquillity that many nearby residents utilize frequently -- in addition to its critical ecological role for various wildlife.

Ms. Igneri said she planned to appear with other concerned residents at the next North Hempstead town council meeting on Tuesday April 22 at 7:30 PM in Town Hall on Plandome Road.

Last year Ms. Igneri was active in the movement that succeeded in getting North Hempstead to call off its planned slaughter of Canada geese under the previous town supervisor. She currently works with senior citizens after a long and colorful career that took her to Florida and work at sea on cruise-ships, as well as in local family events.

Richard Brummel, an environmental activist from nearby East Hills, has assisted Ms. Igneri in raising interest in the issue.

"I am shocked these turtles just died and no apparent effort was made to determine the cause, at least none that was shared with Ms. Igneri.

"I hope the town officials -- and perhaps even state or federal wildlife services --

take an interest in the welfare and apparent distress of these animals. And certainly the story needs to be clarified before any supposed dredging would occur, and the issue of water levels also needs to be better understood before the heat of summer arrives.," Mr. Brummel said.

Mr. Brummel emailed the office of the Town Supervisor and received some responses last week, but his followups to the Supervisor's office went unanswered.

"Naturally I appreciate the expressions of interest and high principle, but if the wildlife is at risk it needs some professional intervention immediately," Mr. Brummel said, adding "If four large turtles have died in the past six months or so, there is a problem that needs action, not pretty words."

Mr. Brummel followed up with a complaint to the 311 center as well, with the reference number "SR 18752".

NOTE -- Photo below by Elaine Ignéri from Manhasset Valley Park, Nov. 30, 2013

▶ **Re: Ecological Emergency? -- Turtles Dying at Manhasset Valley ...** from Judi Bosworth to you Mon, 10:13 PM ● ★

Dear Mr. Brummel,

Thank you for expressing your concern on these issues. As you know the environment and its protection is extremely important to me.

I have our 311 system pulling records of any calls that came in about the wildlife in Manhasset Valley and Whitney Pond. I will see what actions were taken at the time of the calls, and will follow up with any further steps that need to be taken if there is more to do.

As for your reference to a petroleum spill at either of those sites, my Parks Commissioner is looking at her records but does not recall any sort of spill within the last two years

The planned dredging of Whitney Pond and Manhasset Valley are still in the infancy stages. Of course the Town will take into consideration all wildlife and the effect on the ecological system before putting any shovels in the ground. As you know we are required by the DEC to conduct a SEQRA, and our Department of Public Works will work closely with the DEC to obtain all permits necessary for a project of this magnitude.

◀ Again, thank you for your concern for the environment and our Town's well-being. ▶

Sincerely,

Judi Bosworth



Dead turtle at Manhasset Valley Park photographed 11-30-2013.

##END##