



**The 56th Annual Meeting and
Shoreline/Wetlands/Woodlands Cleanup of the
Udalls Cove Preservation Committee**
will be held starting at 10 AM on
Saturday, May 3, 2025

Meet on the Back Road (Sandhill Road), west of the Little Neck LIRR station. We will provide trash bags, work gloves and maps advising where you can spend a productive hour or two collecting trash.

Then stay for the free picnic lunch at Memorial Field!

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UCPC's Old Oak Pond Ecological Restoration Project Hits a Serious "Bump in the Road"

The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee (UCPC) has been working since late 2023 on an ambitious restoration project. Our planned ***Old Oak Pond Ecological Restoration Project*** was intended to remove invasive Norway Maple trees and other invasive species from about 2.2 acres of woodlands, and then replant the area with appropriate native tree and shrub species.

The proposed restoration site is in the Old Oak Pond portion of Alley Pond Park, located immediately west of the Joseph Hellmann Overlook on Douglaston Parkway, two blocks north of Northern Boulevard. ***See page 2 for an aerial photo of the area showing the location of the planned restoration project site.*** UCPC has long served as the stewardship organization for the portions of Alley Pond Park located north of Northern Blvd. and east of Alley Creek.

With help from a \$40,000 grant provided by the Con Edison company, UCPC hired GEI, a well-respected environmental consulting firm, to prepare a detailed design for the restoration project. UCPC added our own funds to make up the total design cost of over \$90,000. The work of actually implementing the restoration project would cost considerably more – likely around \$1 million or even more. ***HOWEVER, we have recently hit a serious “bump in the road” that calls into question the viability of the entire project. (Continued on page 2.)***

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The proposed restoration site is outlined above in orange. UCPC maintains a trail system throughout the area, extending from the Joe Hellmann Overlook to the east end of the driving range parking lot (*see the map on page 7*).

The area is owned by the New York City Parks Department, and UCPC has been coordinating closely with NYC Parks on the restoration project design since 2023. With the design completed, we had planned during early 2025 to apply for the larger grants and the State and City permits that would be necessary to carry out the restoration work.

However, in January 2025 the NYC Parks Department brought to our attention a requirement enacted by the NYC City Council in 2010 that makes it nearly impossible for us to do this project. Local Law 3 of 2010 requires that for every tree of 6" diameter or greater that we remove, we have to replace it with new trees ***that total up to the same diameter as the tree we've removed.*** For example:

- If we remove a 6" diameter tree, we would have to replace it with three 2" diameter trees or two 3" diameter trees;
- if we remove a 12" diameter tree, we would have to replace it with four 3" trees or six 2" trees;
- if we remove an 18" tree, we would have to replace it with six 3" trees or nine 2" trees; and so on.

Here's our problem: on the 2.2 acre restoration site, there is simply not enough space to plant anywhere near the number of replacement trees that the City formula requires. In that case, for the shortfall -- that is, the difference between the number of trees we have room to plant, and the number that the City formula requires -- we would have to pay \$2,900 per tree into the City's tree replacement fund. Because our project is intended to replace all the invasive trees throughout the site, and because there are so many large invasive trees present, the payment we would have to make to the City's tree replacement fund is a staggering **\$785,900**. Obviously, there is no way we can afford that, nor would the grant-making entities to which we would be applying be likely to give us that much "extra" money.

(Continued on Page 4)

A “Bump in The Road” for the Old Oak Pond Project (Continued)

(Continued from Page 2) We are consulting with the NYC Parks Department and our local elected officials to see if there is any way for the planned restoration project to proceed without requiring such a large payment to the tree replacement fund. The law that imposes the obligation was originally intended to address very different kinds of projects. For instance, if construction of a new apartment building requires the removal of, say, three or four large street trees, the builder can pay the required amount into the fund to pay for the requisite number of replacement trees. That payment might total \$50,000 or \$60,000, a tiny fraction of the total cost of the building. But for our planned project, because there are so many large invasive trees that would be removed, the payment to the fund would be nearly as much as the cost of the entire restoration project.

Horseshoe Crabs, Ospreys, and Eagles, OH MY!

In May and June, 2024, our friends at the Douglas Manor Environmental Association (DMEA) again participated in the annual **Horseshoe Crab Count**, and a number of UCPC members volunteered to help. These remarkable creatures have been around for some 360 million years – they are truly “living fossils” that are not much changed since long before the age of dinosaurs (let alone the age of mammals). Not actually crabs, they are more closely related to spiders. They mate in May and June, usually at night at low tide near the time of a full moon. This means that doing a Horseshoe crab “census” is done late at night (or very early in the morning) using flashlights. The photo at right shows two volunteers measuring a crab before affixing an easily visible numbered tag that shows when and where the animal was counted. During the 2024 counting season, the volunteers counted as many as 200 crabs along the short stretch of sandy beach beside the Douglas Manor dock. We hope their matings were successful and that there will be even more to count in 2025!

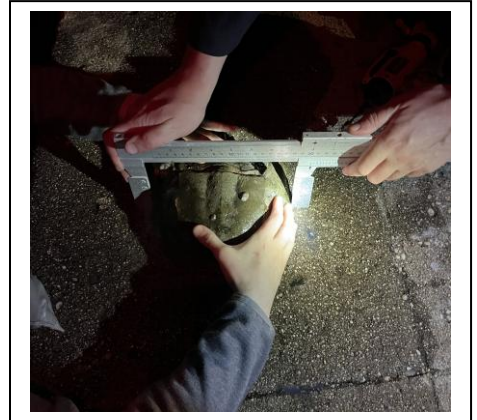


Photo by Steve Rossi

In 1997 UCPC built an Osprey nesting platform that Con Edison helped us install on top of a tall utility pole placed in the wetlands west of the Doug-Bay community. The platform was almost immediately occupied by a pair of these magnificent, large birds – close cousins to eagles. Ospreys eat almost exclusively fish, so they prefer to nest close to open water. In 2004 UCPC installed a second nesting platform on the Udalls Shore shoreline, visible from Douglas Manor’s Memorial Field and the adjacent Osprey Landing section of Udalls Cove Park. This nest was also immediately occupied. Chicks have fledged from both nests nearly every year since their installation; and the young have returned with their mates to build their own nests. There are now 6 or 7 active osprey nests around Little Neck Bay!



The nests are large and very heavy, and the platform we built in 2004 has developed a very pronounced tilt. In February 2025 we undertook an emergency stabilization effort to try to avoid a worsening of the “Leaning Tower of Osprey Nest.” We stretched a metal cable from near the top of the platform to a heavy driftwood log lying nearby on the ground. We hope this will keep the platform from toppling for at least a few more years.

(Continued Page 5)

Horseshoe Crabs, Ospreys, and Eagles, OH MY! (Continued)

Bald eagles are now permanent residents in the Little Neck Bay area! They can frequently be seen in the early morning perched atop tall trees near the Udalls Cove shoreline, or on the branches of a dead tree near old Fort Totten in Bayside, or flying overhead around the Douglaston peninsula. Like their cousins the Ospreys, eagles like to eat fish (in fact, they often try to “steal” fish from an Osprey); but they are also happy to go after rodents and other small animals.



Photo by Peter Reinharz

Bald eagles occur only in North America. They were nearly wiped out by DDT, a pesticide in wide use during and after World War II. DDT was sprayed extensively over “swamps” (what we now call wetlands) to kill mosquitos. The chemical was picked up by insects and other tiny creatures, which were eaten by larger animals, which in turn were eaten by even larger animals. Eagles and Ospreys (like human beings) are at the top of the food chain, so they accumulated heavy body burdens of DDT which caused their eggshells to become thin and break during incubation. Osprey populations plummeted 90% worldwide. Bald Eagles were down to just 487 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states by 1962, when Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*. A decade later the newly formed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT. By 2023 there were 71,467 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states, and an estimated 316,000 Bald eagles – including those that can often be seen around Little Neck Bay! Ospreys have also rebounded worldwide, as we can see from the successful nests around the Bay.

The Past Year in Review



We had a great turnout for our **55th Annual Cleanup** on April 13 of last year, with over 100 people participating! Our volunteers removed literally tons of trash from the shoreline, wetlands and wooded uplands around our community. The good news is that there was a little *LESS* trash than in some previous years – we did not completely fill the 30-cubic yard dumpster

provided by the NYC Parks Department (in past years we’ve filled it to the brim). Of course, plenty of new trash has accumulated during the past year, so there will be lots to do during our **56th Annual cleanup on May 3, 2025**. And all our volunteers and supporters are once again invited to the free picnic lunch at Douglas Manor’s Memorial Field, a long-standing post-cleanup tradition.

More Eagles – But NOT the Bald Variety

Since 2005, UCPC has hosted an amazing 30 Eagle Scout projects, with five completed just since last year’s newsletter! In May 2024 James Griffiths of Troop 71 (*photo at right*) built a new 500+ foot loop trail on the west side of the Old Oak Pond section of Alley Pond Park. In the summer Jack Caldwell of Troop 153 built 32 feet of wooden walkway over a perpetually muddy section of trail in the Virginia Point section of Udalls Cove Park.



Then, starting in November 2024 and continuing into April 2025, three Scouts from Troop 71 completed projects on the Great Neck side of the Udalls Cove salt marsh. (Prior to this we had conducted only one project in the **Village of Great Neck Estates**, which owns the parkland east of the County line.) An aerial photo showing the location of these recent and planned additional Great Neck trail projects can be seen on **Page 6**. In December 2024 Nick Tonorezos blazed a 1000-foot long section of new trail near Mirrielees Circle, and his crew completely finished a 600-foot portion of that trail. (*Continued on Page 6*)

More Eagles – But NOT the Bald Variety (Continued)

In March 2024 Chris Katsoulis and his team finished the remaining 400 feet of that trail, and also built a 12-foot wooden bridge over a stream that crosses the trail. And in April 2025 his brother Nicolas Katsoulis built another 400 feet of trail in and adjacent to Great Neck Estates' Pond Park, connecting that park with Pine Drive to the northwest. Together with the previously existing trail connecting Mirrielees Circle with Pond Park, there is now about a third of a mile of continuous trail along this edge of the Udalls Cove marsh. An additional 700 feet of trail is planned to extend from Pine Drive to Laurel Drive, where an already existing trail leads to the Udalls Cove shoreline. We hope that another one or two Eagle candidates will be willing to undertake that work in the 2025-2026 time frame. UCPC extends thanks to the leadership of the Village of Great Neck Estates for their enthusiastic support of the projects depicted on the aerial photo below; and we offer a big ***thank you*** to all the intrepid Scouts who have done so much work on the trails around our Douglaston, Little Neck and Great Neck communities.

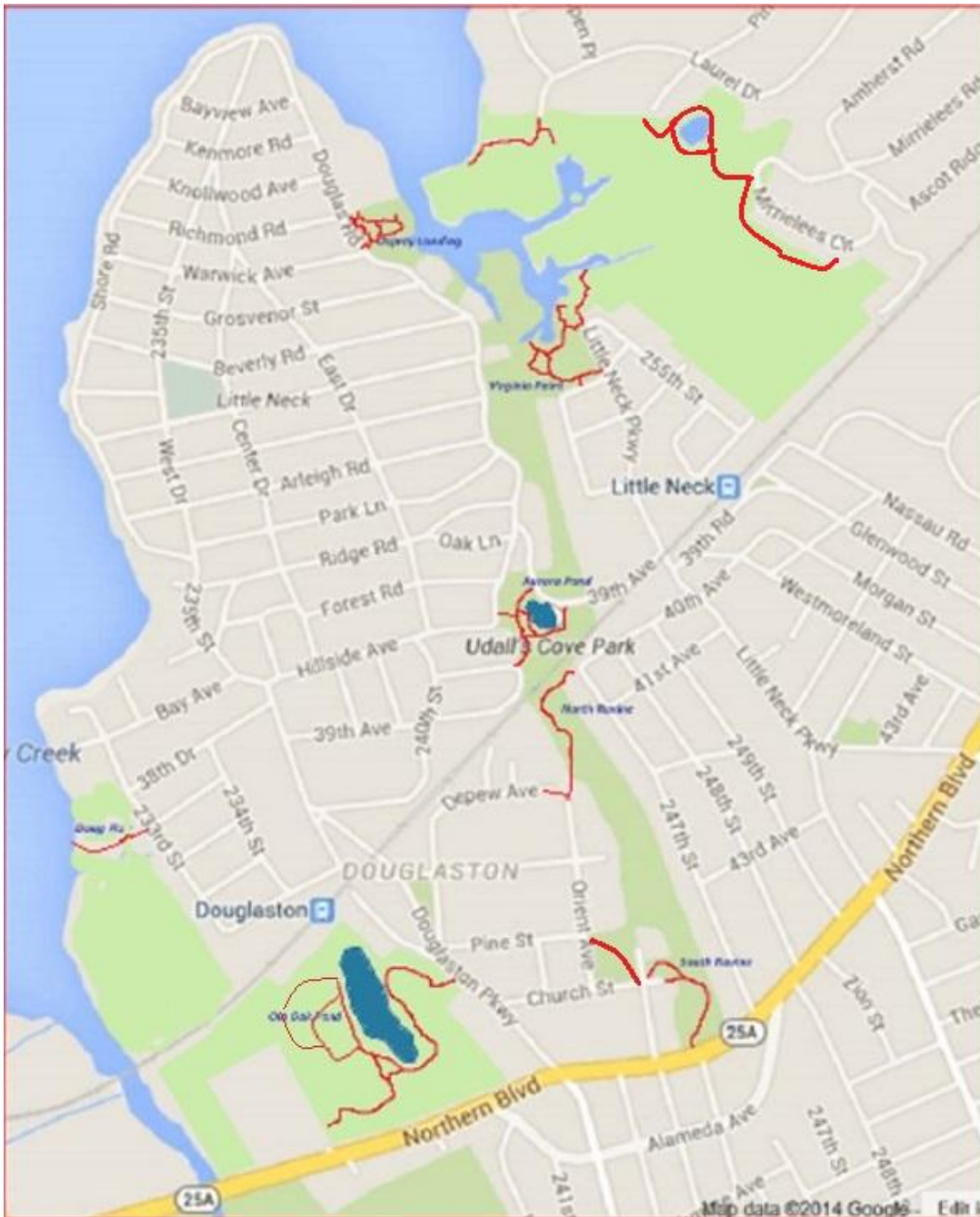


“Women’s Day” on our Trails

On October 4 we led a walk for a number of women living in the Douglaston Transitional Residence, to introduce them to some of the lovely natural areas in their "front yard." We walked on the South Ravine trail from Northern Blvd. to the Douglaston Firehouse (where this photo was taken). We continued on to the Old Oak Pond section of Alley Pond Park, taking the trail that leads from the Joe Hellmann Overlook on Douglaston Parkway to the parking lot of the Douglaston Golf Driving Range. Then we walked to the Alley Pond Environmental Center where Education Director Bonnie Bromberg gave a slide show about APEC's activities, and showed the women a few of APEC's famous "Ambassador Animals." NYC Councilmember Vickie Paladino came by at the beginning of the walk to greet the women. Pastor Lindsay Lunnum of Zion Church, who had the original idea for this outing, joined us for the entire walk.



EXPLORE YOUR PARK!



During the past 26 years we've built or rehabilitated well over a mile of trails (shown in red on the map) across the various sections of Udalls Cove Park, and the nearby Doug-Bay and Old Oak Pond sections of Alley Pond Park. (That pond lies between Douglaston Pkwy. and the Golf Driving Range.)

Foot-bridges cross streams & there are wooden walkways over muddy trail areas.

Take a stroll, bring the kids, walk the dog, admire the wild flowers, do some bird watching, snap a few photos, or just enjoy the scenery!

You can find this trail map on our website, along with narrative descriptions of the various sections of the park and information about how to see and enjoy them, at: <https://www.udallscove.org/map-and-trails>; or point your camera here and click →



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The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee ...



... working since 1969 to **C**onserve, **P**reserve and **R**estore the wetlands and woodlands in the Udalls Cove watershed.

*Join our 56th Annual Cleanup
on Saturday, May 3, 2025 – Details Inside!*

The Udalls Cove Preservation Committee
251-31 42nd Avenue
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