



American white pelican at the Lower Shaker Lake. Photograph by L. C. Gooch.

Epilogue

Doan Brook has much about it that is unique and uniquely interesting — its history and geology, its carefully planned and preserved parks, the museums that lie along it, and the fine neighborhoods of its watershed. At the same time, it is like many other small, urban streams that run almost unnoticed through our cities. We began the last century by taking these streams completely for granted and assuming that they could absorb whatever we dumped into them. Now, we view them as a resource that we need to protect. The impacts of our past negligence are visible whenever we look at a stream, river, or lake. The question is whether we will do what it takes to remedy old errors.

Our emphasis on urban stream restoration has grown out of an increasing awareness that small streams are ecologically important. They not only connect to larger streams and lakes, but they also provide significant habitats in their own right. As our cities have continued to expand, we have begun to realize that no stream is untouched by our presence. We have become aware that we must treat the watersheds we live in more carefully to save any remnant of natural stream habitat.

Growing awareness of our impact on the streams we live with is the continuation of a process that began almost a hundred years ago. Then, we realized that it mattered when we dumped sewage into a stream. Now, we realize that even the occasional overflow of a combined sewer is important, that stormwater runoff from paved landscape causes floods, and that the chemicals we leave on the ground make a difference. Just as we worked to stop direct sanitary sewage discharges in the early part of the twentieth century, we must now work to control the remaining sewage discharges and the damage caused by stormwater.

As we undertake this effort, we need to keep the reason for our labor in view. Walk the Doan Brook at any season. Look at the snow-covered trees in winter, listen to the red-winged blackbirds in spring, explore the Cultural Gardens in summer, and hike the gorge in the fall. Take advantage of the gift the philanthropists gave us in 1900. And make sure that their gift will still be here in another one hundred years.

Believe one who knows: you will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters.

— **St. Bernard of Clairvaux**

Epistles

