



Working to preserve open space in Newton for 43 years!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Spring Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

April / May 2004

SALE OF KESSELER WOODS COMPLETE Subdivision Plan for Brookline Street Filed with City

After a three-month delay ordered by regulators, the 42-acre Kessler Woods property was formally conveyed by NStar to the City of Newton and its development partner, Cornerstone Corporation, on Wednesday, April 7. The delay allowed the Department of Telecommunications and Energy to review the transaction to ensure that the price and sale process were fair to consumers. DTE approved the sale in late March. Proceeds will be distributed by NStar to ratepayers, as required by 1994 legislation deregulating the telecommunications industry in Massachusetts.

As a result of the transaction, which went off uneventfully, the city took possession of nine acres of open space adjacent to the existing Saw Mill Brook Conservation Area on the south side of Vine Street along with an additional three acres north of Vine Street. Cornerstone now owns the remaining 30+ acres, but a conservation easement of about 16 acres is expected to be granted to the city when the two Cornerstone projects are complete. This additional land straddles Saw Mill Brook and South Branch, a stream that feeds into Saw Mill Brook, from the city-owned conservation land to the Brookline town line. Altogether, this will create a 28-acre parcel of open space.

By connecting the existing 20-acre Saw Mill Brook Conservation Area with the approximately 5-acre Bald Pate Meadow Conservation Area, this new property will create a 50-plus-acre swath of green in

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Community Preservation Act is under attack.

And we shouldn't necessarily be concerned about that. In a democracy, everything ought to be poked, prodded, shaken, bent, spindled, hung out to dry, put to the acid test, and examined under a microscope in the hard, cold light of day. What doesn't pass the test is politely shown the door. The rest is preserved because it stands on its merits.

When all is said and done, the Community Preservation Act is a keeper. By any measure, it deserves to stay.

Before the voters of Newton adopted the CPA, the city suffered two decades of inability to fund open space purchases. The result was a string of losses, of which the woods at Andover-Newton

(Continued on page 2)

Save the date!

**Newton Conservators
ANNUAL MEETING**

Wednesday, June 2, 2004

Post 440, Nonantum

***Renata von Tscharnier and Karl Haglund
"Inventing the Charles River"***

See article on page 3

Kessler Woods, continued from page 1

this part of the city. In addition to recreational opportunities, this area will preserve much-needed wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge and other environmental benefits.

Cornerstone has filed a subdivision plan for the first of two developments it will build, this one along Brookline Street. It shows a 13-lot plan, nine in the subdivision itself and four with frontage on Brookline Street. The firm's representatives have been meeting with city staff on road engineering, water and sewer service, tree removal and other details needed to proceed with the subdivision process.

A hearing is scheduled before the Conservation Commission on Thursday, April 15, to begin the process of getting their approval for work adjacent to the wetland. In addition to Conservation Commission approval, the subdivision must be approved by the Planning and Development Board (acting as the Board of Survey) and a special permit will likely be needed from the Board of Aldermen because of grade changes required to build in this area.

Once all the required approvals are obtained, Cornerstone intends to develop the infrastructure, including roadway, sewer and water, and then to sell off the lots individually to other developers, who will construct the thirteen new homes. Cornerstone plans to begin the process of developing the larger property along LaGrange Street after this first project is underway.

Doug Dickson

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in February, April, June, September and November. Deadlines for these issues are the fifth of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles by email in MS Word or rich text format to dgdickson@rcn.com. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Margaret Albright, Jim Broderick, Cris Criscitiello, Doug Dickson, Bill Hagar, Duane Hillis, Ted Kuklinski, Eric Reenstierna, Jon Regosin and Beth Schroeder. Thanks to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading assistance.

President's Message, continued from page 1

Theological School is only the most recent example. In the few years since the Act was adopted in Newton, the city, with the Conservators' help, has expanded both the Webster and the Dolan Pond Conservation Areas with acquisitions. It has undertaken to save Angino Farm at Winchester and Nahanton Streets, the city's last working farm.

The most significant acquisition is Kessler Woods. Five years ago, when Boston Edison first threatened to market the property, the city was helpless to protect it. Five years later, the city had the CPA, and this priority parcel on the city's Open Space Plan was saved.

The city has managed to stretch a dollar in each of these acquisitions. Protection of twenty-five-plus acres at Kessler cost \$4.50 per square foot of land (of which half was paid by Newton taxpayers and half by matching funds from the state). At Webster and Dolan, the costs were \$10.00 and \$11.50 per foot for land that developers would have fenced and built over. Contrast this with the going price range of \$30 to \$60 per foot for residential lots in Newton. Part of the credit for these economical purchases goes in some cases to conservation-minded land owners willing to accept less than full market value for their land. The rest of the credit goes to a city government that has watched its spending carefully.

CPA money has been spread across the city, from Newton Corner to West Newton, Auburndale, Newton Centre, and Oak Hill. Most of the early funding was allocated to badly-needed historic preservation and to recreation and affordable housing. But when Kessler Woods became available, the other interests served by the CPA rallied to the open space cause and allowed the city to offer its winning bid.

The CPA allows us to acquire those open spaces that are most essential to the city's livability. It allows us to pass on to our children a community as rich in woods and wildlife as the city that was passed down from our parents.

Alderman Salvucci has proposed the elimination of the CPA in Newton. The matter is being considered by the Aldermanic Programs and Services Committee. If you feel as strongly as we do about this, make yourself heard through an email (marcia@marciajohnson.org) or letter to Marcia Johnson, the Committee chair.

Eric Reenstierna

Renata von Tscharnier and Karl Haglund to speak at Annual Meeting

The Newton Conservators Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 2, 2004, with special guests Renata von Tscharnier, founder of the Charles River Conservancy, and Karl Haglund, author of "Inventing the Charles River," as keynote speakers.

The Annual Meeting is being moved to Post 440 in Nonantum this year, giving us more space at a better rate. A social hour with a cash bar will begin at 6:15 PM and a sit-down dinner will be served at 7:00 PM. The program will begin at 8:00 PM. A brief business meeting and presentation of awards (see articles on page 4) will occur during dinner to allow our speakers to start as close to 8:00 PM as possible so we don't run late on a weekday evening.



*Renata von Tscharnier and Karl Haglund
(photo from Harvard Gazette Archives)*

Renata von Tscharnier is president and founder of the Charles River Conservancy. A Newton resident, she is an architect and urban planner who has written books on cityscapes and urban art.

Karl Haglund is a senior planner for the state Department of Recreation and Conservation (formerly Metropolitan District Commission). He has a long interest in urban design and the history of the Charles River Basin.

Our speakers collaborated on the book, "Inventing the Charles River," published by MIT Press in 2002. The book was written by Haglund with a foreword by von Tscharnier.

The Charles River Basin, extending nine miles

upstream from the harbor, has been called Boston's Central Park. Yet few realize that this apparently natural landscape is a totally fabricated public space. Two hundred years ago the Charles was a tidal river, edged by hundreds of acres of salt marshes and mudflats.

Haglund and von Tscharnier will describe how, before the creation of the basin could begin, the river first had to be imagined as a single public space. The new esplanades along the river changed the way Bostonians perceived their city. And the basin, with its expansive views of Boston and Cambridge, became an iconic image of the metropolitan area.

The book focuses on the precarious balance between transportation planning and public stewardship. Long before the esplanades were created, great stretches of the river were devoted to industrial enterprises and transportation—millponds, bridges, landfills, and a complex network of road and railway bridges. In 1929, Boston's first major highway controversy erupted when a four-lane road was proposed as part of a new esplanade. At twenty-year intervals, three riverfront road disputes followed, successively more complex and contentious, culminating in the lawsuits over "Scheme Z," the Big Dig's plan for eighteen lanes of highway ramps and bridges over the river.

The presentation will include photographs, maps, and drawings that illustrate past and future visions for the Charles and document the river's place in Boston's history.

MISSION

Newton Conservators, Inc.

The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 43 years ago in June 1961.

ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR AWARD TO MAYOR DAVID COHEN

2003 was a banner year in Newton for preserving open space. Of the many projects that were either started or completed, there is one that stands out in terms of its significance to the community, the complexity and challenge of the process, and the high stakes nature of the effort. The acquisition of Kessler Woods occurred for two reasons: availability of CPA funds and the single-minded determination and creative leadership of Mayor David Cohen.

For these reasons, the Newton Conservators will present its Environmentalist of the Year Award to David Cohen at its Annual Meeting this year.

Though he relied on his staff and a committee of community leaders and advocates to help guide the deal, Mayor Cohen played a pivotal role at key junctures in the process. The first occurred early on when NStar set a February date for responding to its auction, effectively ruling out a bid from the city. Cohen got the Attorney General to extend the auction timetable to June. Then he shaped the proposal to partner with a developer and negotiated the terms of the deal. He obtained community, CPC and Board of Aldermen approval for the plan, and when the auction was extended to a second round, the Mayor put together the winning bid. This marked the first time in the state's history that a municipality has successfully partnered with a developer to prevail in the sale by auction of a major parcel of land.

In selecting the Mayor for this award, we recognize as well his impeccable record on environmental issues over the years. But it is for his stunning success against all odds in the acquisition of Kessler Woods that the Conservators Board of Directors honors David Cohen as the 2004 Environmentalist of the Year.

Doug Dickson

STEPHANIE BACON RECEIVES CHARLES MAYNARD AWARD

Hammond Pond is one of Newton's most beautiful ponds and is a significant natural resource. It is very visible, as it lies directly adjacent to the parking lots of commercial developments along Route 9, where most of us have shopped at one time or another. Water quality in Hammond Pond has been in decline for decades. It took the dedication of

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neighbor Stephanie Bacon, who is a Conservator and a past member of our Board of Directors, to bring about a change.

In 1995, Stephanie began studying Hammond Pond. Through her efforts and the efforts of the Hammond Pond Task Force, we learned that water quality problems at the pond stem an overload of nutrients from Route 9 and parking lot runoff, oil and grease, and the by-products of geese and other birds. A cure was needed to preserve Hammond Pond.

The planned cure is a filtration system to be installed at the edge of the pond where it receives runoff from the parking lots. Filtration beds will provide a bioengineering solution so that the water entering the pond will be far cleaner than the water it receives today. Funding and cooperation from the adjacent property owners and various civic and government groups have been secured. Stephanie Bacon spearheaded this effort. She did this out of a love for this place, and for that we all benefit. This important reclamation project would not have gone forward without Stephanie. She has made a difference.

The Charles Maynard Award is given each year to recognize achievement in biodiversity, habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection. The Board of Directors of the Newton Conservators is pleased to honor Stephanie Bacon as the 2004 recipient of this Award.

Eric Reenstierna

THREE DIRECTORS AWARDS TO BE PRESENTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

Each year, the Conservators Board recognizes community leaders and volunteers who have contributed in a particular way with a Directors Award. This year there are three such honorees, each of whom will receive her award at the Annual Meeting in June.

“Walking Trails” Map Guide Team

Some of Newton's richest habitat is hidden away in open spaces that are off the beaten path. Some of us take years to find them. Three Conservators—last year's President, Lucy Caldwell Stair, former Board member Judy Hepburn, and Pat Robinson—teamed up to create a booklet to bring us to these places and guide us by trail maps into the heart of them. Judy

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Directors Awards, continued from page 4

made the maps, Lucy wrote the text, and Pat laid out the design in a brochure that can be put out on a coffee table or stuffed into a hiker's pocket. To say that this guide is high-quality is to understate it by a long shot. The guide is available through the Conservators or at local bookstores. For this highly successful effort, the Conservators are pleased to honor Lucy Caldwell-Stair, Judy Hepburn, and Pat Robinson with a Directors' Award.

Eric Reenstierna

Retired Science Coordinator Maxine Rosenberg

Maxine Rosenberg was science coordinator for the Newton Public Schools when the Newton Conservators initiated their successful grant program. Maxine saw the benefit of having outside funding to assist teachers and students in environmental education and helped promote the program to science teachers. Her support continued for almost a decade and as a result, the Conservators have funded numerous projects, including butterfly gardens, community gardens, garden classrooms, science days, and water quality projects. Maxine was tireless in her support of this effort to provide unique educational opportunities for Newton students. It is a pleasure to recognize her years of dedicated service to the environmental education of our kids.

Bill Hagar

Retired Animal Control Officer Lucille Riddle

It may not always be apparent, but there is a rich diversity of wildlife in our city. That means the potential for occasional conflict between the interests of animals, like coyotes, deer and fox, and residents. Newton Animal Control Officer Lucille Riddle recently retired after 25 years in the service of Newton. It was her job to manage the city's wild animals found in our open spaces. When someone spotted an unfamiliar creature, it was probably Lucille who responded to their inquiry. She is a true animal lover and spends a lot of her spare time with organizations like SPIN (Stray Pets in Need), where she is Vice President and performs foster care for pets. Anyone who has met her in the field can attest to her devotion to her work with animals and it is that quality that we recognize with this award.

Ted Kuklinski

STARTING AT THE EDGE OF ORDWAY

As the photo below shows, work has begun on the repaving of Grant Avenue and the upgrading of the corner of Everett and Grant to make the sidewalk handicapped-accessible. Two city trees have been removed, a partly decayed oak to the left in the picture and a failing Norway Maple at the right. Curbing will be installed, probably by the end of May.



Photo by Jim Broderick

For the renewal of Ordway Park, this change marks a real beginning. The curbing will allow planting of appropriate ground cover in the space between the curb and the sidewalk and, while the repaving is in process, a water line may come into the park for the first time. The process of applying for a water connection, on which care of new plantings depends, has begun. An anonymous donor has offered to pay for hiring a civil engineer to develop a plan and specifications.

Landscape designers Beth Schroeder and Jim Broderick and landscape architect Susan Sangiolo will present to the Board of Directors in late April preliminary plans for the layout of Ordway Park and a sequence of replantings. In late May or early June, full plans will be presented to neighbors for their comments. Final versions will be brought to the Board of Directors for approval in early summer.

Contributions to the Ordway Park Fund have grown. Generous neighbors and Conservators have contributed over \$6,000 toward the first matching goal of \$10,000. Anyone who has not yet made a donation or who wants to increase their gift can still see their contribution doubled if they send a check to:

***Newton Conservators Ordway Park Fund
PO Box 590011, Newton, MA 02459***

Jim Broderick

Spring 2004 Newton Conservators Lecture

*Thursday, May 20, 2004, 7:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library*

“NEWTON AND THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM: NATURAL CONNECTIONS”

Brendan Whittaker

Former Vermont Secretary of Natural Resources



At first glance, it may appear that the City of Newton, an urban ring suburb with a population density of 4643 persons per square mile, and the Northern Forest areas of Vermont, with only 20 persons per square mile, have little in common. Yet Newton native Brendan Whittaker will elucidate the linkage between these seemingly disparate natural environments when he delivers the 2004 Spring Lecture at the Newton Free Library in May.

He has lived in farthest northeastern Vermont for almost forty-five years. As a graduate professional forester in a one-industry paper mill town, he has found himself deeply involved in the vast land ownership changes taking place in northern New

York and New England, particularly over the last 15 years. He feels a debt to his Garden City upbringing for putting him on the road to a life in conservation. He has been a longtime but far-away member of the Newton Conservators.

Dan Perlman, Professor of Biology at Brandeis University and coauthor with E.O. Wilson of *Conserving Earth's Biodiversity*, will join Mr. Whittaker is exploring the many emerging linkages—physical, biological, environmental, and even spiritual—between Newton and the Northeast Kingdom, a 20-million acre region some 30 times bigger than Rhode Island.

Brendan Whittaker is a proud graduate of Newton High Class of 1952 and went on to a degree in Forestry from the University of Massachusetts. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. He began his career in Vermont state government in 1959 as Essex County Forester. In 1967, he served as First Chairman of the Act 250, District I Environmental Commission in Vermont. In 1977, he was appointed as Director of the State Energy Office, and in 1978 he became Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

He was chosen to chair the international negotiations by environmental representatives of the six New England Governors and five Eastern Canadian Premiers, which resulted in the Unanimous Joint Agreement on Acid Rain. In 1991, he was appointed to the Northern Forest Lands Council, and in 1992 he joined the Vermont Natural Resources Council as a Northern Forest Project Manager. In 1997, he became one of the founding members of the nationwide “Forest Stewards Guild.” He was just re-appointed in 2004 as a Vermont member of the Connecticut River Joint Commission. He also serves as a selectman in the town of Brunswick, Vermont, and is a partner with his wife, Dorothy, in the market garden they operate from their farm.

This lecture is co-sponsored by the Newton Free Library. Brendan Whittaker's lecture is the seventh in the twice yearly Newton Conservators Lecture Series, which features renowned experts in areas related to our conservation and open space mission. As part of our educational outreach, the programs are free and open to the public.

For further information on this event, please contact Ted Kuklinski (617-969-6222).

Ted Kuklinski

Are there any owls in Newton?



Yes, there are at least two species regularly residing in the city, but as nocturnal creatures, they are more often heard than seen. At this time of year, on an after-dark stroll near the soccer field in Cold Spring Park, along the woods in front of Newton South High School or near the Hammond Pond Park Reservation, you can usually pick up the quavering whistle

of an Eastern Screech Owl. This small fellow, feathered either in gray or red, can usually be coaxed out from the deeper woods by imitation of its call. You might catch sight of the bird fluttering in ghostly fashion against the night sky as it comes out to investigate.

During the past few weeks, I have been hearing a screech owl calling just before sunrise from a small wooded area next to our house in Newton Highlands. In a 4:00 AM tour of Newton on a night in December, several of us were able to locate seven of them in just two hours. During the day these birds roost in a nesting box or a tree cavity, and if, with binoculars, you inspect each hole in the trees around your neighborhood, you may discover a screech owl looking back at you. It must be true that owls see people more often than people see owls!

Our other regular Newton resident is the Great Horned Owl, recognized at night by its far-carrying call consisting of a short, staccato run of deep-pitched hoots. They are found in places like Houghton Garden, Kennard Park, or the Newton Cemetery, and by this time of year many have already mated and started to nest. During the day, they also seek out a quiet place to roost, very often in the upper branches of a large white pine, close to the main trunk. I've occasionally seen one high up in a pine grove along the Sudbury Aqueduct or in Cutler Park. Their presence may be noted by finding white droppings or some regurgitated owl pellets at the base of a tree. More often it is the excited noise of a bunch of crows that leads to their discovery. Crows detecting a roosting owl will assemble a large group of their fellows to surround it, setting off a loud chorus and notifying everyone within hearing of its presence.

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The talons and sharp beak of the owl keep the crows from direct attack, but the harassed bird may be forced to fly off, giving you an opportunity for a good look.

Less often seen in Newton are the Long-eared Owl, the Barred Owl, and the Saw-Whet Owl, but all three species have been reported. In early days when there were farmlands, Newton undoubtedly housed some Barn Owls, but they have disappeared with the last of the large, old farm buildings and open fields. The Short-eared Owl and the large Snowy Owl (an occasional winter visitor from the Arctic Tundra) are daytime hunters seen in wide, open areas such as salt marshes or coastal dunes, habitats not found here.

One winter, several years ago, a Boreal Owl, an unusual visitor from the woods of Northern Canada, turned up in the courtyard of the Brown Middle School. It was spotted through the window by an alert teacher, and students got great looks at a species rarely seen in these parts. Many birders would have died to have it on their Life Lists!!

M.G. Criscitiello

Advice about Invasive Plants



Did you know that you may have invasive plants in your garden?

There are quite a few here in New England. They are dangerous because they spread into natural areas and push out the diverse native plants that were originally there. This disturbs the balance of nature and endangers the habitat of many living creatures. I had a few in my yard and it was a hard but important decision to have them removed.

The privet hedge (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*) is one example. We had a hedge along the border of our property next to our driveway. I had lived with it for 25 years. After it was removed I knew I had made the right decision. It was so boring and uninteresting. Now I'm converting that area into a mixed perennial garden with ferns and bulbs. We finally have a place to shovel the snow off of our driveway too!

A number of years ago I removed all of the barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) plants in my yard. They may be pretty but I don't know of a nastier plant to prune. This plant is spreading all over our natural areas. There are several wonderful native alternatives for your garden

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Invasive Plants, continued from page 7

including bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) and chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), American cranberry bush (*Viburnum trilobum*), Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) and common winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*).

We had a giant winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*), also known as a “burning bush” in our backyard. It was an arduous chore to prune it. I’ve learned over the years that this is an especially invasive plant that is spreading into the understory of woodland areas, crowding out native plants. This year I took the last burning bush out. I will replace it with a lovely native berrying shrub. The bayberry, highbush blueberry, chokeberry, American cranberry bush, the fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*) and the sweet pepper bush (*Clethra alnifolia*) are good replacements.

Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*) were once planted as street trees in Newton. No one realized that they would be moving into our gardens and parks but they are everywhere now. They create dense shade and their roots are close to the surface, making it difficult to grow other plants below them. We had our three Norway maples removed and I’m looking forward to replanting the hillside in front of our house with more appropriate plants. If you need to replace a Norway maple but you would still like to have a large scale shade tree, you could plant a red maple (*Acer rubrum*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) or tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) instead.

Thank goodness I had no Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). You may have seen it engulfing forest trees. When snow and ice accumulate on these vines, the trees are often damaged or pulled down by the weight.

If you remove your invasive plants you will need to replant the area with more respectable plants. I would suggest planting native New England plants. They were meant to be here and they will help re-establish the diversity that is important for wildlife habitats.

It’s especially important that invasive plants are not added to a garden that borders a natural area. These thugs will move right in. If you are hiring a landscaper to put plants on your property make sure that none of the plants are considered invasive here in New England.

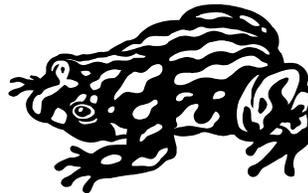
If you would like a more complete list of invasive plants go to the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England at the University of Connecticut website:

<http://invasives.eeb.uconn.edu/ipane>

Beth Schroeder, Schroeder Design, bsw1@comcast.net

Exploring Newton’s Vernal Pools

For many Massachusetts naturalists, late March and early April means time to look for, listen to, think and dream about amphibians.



At this time of year, many of our native frogs and salamanders stage dramatic night-time migrations to breeding wetlands. Vernal

pools, relatively small ponds lacking fish, are particularly important breeding habitat for many amphibians such as the Spotted Salamander and Wood Frog.

Over the past few years, I have become particularly interested in understanding the status of amphibians in urban settings such as Newton. From the perspective of an amphibian such as the spotted salamander, Newton is a sea of inhospitable development, with relatively small islands of open space that may contain suitable habitat. For example, populations of spotted salamanders and American toads in Cold Spring Park appear to be completely isolated from other salamander and toad populations.

I find it fascinating to try to determine the distribution of amphibians within this urban environment, and to track the status of these populations through time. Some species that are extremely common or abundant throughout much of Massachusetts are extremely rare in Newton. For example, to date I am aware of only one breeding site for Eastern Newts and one breeding site for Wood Frogs in Newton.

From an aesthetic point of view, there is something particularly spectacular about listening to a Spring Peeper chorus behind the Chestnut Hill Mall, or observing a Spotted Salamander swimming under the ice in Cold Spring Park, versus experiencing similar phenomena in more rural settings. Warm April evenings are a good time to listen for calling Spring Peepers and American Toads at sites such as Nahanton Park and Hammond Woods.

If you are interested in learning more about vernal pools, I will be leading a vernal pool walk on Sunday April 25, at 10:00 AM, meeting at the west end of Saw Mill Brook Parkway, adjacent to the MDC sign. Wear calf boots or waders if you have them. Questions? Call 617-244-0736.

Jon Regosin, Reptile and Amphibian Biologist for the MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

ANGINO FARM UPDATE

The Conservators presented a preliminary proposal for acquisition of Angino Farm using CPA funds to the Community Preservation Committee on March 31st. Residents of the neighborhood spoke favorably, including Teresa Walsh, a lifetime resident of Newton Highlands and Gene Rubin, the president of The Ledgebrook Condominium Association. A last-minute price reduction to \$3 million was a welcome indication that the Angino family wants to make this happen.

Ledgebrook has expressed an interest in joining with the Conservators to protect approximately 1.5 acres of property with a Conservation Restriction and restoring the historic farm house. Discussions are continuing to determine the very best method of raising the matching funds.

There is a group that would like to keep this an active community farm and Duane Hillis welcomes any comments and assistance in that endeavor (617-262-1111).

Duane Hillis

Volunteers Needed for Albemarle-Cheesecake Brook Clean Up

The Friends of Albemarle have scheduled a clean up of Cheesecake Brook, Albemarle Park and Avery Wood for Sunday, April 25 as part of NewtonServes.

Volunteers should meet at 9:00 AM for the morning clean up team or at 1:00 PM for the afternoon clean up team at the Snack Shack next to the Gath Pool on Albemarle Road, in the park.

For more information, contact Newton Serves (bdroz@ci.netwon.ma.us) or Friends of Albemarle at info@FriendsofAlbemarle.org.

Margaret Albright

GREEN DECADE COALITION/NEWTON LECTURE SERIES

Environmentally and Socially Conscious Investing

Monday, April 26, 2004 7:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library

Call for Amateur Scriptwriters, Producers and Directors

The Newton Conservators will be joining with the Green Decade Coalition to create a series of programs to be run on Newton's cable TV channels. These will involve presentation of information about Newton's conservation areas, efforts to improve management of our parks and other topics of interest to Newton residents.

If you have experience writing, directing or producing for cable TV, or would like to learn by doing, contact Eric Reenstierna (ericreen@tiac.net) or Ted Kuklinski (tkuklinski@aol.com).

This initiative is a logical extension of other programs we run, including our Spring and Fall walks, our "Walking Guide to Newton's Parks and Conservation Areas," our lecture series and our educational grants program.

Attention Tree Lovers:

Volunteers are needed for Newton's Urban Tree Commission, which advises and supports the city's Forestry Department in caring for our trees on streets and other public land. Potential activities include developing policies and programs, organizing events and participating in a tree stewardship program. For more information please contact Chair Katherine Howard at howard_katherine@hotmail.com or 617-527-1796.

Katherine Howard

Calendar of Events

Newton Conservators Board meets the fourth Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM, usually in a City Hall meeting room or the City Hall cafeteria.

Conservation Commission meets the fourth Thursday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Parks and Recreation Commission meets the third Monday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Community Preservation Committee meets the last Wednesday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Aldermanic Committee on Community Preservation meets the last Tuesday at 7:45 PM in City Hall Room 222.

Flowed Meadow Flowing with Improvements

Most visitors to Newton's Auburndale Park, affectionately known as "the Cove", may not be aware of the immediately adjacent and expansive Flowed Meadow Conservation Area. This lovely 28-acre parcel consists of wetlands, uplands, small kettles and grassy edge habitats that are very attractive to wildlife. It is home to coyotes and fox, reptiles, and many bird species—bald eagles were even seen there last winter.

The Flowed Meadow area can be easily accessed from the far right corner of the Cove parking lot on West Pine Street. It extends downstream on the Charles River to the Forest Grove Circle and back from the river to the rear of the capped landfill that is across Lexington Street from the Burr School fields. A trail entrance is on Staniford Street which is off Lexington Street.

A small stream flows from the east through the "flowed meadow" to a pump station near the banks of the Charles River. The level of the stream is lower than the river and the pump station serves to raise the stream flow to river level. The north side of the Flowed Meadow is bounded by a little known upland path/unpaved road which goes from Forest Grove Circle and connects to Wabasso Street, running behind the DPW landfill.

In 1983, seven acres were conveyed to the city to form the original Flowed Meadow Conservation Area, which is under the jurisdiction of the Newton Conservation Commission. In 2000, additional land was deemed surplus to DPW needs and declared as open space. The Mayor's Flowed Meadow Planning Group recommended that this area be used for passive recreation and made suggestions for improvements.

While familiar to locals, the trails in Flowed Meadow were unmarked, overgrown, and difficult to navigate. Crossing two of the streams in the area was particularly difficult, forcing visitors to utilize an unstable hodgepodge of boards and logs, often resulting in wet feet for those daring enough to try. Matthew Gray, who lives near Flowed Meadow, decided to do something about this situation and tackled the job as his Boy Scout Eagle Project. Such volunteer service projects have been invaluable in many of our Conservation Areas over the past several years. He consulted with Martha Aherin Horn,

Newton's Senior Environmental Planner, and came up with a proposal which he took before the Conservation Commission for approval. The plan encompassed new bridges for the trails, signage, and bluebird houses.



One of the two new bridges constructed at the Flowed Meadow Conservation Area (photo by Matthew Gray)

Troop participation is an important component of any Eagle project and some thirty scouts, leaders, and other adults were involved, with approximately 150 volunteer hours expended. At one of the scout meetings, troop members worked in teams to build and assemble six bluebird houses, which were later installed along the trails. The unusual design of the houses allow them to be easily cleaned and maintained. The Eastern Bluebird used to be abundant in Newton but competition from non-native species reduced their numbers to the point where many Newtonites may never have seen one.

New trail signs were designed with a rustic look with their forest green color and routed lettering highlighted in yellow. They designate previously unmarked trails such as Staniford Path and the Swamp Trail. With the new trail signs, Flowed Meadow is no longer a veritable forest maze.

The new bridges may be the highlight of the project and should last for decades. They are not only stable, but have minimal visual impact on their surroundings. As an example of creative recycling, some structural components of the old bog bridges from Dolan Pond, since replaced with a raised boardwalk, were used in the two Flowed Meadow bridges. Prior to the installation itself, a work day had been devoted to preparing, cutting, and drilling

(Continued on page 11)

Flowed Meadow, continued from page 10

the bridge materials. One of the bridges spans the stream through the Flowed Meadow, provides a means of travel across the meadow and makes possible a nice walking loop.

The installation itself took place on June 14, 2003, a misty Saturday, with scouts, leaders, and parents all working together in teams. Some worked on the bridges and others dug holes for the sign posts, while another group took on the task of scouting for good locations and installing the birdhouses. All the installation work was finished by 2:00 PM that day, ahead of schedule. As the scout troop was leaving, the members were pleased to see some visitors to Flowed Meadow already walking across bridges that, a few hours before, didn't even exist! Thanks to this project, future visitors will have an easier time navigating the wild area of Newton known as Flowed Meadow.

Ted Kuklinski



*New Signage at Flowed Meadow Conservation Area
(photo by Matthew Gray)*



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April/May 2004 Newsletter



the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

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- The Edge of Ordway Park page 5
- Brendan Whittaker to Speak May 20 page 6
- Owls in Newton page 7
- Advice about Invasive Plants page 7
- Exploring Newton's Vernal Pools page 8
- And much more!

Annual Meeting on June 2—Renata von Tscharner, Charles River Conservancy, and Karl Haglund, DRC, to Speak



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