



Working to preserve open space in Newton for 44 years!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Spring Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

April / May 2005

ROGER SWAIN TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING

“The Man in the Red Suspenders” will be the keynote speaker at this year’s Annual Meeting of the Newton Conservators on Wednesday, June 1 (see box below and related articles on pages 3 and 4). Roger Swain, a resident of Newton Highlands and a member for several years of the Conservators’ Board of Advisors, will speak about trends in farming and gardening, with particular reference to community farming and the impending acquisition of Angino Farm by the city.



Roger Swain is best known as the host of “The Victory Garden” on PBS, a position he held for 15 years. Recently, he returned to television as co-host of a new program, shown locally on Channel 56, called “People, Places and Plants,” created by the magazine of the same name.

Since 1978, Roger has been science editor of Horticulture Magazine, writing regularly on a variety of topics. He is the author of several books about gardening and horticulture, including *Earthly Pleasures*, *The Practical Gardener*, *Field Days*, *Saving Graces* and *Groundwork*, and contributor to many more. As storyteller and lecturer, he is in wide demand, speaking at garden shows, garden clubs and other venues.

In 1992, Swain received the American Horticulture Society Award for Writing and in 1996, he was awarded the Massachusetts Horticulture Society’s Gold Medal for his “power to inspire

others.” He is a graduate of Harvard College and earned a PhD for his study of the behavior of ants in tropical rain forests. But it is his work with plants that has made Roger Swain one of this country’s most highly regarded authorities on gardening.

In addition to their Newton residence, Roger and his wife own a working farm in southern New Hampshire. So he brings his own honest, personal experience to the topic of farming. His observations on the art and science of farming, along with the trends, benefits and consequences associated with community farming, will be a treat for all who attend. And, of course, the timing couldn’t be better, as we continue on many levels the work needed to complete the Angino Farm acquisition and plan for operation of the farm.

Be sure not to miss this timely and inspirational talk by our Newton neighbor and America’s most popular gardening enthusiast.

Doug Dickson

Save the date!

**Newton Conservators
ANNUAL MEETING**

Wednesday, June 1, 2005
Post 440, Nonantum

***Speaker: Roger Swain on
Community Farming***

See article on page 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Battle for Land

Saving open space can mean a fight. To protect important open spaces not already in public hands takes money. Open space is just one of many interests that makes a claim for public funds. And, unless there is more than enough money to go around—which there never is—we on the open space side can find ourselves in large disagreements.

Our best argument for funding is that it is not a case of either/or—either the schools or public safety or open space. A healthy community makes room for all those things. What kind of community is it that does not support its schools, fund its police AND set aside open space?

You know you are in a fight when one of the candidates for mayor tries to make a liability of the city's most important open space acquisition in decades, Kessler Woods. The candidate would like to hang something negative around the current mayor's neck. The candidate casts the city's part of the bargain as "\$5 million to help a developer." Whether or not the larger transaction helped a developer, the city's \$5 million bought the largest parcel of sensitive habitat in Newton at the cheapest price per acre in decades. The candidate argues that the money for Kessler Woods would have been better spent on the schools. Never mind that the money came from Community Preservation Act funds that by law can ONLY be spent on open space, historic preservation, recreation or affordable housing. In a fight, accuracy goes by the boards. Your opponent may pick up any stick.

You know you are in a fight when those who oppose the city's new community farm charge that the farm is "elitist." The farm will be open to the entire community and will, in turn, build its own community, with a cast of farmers that will change from year to year. School kids from all over town will come to learn about farming. The community farm is no more for a farming elite than a ball field is for a baseball elite or the library for a book-reading elite. Anyone who saw the farmers in their bib overalls with dirt under their nails would ask, "What elite?" As elites go, this group is not elite. Still, a charge can stick if it isn't refuted. A charge gets a life. And so, refuting it, you are in a fight.

Newton Conservators Newsletter

You know you are in a fight—or, at least, a decent-sized skirmish—when you lock horns with the Newton Taxpayers Association. The NTxA is no stranger to a fight. Over the years, the NTxA has provided perhaps the only serious opposition to the city's political status quo. The NTxA opposes the Community Preservation Act. The Act has provided the only public money for open space and other community preservation efforts in decades. It is at the heart of the Conservators' activities. And so, with the NTxA, we are in a tug of war.

The problem with the NTxA's position on the CPA is that it is reflexive. Without regard to whether CPA spending has been frugal or appropriate, the NTxA opposes CPA spending simply as spending. When the Community Preservation Act first came along, the question was theoretical: "Do you want to dedicate a fund for these things—historic preservation, open space, recreation and affordable housing—that for decades have been starved for funds?" Now, we have a track record. If the NTxA were to take issue with CPA projects on the grounds of wastefulness, we could engage them. We would welcome that argument. We think we can win it. But if the NTxA's case is that we should return to a yesterday when those important community interests were simply not funded, what is there to say? How can we engage them?

Our track record is the expansion of open spaces at Webster and Dolan Pond. It is Kessler Woods, for decades a priority parcel in the city's Open Space Plan, and the new Angino Community Farm. We don't just stand on general intentions anymore. We stand on our record. We can defend these acquisitions as frugal and appropriate. More than that, they enhance the open spaces the community wants to protect. They enhance the community itself.

No one comes under attack because they are losing. We have been succeeding. But even successful efforts can be spun in a negative way. That's why we always need to get the word out about our projects and how they benefit the community.

Open space is about wildlife. It is also about people. It is about livability. Is one percent of the city's real estate tax base too much to help maintain its livability? Is it enough? These questions may

(Continued on page 3)

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR JUNE 1 AT POST 440

The Annual Meeting of the Newton Conservators will be held on Wednesday, June 1, 2005, at Post 440 on Watertown Street in Nonantum. A social hour will begin at 6:15 PM and will include a cash bar. Dinner will be served at 7:00 PM and a business meeting will begin during dinner. In addition to reports from the president and treasurer, members present will elect a



new slate of officers and a board of directors for the coming year. Environmentalist of the Year, Charles Maynard and Directors Awards will also be given.

At about 8:30 PM, Roger Swain will take the podium as this year's keynote speaker. As one of the nation's foremost authorities on gardening, he will talk about the phenomenon of community farming and the role it can play in the life of urban areas, and in particular, a city like Newton. Roger is a compelling and knowledgeable speaker, and if you haven't previously had the opportunity to hear him tell stories about his personal experiences in the garden and on the farm, this is a chance not to be missed!

Including a brief question-and-answer period, the meeting is anticipated to end at around 9:30 PM, allowing all to get home at a reasonable hour.

Doug Dickson

Battle for Land, continued from page 2

come to a citywide vote. Whether or not they do, the mayoral election will. And wouldn't the mayoral candidate who until now has taken such a negative view of our work do better to give it a serious assessment? And, if he finds our projects successful, advocate not for less open space but for more?

A good fight is good for any cause. This fight helps to remind us that the projects we bring to the city need to be defensible as wise and effective spending. The fight keeps us frugal. It keeps us sharp and effective. It helps us sort out what we value. We welcome a good debate. This one is ours to win.

Eric Reenstierna

Doug Dickson Named Environmentalist of the Year

In ten years as a Conservator, Doug has made his mark on the organization and, more than anyone else in recent years, has helped the Conservators make its mark on this community.

Doug has been a Newton resident since 1983. He lives in Newton Centre with his wife, Sharon Smith, where they raised two children.

In 1995, Doug worked with the city, Youth Soccer and his neighbors to oversee renovation of Weeks Field, an 11-acre city park. In 1996, Doug joined the Conservators' Board of Directors. At about the same time, he became chair of the just-formed Urban Tree Commission, where he helped develop and pass the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance, requiring that trees removed for new construction be replaced to prevent a net loss of city trees. In 1997, he became chair of the Newton Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee and led the design and implementation of a nationally recognized IPM policy for city buildings and grounds. That policy in Newton's schools earned an IPM Star rating in 2004 from the national IPM Institute, only the second school system in the nation to be so recognized. Doug also chaired the Landscape Maintenance Task Force in 1995 and serves on the Landscape Advisory Council, its successor. In 1999, he became president of the Conservators, after serving a two-year term as vice president.

In 2000, during Doug's term as president, the Community Preservation Act was approved by the state legislature and the question in Newton was whether to adopt the CPA. The Conservators took the lead in organizing a coalition of like-minded groups and individuals to put the measure before the voters. Doug was a key member of the group, helping to plan the campaign and deliver the CPA message at various public meetings. In November of that year, the CPA was adopted in Newton, and that opened the door to the Conservators' current success in bringing important open space acquisitions before the Community Preservation Committee. In 2002, the Conservators' Environmentalist of the Year Award went to the Community Preservation Alliance.

The Community Preservation Committee was

(Continued on page 4)

Environmentalist of the Year, continued from page 3
formed by the city in 2001. Doug became one of the original nine members of that committee, serving initially as its vice chair and later as its chair, the position he currently holds. Doug continued in his role as the public face for many of the CPC's activities, holding public hearings, presenting to the Board of Aldermen and meeting with community groups.

In 2003, the Kessler Woods property was put on the market by NStar. Kessler Woods had been a priority parcel for acquisition for decades and now, with CPA funds, the city had a chance to bid on the land. The Mayor, who received the 2004 Environmentalist of the Year Award for his leadership role at Kessler Woods, assembled a task force and recruited Doug as a member. Together with others, Doug was a key to the successful bid and acquisition of Kessler Woods.

That wasn't enough. The next year, the Angino Farm, a second priority parcel, came to market. Doug was part of the Conservators' Land Acquisition Committee that created a strategy for protection. We put the parcel under agreement and brought the agreement to the Community Preservation Committee, where Doug by then was chair. Doug and the CPC helped craft the eventual plan for a working farm at Angino. Today, the farm is pending purchase by the city.

Doug's credibility with the Board of Aldermen and with the Mayor, and his work to help craft these and others proposals has contributed to high quality CPA projects. He has helped assure an excellent track record that will help us make a good case for renewal of the Act in Newton, if it again comes to a vote.

In 2003, Doug became a member of the Newton Conservation Commission. At times, his service is needed at City Hall every night of the week. Doug rises to the chairmanship of the various committees he joins because others respect his sound judgment, his calm demeanor and his ability to lead a group. The Conservators have certainly benefited from Doug's leadership. So has the city. The community is a better place because Doug Dickson has taken it upon himself to serve. He clearly loves this work and we want to thank him by making him our Environmentalist of the Year for 2005.

Eric Reenstierna

Cris Criscitiello to Receive Charles Maynard Award

"Hello, I'm Cris Criscitiello and this is the Environmental Show..." We are all getting quite used to seeing Cris as the spokesperson for the Conservators portion of The Environmental Show on NewTV. His welcome smile, comfortable manner in front of the camera and wonderful voice make Cris a natural host. Cris has worked diligently on each of the NewTV Environmental Shows, spending countless hours recording his voice, taping in the field and assisting in the editing of these shows. The Cold Spring series especially brought much needed attention to the work of The Newton Conservators in habitat reclamation, biodiversity and the need to protect our natural resources. This short series, consisting of two half-hour shows was shown on NewTV and is available at the Newton Free Library. Education is the key to getting people involved in protecting our environment and Cris in a leader here in Newton in making that happen.

Cris organizes and participates in the Newton portion of the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count, setting up teams to cover each area in the count, tabulating the results and submitting them. This critical element in helping track the movements of birds creates an early warning of changes in their natural habitat.

As an avid birder, Cris has served as an able leader on a number of our spring and fall bird walks. With Beth Schroeder, he is creating a bio-almanac of the conservation areas that John Richardson documented in 1995. This team will review the list of plant and animal species recorded by Richardson, taking note of changes over the last 10 years.

Cris also worked with fellow Conservator Jon Regosin and the developer of Kessler Woods to plan the pathways that will make this jewel of an open space available to all. By creating access, we hope to improve the appreciation of this parcel as an essential part of the greater Charles River watershed ecosystem.

Like Charles Johnson Maynard in his day, Cris Criscitiello deserves this award for his actions to promote awareness of biodiversity, reclamation of wildlife habitat and protection our natural resources. Cris is a retired cardiologist with a lot of heart.

Duane Hillis

Bill Shaevel Recognized with Directors Award

Doing good sometimes requires having a good lawyer! Bill Shaevel, a member of our Board of Advisors, has been the go-to person for the Newton Conservators. As we have discovered, legal work is increasingly a large part of the open space effort, particularly with new CPA-related acquisitions. With his friendly “Top of the morning” greeting by phone or in person, this highly experienced attorney has been the legal backbone of our organization, drafting complex documents, interacting with the city and our project partners, and providing us with top-notch representation.

As a concrete example of how much work is involved in such projects, Bill recently provided a bound collection over two inches thick of legal documents for the recent 76 Webster Park project, which will increase the area of the Dolan Pond Conservation Area by 10%. It included complex agreements between the Conservators and the city, the Newton Housing Authority, and Habitat for Humanity. Conservation restrictions, an important component of any open space project, need to go through many approval steps and Bill's *pro bono* service has been invaluable on this and other projects.

Bill is a founding partner of the Boston law firm of Shaevel and Krems (www.shaevelkrems.com). The firm began in the late 1960s when Bill began practicing law with the late Congressman Joe Moakley and it assumed the current name in 1987. Although he currently lives “just over the line” in Brookline, Bill is a former Newton Alderman and chairman of the Economic Development Commission. He is currently vice president of Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly and Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Bethany Hill Housing, as well as treasurer for the John Joseph Moakley Charitable Foundation.

Bill says, “I love being called someone’s lawyer and consider myself lucky to have chosen this calling over 30 years ago.” We are fortunate to have Bill Shaevel as “Legal Counsel to the Newton Conservators” and for his wonderful efforts, we are pleased to recognize his service with our Director’s Award.

Ted Kuklinski

BOARD RECOMMENDS CHANGE IN CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION

Until last year’s annual meeting, if the Newton Conservators, Inc., were to dissolve, or ‘go out of business’, all of the organization’s assets would have been given to the City of Newton. As the Conservators has increased its land trust activities in recent years, potential donors have asked for assurance that the assets they contribute will be used for conservation purposes only. In addition, there is a possibility that Conservation Restrictions held by the Conservators on city-owned properties would be nullified if they were given to the city. (The city can’t legally own and hold a conservation restriction on the same land simultaneously.)

In June of 2004, the members present at the Annual Meeting voted to amend the bylaws to provide that the assets would instead be distributed to appropriate tax-exempt conservation organizations if we were to dissolve. Unfortunately, we did not realize at the time that State law also requires an amendment to the Certificate of Incorporation, on file with the Secretary of State, and that action requires a two-thirds vote of all members. We will meet that requirement this year by distributing ballots for members to complete and return when we send out the invitation to this year’s Annual Meeting, to be held June first.

The ballot will read as follows:

The Board of Directors of Newton Conservators, Inc. recommends that the following language in the Certificate of Incorporation,

...”upon the termination and liquidation of the corporation any real estate owned by said corporation shall be given to the City of Newton for the public purposes hereinbefore enumerated and any other assets remaining after payment of all obligations of the corporation shall be given to the City of Newton to be used for the public purposes hereinbefore enumerated.”

be amended to read,

...”in the event of the dissolution or the termination of the corporation, all its net assets shall be transferred, paid over, and delivered exclusively to or for the benefit of one or more conservation organizations to be used and dedicated as nearly as practicable in accordance with the purposes of this Corporation as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, provided that no such assets shall be distributed other than to or for the benefit of organizations qualifying at the time of such distributions under the provisions of Sections 501(c)(3) and 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as may be amended.”

Larry Burdick

Conservators Thank the Board of NewTV

At the February 15 Annual Meeting of NewTV, the Newton Conservators formally expressed their appreciation for their support for our efforts in producing the local cable TV show called "The Environmental Show." The statement, read by Duane Hillis at the meeting, goes as follows:

"In today's media rich environment, it is not enough to just have the desire to "speak-up", grab a soap box and take to the streets. Today, competition for the eyes and ears and potentially, the hearts and minds of our global community, is keen.

"Today you need to understand and make use of all the power of our many forms of media. Here at NewTV, thanks to wise legislation that allowed for the funding of local public access stations across the country, all of us have an equal opportunity to learn the skills we need to reach this global audience and to get our message heard, understood and perhaps to encourage a few to agree with our viewpoint.

"The Newton Conservators advocate for the preservation of Newton's open spaces and since 1961 we have helped preserve over 200 acres of open space and create several major parks for public enjoyment. We wanted to let people know about these wonderful parks as we continue to create new public open space so all of our residents know how critical these remaining open spaces are to our health, both mental and physical, and wellbeing on this planet.

"In that endeavor to publicize our precious open space, the Conservators are co-producing a NewTV series, called The Environmental Show, in conjunction with The Green Decade Coalition. We each have a half-hour show every other month.

"When we started over a year ago, we all had simplistic ideas of what it would take to create these shows: take a camera on a walk and shoot some pretty trees, flowers, birds and bees. Well, now we know better! It takes training and perseverance to acquire the skills needed to create a show that attracts a viewer's attention and holds it for the full show.

"We at the Newton Conservators want to thank NewTV for the training, the facility, the support, and most of all the encouragement to get out there and CREATE!

"We all do hope that, with the right lobbying and public pressure, our government will continue to do the right thing and preserve the critical funding that makes all this work. Without this financial support, it would be very difficult and expensive for groups like ours to acquire the skills needed to effectively carry forth our message in this modern world.

"Thank you all for maintaining a valuable community resource."

Duane Hillis

(Editor's note: At this meeting, Duane Hillis was unanimously elected to the Board of NewTV, giving the Conservators an ongoing link to this important community group. The Conservators have for many years been a member of the NewTV organization.)



Wood Duck in Autumn, part of photographic series to be highlighted on NewTV Show (Photo by Carole Smith Berney)

Flora, Fauna of the Charles on NewTV

This month's Environmental Show, produced by the Newton Conservators for NewTV, celebrates the Charles River with a virtual walk along the one-mile stretch of the river from Watertown Square to Bridge Street. In "Flora and Fauna of the Charles River," photographer and naturalist Carole Smith Berney presents a colorful and entertaining look at the river and pathway, featuring the wildflowers, birds, herons, ducks, turtles and furry creatures found there. See the riverscape along with the people who walk, run, skate, bike, fish and birdwatch along the path. One

(Continued on page 7)

Flora, Fauna, continued from page 6

portion of the show focuses on the efforts of Massachusetts DCR planner Dan Driscoll with before and after shots of the Charles River Pathway.

Berney is a Watertown naturalist, wildlife photographer and nature educator. Inspired by her many walks on the Charles River Path in Watertown and Newton, she has documented life along the river in all seasons and weather over several years. Her "portraits" of animals help to enhance the community's appreciation of the biodiversity and natural beauty found close to urban settings. She exhibits her work locally and presents slideshows for diverse audiences: libraries, community groups, assisted-living facilities, senior centers, and public and private schools from kindergarten through high school. Her publications include "Clever Critters," featuring photographs of animal behavior in a forthcoming issue of "Highlights for Children," and "Wildflowers Along the Upper Greenway Path."

This program is based on her presentation last fall as part of the Newton Conservators Lecture Series. The Environmental Show is a joint effort of the Green Decade Coalition and the Newton Conservators. The program is repeated during April on NewTV's Blue Channel on Saturdays at 10 AM, Mondays at 3 PM, Tuesdays at 1:30 AM and 11:30 PM, Wednesdays at 11:30 AM, and Thursdays at noon, 4:00 and 7:30 PM. Please note that this is a new, extended schedule.

Ted Kuklinksi

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 44 years ago in June 1961.

We're All In This Together

It was a poignant moment for me—to hold the remnant of such a majestic creature in my own hand! It was larger than expected, big as a crow, and its feathers were still bright despite years in a darkened specimen drawer. The fiery red crest, the brilliant



Painting of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by J.J. Audubon, showing male (l) and female birds foraging for larvae. (Taken from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Web site)

stripes running down the sides of the neck, converging to form a broad white shield on the black back—these were markings quite different from those of its Pileated cousin. Most striking was the impressive long white beak giving the bird its name: Ivory-billed Woodpecker. A tag on its leg bore the date 1911, the year it had met its fate in a Florida swamp. Inscribed also was the name of the naturalist who had shot it and later bequeathed it to the museum's bird collection. Officials there had allowed me to examine some of their prized examples

(Continued on page 8)

Ivory-billed Woodpecker, continued from page 7
of "*Campephilus principalis*." The name, roughly speaking, means "lover of grubs, chief of its tribe." Now represented by only a few such "skins" tucked away in cabinets, it had once been a free-ranging inhabitant of southern forests.

My interest in the Ivory-bill dates from 1935 when, as a boy, I learned that a team of Cornell ornithologists was searching the swamps of the southeastern US for the very few remaining. Notice had been given of its dwindling population, and the aim was to record its voice and also to study its habits in hopes of finding some way to restore its numbers. None was seen until the group reached an area near the Tensas River in Louisiana. Several pairs were located there in a forest of towering oak and sweet gums, set aside by the Singer Company as a source of wood for its sewing machine cabinets. Cumbersome equipment was lugged by mule cart into its swamps, and the bird's calls and its loud drumming sounds were recorded for posterity.

The study, extending over three years, revealed some discouraging information. The bird's chief food consisted of larvae of a particular kind of wood-boring beetle, retrieved by tearing off strips of bark from dead trees and probing for grubs tunneling underneath. Fallen trees were not often visited, and dead ones remaining upright were few and far between. James Tanner, Cornell's major investigator, estimated that each nesting pair would require a minimum of 2.5 to 3 square miles of forest to meet its needs. With this specialized source of food, together with the pace of lumbering in these bottomland forests, the bird seemed doomed. As World War II came along, the rate of cutting accelerated and by mid-century, the primeval forests of the South had all been harvested—the bird's usual habitat was gone. The last recorded Ivory-bill, a lone female, was seen in the remains of the Singer tract in 1944.

Now and again news would come of a possible sighting, but none was confirmed. What seemed like a highly reliable report in 2002 generated an intensive search through the Pearl River region of Louisiana. This included the use of special electronic acoustic devices posted throughout the swamp, but thousands of hours of such recordings yielded no authentic calls or tapping noises. A subspecies of the Ivory-bill has been known to exist in the forests of Cuba, most recently in the mountainous eastern end of the island, but the last of these was seen in 1987, and further

search there has yielded no success. Hope for the survival of this bird lives on in some quarters, but it appears increasingly certain that the species has been elbowed out of existence by destruction of its habitat.

A well-illustrated account of the whole, sad story was written recently by Phillip Hoose. The title of his book, "The Race to Save the Lord God Bird," was based on the sort of exclamation bursting from people at their first sight of this glorious creature. In an effort to attract young readers to the idea of conservation, he has aimed at an audience of eighth and ninth graders, but I assure you the book provides fascinating reading for adults as well.

His story has its heroes and its villains; among the latter are the bird-skin collectors and their hired gunners who, perhaps unwittingly, continued to track down these creatures in the face of severely declining numbers. Most of all, he blames the owners of lumber companies who were intent on harvesting all the growth in the climax forests of southern swamps. Despite appeals to save some of the areas as preserves for the Ivory-bill, the rich market for the valuable wood trumped all calls for caution. Today, in place of those great trees on the Singer tract, there are vast fields of soybeans. However, loss of the water-holding capacity of those former wetlands has now led to increased problems of flood control in the region. Continued encroachment for agricultural or industrial use on such lands, there and elsewhere in the world, is taking its toll.

Ironically, while the media were focused on "end-of-life" issues, the remarkable March 30th report of the "Millennium Ecosystem Assessment" missed the headlines. It summarizes the results of a joint effort of 1,360 specialists in 95 nations, warning that "human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted." In other words, besides a grim outlook for huge numbers of plants, animals, fish and other organisms, survival of the human species itself is increasingly under threat. Those of us who continue to think of the "environment" as something surrounding us but not including us—something "out there" consisting only of mountains, forests, wetlands, lakes and the like—may be missing the point. We are really messing up those ecosystems

(Continued on page 9)

Ivory-billed Woodpecker, continued from page 8

we're actually a part of. That's sobering to think about as we greet the awakening spring this month!

In the face of all this, we might consider some words from the naturalist and author, Joseph Wood Krutch. In his essay on the month of April in his book "The Twelve Seasons," he urges us to set aside a special day each year to mark the arrival of spring, "to celebrate our ancient loyalties and to remember our ancient origins." To determine its date, he would depend not on the calendar, but on calls from the little frogs in the swamp. He would name it the "Day of the Peepers," as they tune up to tell us once again, "Spring is come!" Each year as we relish this great resurrection, he would add this: "*Don't forget, I'd whisper to the peepers, 'we're all in this together!'*"

M.G. Criscitello

WHAT DOES THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE PROGRAM REALLY DO?

In the last issue of the Conservators Newsletter, I wrote about what it is like from my point of view to take on the running of an environmentally-focused program for teenagers. It's a lot of work, but it is exciting and gratifying in a lot of ways.

Various people have asked me, "Why should kids sign up for the program?" or "What does the program do for kids?" I think the parent of any student who has been in the program knows the answers to those questions, but this article is about what I have seen as a parent of a kid in the program (over several years), and now as the Executive Director.

On the surface, what you see first are kids who come home talking excitedly about the program and the other kids who are in it, laughing and telling stories about what they did during the day. Pretty soon, other kids from the program who you haven't met before start showing up at your house and over time some become good friends of your kid. Our son made friends with kids he met in "Envi Sci" and we

got to where we setting extra places at dinner on a regular basis. I discovered that they were good kids.

You find out that the kids have been learning about ecology, are using words like "biome" and "vernal pool", and are taking water samples of the Charles River to check for water quality and monitor pollution. You hear that one kid gave a public speech about the lichens on Mt. Washington that take years to grow back if you step on them.

During one summer, our son and two of his friends rode their bikes to Brown Middle School every day (about 5 miles one way), then hiked several miles on whatever the daily trip was, then rode their bikes back home. They canoed 10 miles on the Charles, hiked at Blue Hills and Mt. Monadnock, then carried 40-plus pound packs up the aptly named "Devil's Staircase" trail on the three-day trip to Mt. Washington. By the end of the month, those kids were *really* buff! They were also confident in their abilities to hike and to handle working in a group.

But I think there are longer-term effects of the program that take time to see. One student leader is planning to study outdoor resource management as a career, probably working with wildlife and forestry. Another is sailing on a research ship in the Pacific, learning about oceanography. Another is working at the Appalachian Mountain Club "huts" in the White Mountains, supporting conservation and back-packers who enjoy the wilderness. Others have gone on to work in environmentally focused companies, including one that develops special products for containment of hazardous materials.

Adults often talk about getting kids off the couch, or away from the TV or computer video games, and getting them outdoors. We like to discuss building kids' self-esteem and teamwork skills. This program actually does that. It encourages kids to pay attention to the environment, and to the government's public policy decisions. I think it builds a real understanding of the consequences of people's actions, or inactions, in relation to the environment. I think it also gives the students in the program a sense of personal responsibility and an incentive to take action on their own. And all of this while having fun!

Considering the alternatives, those are impressive results. Find out more about the Environmental Science Program at: www.newtonenvisci.org, 617-969-0288, or contact@newtonenvisci.org.

David Backer

Help Beautify Ordway Park!

Last week, the Conservators signed a contract with Weston Nurseries to install five varieties of native shrubs in Ordway Park. Thanks to the generosity of the Newton Centre Garden Club, we were able to make the down payment, but we need to raise enough money by mid-May to make the final payment. We are asking neighbors and members of the Conservators to sponsor one or more of the native shrubs listed below, shrubs that, like the pepperbush shown below, will enhance the Grant Avenue side of the park.



These plantings along Grant Avenue are the first visible step in the renewal of Ordway Park. In fact, this will be the first major

effort in almost 35 years to renew Priscilla Ordway's woodland garden. It is not a great exaggeration to say that Priscilla Ordway's 1971 bequest of the garden and \$20,000 to be used for the general purposes of the Newton Conservators marked a defining moment in the development of our organization. With the cash gift, the Conservators gained a measure of financial security and the opportunity to support a series of local organizations working on specific conservation projects. The bequest of the property marked our emergence as a land trust, a facet of our organization that recently has led us to act as an intermediary in the city's acquisition of Kessler Woods, Angino Farm and the addition to Dolan Pond, and to accept in our own right small parcels for preservation.

Because of the initiative of neighbors of Ordway Park, we are moving steadily toward our long-range goal of an endowed fund for the maintenance and improvement of the park. The goal of \$50,000 to provide income for those purposes is still at a distance, but in less than two years the generous grant of \$10,000 has been matched by more than a hundred neighbors, friends or relatives of neighbors and Conservators. Until the full endowment goal has been reached, however, specific improvements like the Grant Avenue plantings will have to be funded separately.

Thus, we feel that the installation of these native shrubs takes on special significance. They will demonstrate to neighbors and passersby that the hillside lot along Grant Avenue deserves to be called a park, as Priscilla Ordway's will specified. And as the oldest land holding of the Newton Conservators, a renewed Ordway Park will better represent the Conservators' stewardship. Please join us in sponsoring these plantings.

Please make your check out to the Newton Conservators, Ordway Park Planting Fund and send it to PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 and we'll send you a plan and a full description of the plants you have sponsored.

Jim Broderick

Sponsor a Shrub at Ordway Park

DWARF HUMMINGBIRD PEPPERBUSH

\$50 per shrub, 7 needed (Clethra alnifolia "Hummingbird")

MAPLELEAF VIBURNUM

\$75 per shrub, 6 needed (Viburnum acerifolium)

ARROW-WOOD VIBURNUM

\$75 per shrub, 2 needed (Viburnum dentatum)

FRAGRANT SUMAC

\$70 per shrub, 7 needed (Rhus aromatica "Gro-Low")

CAROLINA ALLSPICE

\$60 per shrub, 3 needed (Calycanthus floridus)

ALBEMARLE MASTER PLAN ON SCHEDULE

Last fall, the Friends of Albemarle Park, along with the Newton Conservators and the City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department, contacted the Community Outreach Group for Landscape Design (COGdesign) with a proposal to develop a master plan for the 25-acre Albemarle Park/Halloran Sports and Recreation Complex. The proposal was accepted, and Judy Kokesh, a student at the Landscape Institute of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and a designer for COGdesign, is

(Continued on page 11)

Albemarle, continued from page 10
developing the master plan as her thesis project, to be completed early this summer.

In addition to exploring the park's organization, circulation, and connections with nearby amenities, Kokesh will detail the connection between the park and the abutting F.A. Day Middle School. The master plan will be based on current and anticipated needs and will serve as a framework for future design decisions and use of this space.

The major stakeholders and users of the site have been vital participants in the design process. The Friends of Albemarle Park has served as a link to the

Community members discuss their vision for Albemarle Park at



the November meeting. (Photo by Margaret Albright)

larger community by organizing community meetings, arranging meeting space, and providing introductions to other stakeholders. Newton Parks and Recreation provided large format aerial photographs and topographical maps of the site.

The first community meeting was held on November 10, 2004, to identify current uses and anticipated needs. Those who could not come to the meeting were invited to provide comments by email. Kokesh also gathered input from teachers at the Horace Mann and Day Middle Schools and from Newton Parks and Recreation staff.

A second meeting on March 15, 2005, was held to discuss the site inventory and site analysis and to hear comments on the proposed design for the park. The draft plan featured wooded areas and raised berms to provide visual interest and windbreaks, and improved pedestrian circulation. The final design will be presented to the community in late May. From there it will be up to the Friends of Albemarle, the Conservators, and the Parks Department to solicit comments and suggestions, build support, prioritize

components of the plan, and develop a program to implement improvements.

For more information on the Friends of Albemarle, or to help with this project, please contact info@FriendsofAlbemarle.org or Margaret Albright at 617-969-0497. COGdesign is a non-profit service organization offering pro-bono quality landscape design for community-based groups. For more information, visit www.cogdesign.org.

Margaret Albright and Curtis Betts

Charles River Cleanup April 30

The 6th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2005, from 9 AM to 12 noon. Join more than 1,000 volunteers who will pick up trash at different cleanup locations along the entire length of the Charles River. Site locations include the 23 towns that the Charles flows through, including Milford, Bellingham, Needham, Dedham, Wellesley, Weston, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, Cambridge, Brighton, Allston, Brookline and Boston.

Businesses, schools, neighborhoods and civic groups are encouraged to participate in the Cleanup, along with individuals. To participate or obtain more information, contact Anna Eleria of Charles River Watershed Association (781-788-0007, x 225, aeleria@crwa.org) or Sara Miller of Massachusetts Community Water Watch (617-879-7735 or massart@waterwatchonline.org).

This event is sponsored by CRWA, MCWW, the Charles River Stream Team, the Clean Charles Coalition, the Charles River Conservancy and the Esplanade Association.

Invest NOW in the success of Angino Community Farm

Funds are needed to cover start-up costs

***Help us meet a generous
\$15,000 Challenge Grant!***

Make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Write "Farm" on the memo line

All contributions are fully tax-deductible

Update on Angino Farm

Steps to complete the acquisition of this 2.25-acre historic property are continuing, with good progress made on some fronts but unfortunate delays on others. Among the good news is preliminary acceptance by the State Department of Environmental Protection of the conservation restriction that will be held by the Newton Conservators, as required for all purchases using CPA funds. The Conservators recently reviewed and signed the CR and it next goes before the Board of Aldermen to be formally considered and accepted by the city.

This is a critical step since the city has determined that the transaction cannot be brought to a close without this preliminary approval. With this acceptance by the state, the actual purchase of the farm from the Angino family looks likely to be achieved in May, as originally hoped.

Two other steps are off schedule. The most important is creation of a Farm Commission to set policy for and oversee operation of the farm. A committee of aldermen, representatives of the mayor and of interested groups, including the Farm Group and the Community Preservation Committee, is drafting an ordinance to enable this Commission. The composition of the Commission and its precise duties and responsibilities are under discussion and some additional time will be required to get agreement.

Once agreement is reached, the draft ordinance will go to the Board of Aldermen, where it will first be reviewed in committee (most likely the Committee on Community Preservation). They have indicated they will hold a hearing to obtain public input about the shape and mission of the Farm Commission. Any changes will be worked out, and it will then go to the full Board for consideration. This process will likely take several weeks.

When the ordinance is passed, it must be signed by the Mayor and a twenty-day period for appeals must pass. Then members of the Commission will be selected, appointed and approved and the work of the group can commence. Initial activity will center on the nature of the working relationship between the farm and the city. Assuming the Commission decides to contract with a nonprofit farm group, a contract will need to be drafted and approved. Policies will be developed and other details worked out. It is now

quite clear that these steps will not be completed in time for this year's planting season.

A second issue involves re-zoning of the property. This step is also off schedule and requires Board of Aldermen approval, but is not on the critical path.

Some work on the buildings and other preparatory work on the land itself may be possible this year, but the reality is that the farm will not be up and running until the spring of 2006.

Doug Dickson

In Memory of Roger Feinstein

Roger Feinstein, past president and treasurer of the Newton Conservators and noted educator, died March 23. Roger leaves his wife, Bette, and children Eric and Amy. Roger was a professor at UMass Boston. He combined his academic life with work as a concerned community member. Friends remember him for his absolute honesty and compassion. Said a friend, "The qualities that always impressed me about him were his complete lack of artificiality and utter lack of pretense. He also was a kind and gentle soul who opened his home to numerous international students over the years." He was described as a "ferocious recycler." He constructed bicycles from discards and in warm weather was out on the roads of Newton riding his bike. He enjoyed the beauty of the city, especially its natural areas, which he helped to preserve. We note his passing with regret.

Eric Reenstierna

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.

Editor: Doug Dickson 617-969-8661
Production: Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Margaret Albright and Curtis Betts, David Backer, Larry Burdick, Jim Broderick, M.G. Criscitiello, Doug Dickson, Duane Hillis, Ted Kuklinski and Eric Reenstierna. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading.

Spring Walks Begin May 8

The annual Mother's Day bird watching walk in Nahanton Park kicks off our Spring Walk series this year. The walk will begin at 7:30 AM on May 8 and will be led by experienced birder Haynes Miller. Bring your binoculars and join new and experienced bird watchers to catch a glimpse of migrating warblers and other colorful creatures.

The Spring Walks, sponsored by the Newton Conservators, feature canoe trips, bicycle rides, long hikes and short walks through many of the city's open spaces. This is a chance to explore areas you may not have been to before or to return to familiar locations in the company of people who share your love of nature.

The entire walk series is outlined in the enclosed flyer, with numbers to call for more information and references to locations included in our "Walking Trails" guide to Newton's green spaces. Copies may be purchased at www.newtonconservators.org.

Calendar of Events

Newton Conservators Board meets the third 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 of every month at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

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

Community Preservation Committee meets the last Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM in City Hall Room 209.

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



**If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2005, now is the time. Please renew today!
And consider an additional tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 44 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form
PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • www.newtonconservators.org

YES, I'd like to start/renew my one-year membership with the Newton Conservators to help preserve open space in Newton. I'll receive informative newsletters and emails and be invited to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities.

I'd like to make an additional tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Newton Conservators: \$ _____

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS	
Individual member	\$25
Family member	\$35
Sustaining member	\$50
Donor	\$75
Patron	\$100

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ Make checks payable to **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

April/May 2005 Newsletter



the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

IN THE SPRING ISSUE:

- Roger Swain is Annual Meeting Speaker page 1
- The Battle for Land page 2
- Flora and Fauna of the Charles on NewTV page 6
- We're All In This Together page 7
- Environmental Science Program page 9
- Donate a Shrub for Ordway Park page 10

Spring Walks begin on Mother's Day (May 8)—see flyer
Annual Meeting scheduled for June 1—save the date
Contribute to the Angino Farm Fund—see page 11



Printed on recycled paper with minimum 20% post-consumer waste

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
P.O. Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organ.
US Postage Paid
Newton, MA 02459
Permit No. 55629