



## *the Newton Conservators*

# NEWSLETTER

Winter Issue

<http://www.newtonconservators.org>

February 2001

### Message from the President

## Remembering Marty Sender

by Doug Dickson



In December, Newton lost an inspirational defender of the environment and the Conservators lost a key activist and leader. As a member of the Newton Conservators Board of Directors, Marty moved the organization to action on a number of fronts. He was

passionate about the acres of parks and public lands that line the Charles River near his home in Auburndale. For him, they served as a microcosm of the issues facing all of Newton's public spaces.

For example, when construction of a volleyball court was set to begin at Auburndale Cove without prior community input, Marty jumped into action. Placing himself on the line, literally, he stood down the heavy equipment to delay the project until it could be assessed against the larger principles of community need and public involvement, balancing passive and active recreation, and planned vs. patchwork development of public open space. These are principles, which the Conservators have solidly embraced over our 40-year history. Marty's courage and conviction provided the organization yet another opportunity to consolidate and reinforce them.

There are many other stories of Marty's activism. His long support for reclamation of the Rumford Avenue landfill as part of the Flowed Meadow conservation area was critical to the city's realization of that goal last year. Little League signs at Lyons Field and elsewhere in the city were

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frequent targets. But nowhere was the full power of Marty's focus and advocacy more clearly demonstrated than in his determination to clean up and restore the Lakes District of the Charles. His success over recent years in getting funding for removal of water chestnuts is a model of advocacy that has subsequently been adopted by many other organizations and individuals.

Marty's genius went beyond the ability to see issues and respond to them. He clearly recognized the opportunities they presented. And he was, above all, a force for constructive change. Sometimes that came in the form of a negotiated solution, as in the case of the Little League signs. Understanding the financial needs of the league, Marty was instrumental in gaining an agreement that preserved the league's ability to raise money from commercial sponsors while limiting the visual impact of sponsor recognition on the environment. In other cases, he pushed for changes in process to protect against precipitous and arbitrary decisions and to encourage community participation.

Public opinion, publicity, advocacy and persuasion were the tools of Marty's craft. He used them with deft precision for our cause. When we needed to build support for a position or get the word out on an event, we counted on Marty to do the job. He was our Great Communicator. In shaping the policies and positions of the Conservators, Marty demonstrated full command of another set of tools: he was creative and resourceful in solving problems and his skill as a strategic thinker and tactician was apparent to all. His vision

helped guide the organization—he was like a Leading Indicator for us. When Marty raised an issue, it was often set in a broad context that opened the way for new insights, new directions and new opportunities. He was a Compass for the organization and for this more than anything, he will be greatly missed.

In May 2000, the Newton Conservators, Inc. presented Marty Sender with its highest award, Environmentalist of the Year. When I called Marty to inform him of our decision to recognize his work with this award, his initial response was: “Are you sure? I saw the list of nominees in the minutes and I’m not sure you’ve selected the most deserving candidate.” Then I had the pleasure of telling him the decision was unanimous. If you were at the Annual Meeting when Peter Kastner presented the award to Marty, you witnessed something else we’ll miss—his charm, his fun-loving nature and his ability to enjoy the fullness of the moment. There was no doubt that Marty savored the recognition he was awarded that evening and we’ll savor our memory of his pleasure in accepting it.

## Notes on Dolan Pond

by Ted Kuklinski

Several times this winter nature has decked out Dolan Pond in white raiments covering every tree branch with a blanket of fresh powdery snow. Fresh snowfalls are a good time to look for animal tracks. Animals fitting the description of the fisher, a type of weasel, were reported last winter by Dolan Pond abutters.

Coyote tracks are also sometimes seen. These are similar to dog tracks, but the paw prints are more in line and a bit more elongated. The distance between coyote paw prints ranges from 17.5 to 26" with an average of about 19-21". A good reference is "Tracking and the Art of Seeing - How to Read Animal Tracks and Signs" by Paul Rezendes (Camden House Publishing, 1992). The Eastern Screech Owl, first noted last year in the vicinity of Quinn Pond, has been seen again by local residents.

In winter the frozen ponds provide access to areas in Dolan Pond Conservation Area that are not normally accessible. Quinn Pond is often a favorite skating spot, which is sometimes kept clear of snow by local residents. Under the right conditions, Dolan Pond is also suitable. Unlike Auburndale Cove, the local ponds are quite shallow, posing more the danger of wet feet and legs (as opposed to falling completely through the ice). Banana Pond is deeper (perhaps as deep as 5 feet in places) and could pose a more serious threat with thin ice conditions. Always use caution on ice.

The Dolan Pond Conservation Area is within an area eligible for federal funds under the Community Development Block Grant program for such things as street improvements, playgrounds and parks. Grant funds of \$150K have been allocated for fiscal year 2002 for Dolan Pond improvements such as handicapped access, replacement boardwalks, plantings, entrance improvements and nature overlooks.

If you see any unusual wildlife, we would appreciate any reports, or would like to borrow photos or videos for possible posting on our website. Newtonians interested in Dolan Pond can contact the Friends of Dolan Pond, 24 Henshaw Terrace, West Newton, MA 02465, (617) 969-6222 (messages/fax), [info@dolanpond.org](mailto:info@dolanpond.org). Website: [www.dolanpond.org](http://www.dolanpond.org).

### Environmental Legislative Forum

#### *Featuring a Discussion of the Community Preservation Act*

Monday, February 26, 2001

7:00 PM, Druker Auditorium

Newton Library

Homer and Walnut Streets, Newton Center

Sponsored by the Green Decade and the Newton  
League of Women Voters

**The Newton: Conservators Newsletter**© appears three or four times a year. Editor: Michael Clarke. Production: Bonnie Carter, 969-0686. We wish to thank the contributors to this edition of the **Newsletter**: Mike Clarke, Ted Kuklinski, Ruth Balsler, Jim Broderick, Sarah Barnett and Doug Dickson  
Newton Conservators, Inc.

## Community Preservation

by Jim Broderick

An overview of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and what it means to Newton property tax payers will be the subject of a discussion in the second half of the Green Decade/NLWV Environmental Legislative Forum on Monday February 26 at the Newton Library.

The CPA is new legislation that helps Massachusetts communities to plan for controlled change and raise funds to achieve their goals. The CPA allows towns and cities to create a dedicated stream of funding to acquire and protect open space, preserve historic buildings and landscapes and create and maintain affordable housing. CPA funds come from a permanent state matching fund and from a local surcharge on property tax bills.



**Kessler Woods in Winter.** One of Newton's threatened open spaces that might benefit from the CPA.

**Why the Community Preservation Act is Important for Newton.** Many of the elements that contribute to the quality of life in our neighborhoods are under attack. When two large tracts of open space came onto the market last year, Kessler Woods (42 acres) and 20 acres of the Newton Andover campus, the city did not have the funds to protect them. The quality of our neighborhoods depends also on smaller parcels of unbuilt space, large side yards and corner lots. These are prime targets for development as the city discovers the limits of zoning laws in regulating growth. Lost too often in the process are historically significant buildings that give character to our neighborhoods, and lost too are smaller homes, once within reach of first-time home

buyers.**State Matching Funds.** Through the newly created Community Preservation Trust Fund (CPTF), the state will provide matching grants, up to a maximum of 100%, to communities that adopt CPA. The CPTF's revenues are estimated at upwards of \$25 million annually.

**Local Revenue from the Local Surcharge.** The surcharge on residential tax bills can be up to 3% ; three kinds of exemptions can be granted: property owned and occupied by people who qualify for low-income housing or moderate-income senior housing; commercial and industrial property; and \$100,000 of the assessed value of residential property. Using Newton's 2000 tax rates, if all exemptions were adopted and a 1% surcharge voted, Newton would raise \$991,945, eligible for up to a 100% state match. With a 1% surcharge and the \$100,000 exemption for the average Newton residence (\$484,500), the owner would pay \$46.37.

**Community Preservation is a Public Process.** If Newton approves CPA, it must establish a Community Preservation Committee that will make annual recommendations to the Board of Aldermen on how the money will be spent. An ordinance will establish the size and composition of the Committee. The state guidelines for the Committee's duties are few: that it limit its expenditures to open space, affordable housing, historic sites and recreation; that it annually devote 10% to each of the following: open space, historic sites and affordable housing, and that it hold public hearings before deciding on possible projects. The Act explicitly gives the Committee great flexibility: it can spend all its funds in one year; it can keep in escrow all or part of its funds; and it can obtain loans against its stream of funds.

### What can I do to help adopt CPA ?

- Attend upcoming meetings of the Newton Community Preservation Alliance and make known your preferences on the percentage of a surcharge and the number of exemptions.
- Tell your aldermen that you want a referendum to give Newton voters a chance of vote for the CPA.

**Walk Across the River?**  
between Wellesley and Newton  
by Mike Clarke

The Wellesley selectmen and Trails Committee are conferring with Dan Driscoll, senior planner for the MDC, regarding funding for repair of railroad bridge over the Charles in Lower Falls near the former Grossman's store on Washington St. A safe bridge could eventually provide a delightful pedestrian pathway linking the trail system in Wellesley with the old railroad right of way owned by the MDC linking to the MDC's Charles River Reservation at Grove and Pine Streets in Newton.

If the project proceeds, the MDC may be looking for volunteer labor to work on the bridge this summer. In addition helping hands, the Wellesley Trails Committee is looking for suggestions as to the best way to eliminate the invasive bamboo along the river. Those interested in helping in the Charles River Clean Up on April 21, can contact Bob White at [bbskwhite@mediaone.net](mailto:bbskwhite@mediaone.net).

**Newton's Plan for Open Space**  
by Mike Clarke

Mayor David Cohen has established an Open Space Plan Advisory Committee to revise the City's Recreation and Open Space Plan (OSP). The Committee has representatives of Newton environmental and neighborhood organizations, the Board of Aldermen, Planning and Development Board, Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and the MDC. The first step is to update the existing OSP by June 1 in order to meet the state requirements for Urban Self-Help grant funds. More important, is a second phase to thoroughly revise the Plan to meet Newton's need for green space and recreation lands.

**Messing with Mother Nature**

**Sheldon Krimsky**, author of the new book,  
*Hormonal Chaos*

Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy, Tufts  
University

**Monday, March 26, 2001, 7 pm**

**at the Newton Public Library, Homer and  
Walnut Streets, Newton**

Sponsored by the Green Decade Coalition, Newton  
Conservators and the Newton Free Library

**Andover-Newton Hill**  
by Sarah Barnett

Management Sciences for Health has decided not to build an office building and parking lot on 3 acres of the southern slope of Andover-Newton Hill now owned by Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS).

Newton Terraces LLC proposes to buy these 3 acres in addition to 8 acres it had previously planned to develop and 2 acres it will set aside as open space. Terraces has applied for a special permit to build 48 large townhouses and a clubhouse on the entire 11 acre site on the southern slope between Langley Rd. and Cypress St. A public hearing will probably be held in March.

From the top of A-N Hill, there is a broad view to the south that includes Oak and Bald Pate Hills on the west and the Great Blue and Chickatawbut Hills in the 7000 acre Blue Hills Reservation on the east. Preservation of this Vista, advocated by the Newton Conservators, has been part of Newton's Open Space Plan since 1981.

The previous proposal by Terraces to build 38 townhouses on the southern slope seemed to provide a reasonable compromise in preserving the Vista. (For an observer standing on the ANTS campus between Stoddard and Berkeley/Student Center, how much of the Vista will be preserved depends on the height, width and distance from the observer of each proposed building.) Terraces' previous proposal indicated that low shrubbery and trees would be planted between the townhouses and the ANTS campus so that the vista would be visible.

As part of a special permit, the Conservators have advocated that Terraces offer a permanent conservation restriction that will prevent any future obstruction of the vista. This would help ensure that the vista will be there for the hundreds of residents, students, employees and visitors on Andover-Newton Hill, now and in future years. The Conservators have also suggested that ANTS provide a conservation restriction for a vista viewing site.

The Conservators have further advocated for a 90 ft green buffer around the periphery and the walking path from the south to the top of the Hill that would benefit the natural environment and general public enjoyment. For detailed information on the Terraces project call BTNA at 965-5880.

## Aqueduct Pathways

by Mike Clarke

The Programs and Services Committee of the Board of Aldermen has resolved to request the Mayor to appoint a temporary committee to devise a plan for the preservation and recreational use of the Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts in Newton for better access and public enjoyment.

Such an Aqueducts Committee would discuss with the MWRA and other appropriate land owners ways to make portions of the aqueducts safe and natural walkways. The committee would be asked to report to the Mayor and Aldermen within six months. The committee would probably consist of representatives from the Mayor, Aldermen, Parks and Recreation Department and Commission, Conservation Commission, DPW, Law Department, Planning Department and an open space organization such as the Newton Conservators.

Working with these groups the committee would clarify with the MWRA the ownership of the various parcels on the aqueduct surface and what type of access would be most appropriate within Newton. Both aqueducts are included in the charge of the committee so that it might begin developing an overall vision of the aqueducts as integral parts of Newton's park and pathway systems. In conjunction with the MDC Quinobequin Rd. and proposed Charles River Pathway along Quinobequin Rd., the two Aqueducts can be joined into a continuous circuit linking Waban, Newton Highlands, Newton Upper Falls and Newton Centre.

## Invest in the CPA

by Mike Clarke

By utilizing the recently passed Community Preservation Act (CPA), Newton could raise a million dollars each year. At a cost of \$50 for the average homeowner coupled with state matching funds, Newton would garner a continuous stream of perhaps two million dollars each year for recreation and conservation lands, historic preservation and affordable housing.

If Newton does not utilize the CPA, an estimated \$26,000,000 in *annual* state funds will go to other communities.

In short, we can preserve our remaining natural spaces in which we can walk in meditation or simply enjoy the freedom of the out-of-doors with our children and pets. We can preserve our stately, interesting and curious historic sites. We can move toward more affordable housing. All for about the annual cost a newsmagazine.

Of the homeowner's average \$50 investment, \$15 would likely be returned through federal property tax deductions. With a 100% state match, the average homeowner's investment in community preservation would return \$65 to the community. Consequently, not investing in community preservation is equivalent to not investing in your 401k plan.

The Board of Aldermen, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Landscape Advisory Council, the Newton Housing Partnership, the Historical Commission and the Newton Conservators, Inc. endorsed the passage of the CPA. Community groups including the Newton Conservators, the Can-Do organization for affordable housing, and the Advocates for Historic Preservation have already joined together to form the Newton Community Preservation Alliance (Newton-CPA). Its mission is to inform Newton residents about the possibilities for community preservation through conserving open space, creating recreational opportunities, broadening housing access, and protecting historic sites; all of which are essential to the quality of life in Newton's villages and neighborhoods.

Now is the time to tell the Mayor and Aldermen that you want to raise the return on your investment in Newton by using the CPA.

### Annual Dinner - Save the Date!

*Wednesday, May 30, 2001*

Noyes Hall,  
Andover Newton Theological Seminary

Nominations Sought for  
***Environmentalist of the Year***

Send Nominations to: Doug Dickson, 17 Oxford Rd  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

E-mail: [ddickson@mediaone.net](mailto:ddickson@mediaone.net) Ph: 969-8661

## Conservators Lecture Series

by Ted Kuklinski

Peter Alden, well known naturalist and author, will be the inaugural speaker in a new series of lectures sponsored by the Newton Conservators. Alden, a renowned birder and entertaining and informative speaker, has led over 250 ecotours to over a hundred countries on all seven continents and lectured all over the world for travel and museum organizations. His talk entitled, "The Birds and the Bees, the Flowers and the Trees – Biodiversity in Newton", will take place on Wednesday evening, March 21 at 7 P.M in the Druker Auditorium of the Newton Free Library (330 Homer Street). The lecture is cosponsored by the Newton Free Library.

Mr. Alden is the author of over a dozen nature field guides including the groundbreaking "National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England" (Knopf, 1998). This book is an easy to use field guide for identifying 1,000 of our region's wildflowers, trees, mushrooms, mosses, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, butterflies, mammals and much more.

The Boston Globe review (5/24/98) of his regional field guides says, "The guide series will appeal to all ages. Concise writing, liberal use of sharp, colorful photographs, drawings, and maps, and logical inclusions of representative species, weather, and habitats found in the region make the guides real horizon expanders."

Last June, Alden spearheaded the first ever statewide Biodiversity Days for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Citizen naturalists in over 80 Massachusetts towns went out into the field to do a species census. This provided a valuable and interesting snapshot of common and unusual species present both here in Newton and across the state of Massachusetts.

**The Newton Conservators Board of Directors Meetings** are normally held on the fourth Wednesday of the Month. The next meeting is February 28, Rm 202 of Newton City Hall.

## ***The Birds and the Bees, the Flowers and the Trees***

**Biodiversity in Newton**

**A Talk by Peter Alden**

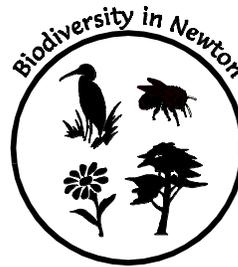
renowned naturalist, author, and lecturer

Wednesday, March 21, 2001, 7 PM  
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library  
330 Homer Street

The Newton Conservators, Inc.  
P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459  
[info@newtonconservators.org](mailto:info@newtonconservators.org)  
[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

## **Biodiversity Days 2001 - June 8-10**

by Ted Kuklinski



Newton will participate in the second annual statewide Biodiversity Days. A series of walks will be held on June 8-10 to tabulate living species in Newton. Volunteers will be looking for birds, animals, reptiles, flowers, trees,

mushrooms, insects, and more. Those who participated in last year's Biodiversity Days walks had a great time.

Amateur or professional naturalists are needed to lead walks in open spaces in Newton. Walks can be specialized in a particular branch such as birds or could include all species. If you wish to volunteer or participate, please contact Ted Kuklinski by mail at 24 Henshaw Terrace, West Newton, MA 02465, phone at (617) 969-6222, or email at [DolanPond@aol.com](mailto:DolanPond@aol.com)

**The Newton Urban Tree Commission** is seeking volunteers to assist with "point and click" entry of tree locations from the Newton Street Tree Survey to the City's GIS (Geographic Information System). Please contact Katherine Howard at 527-1796

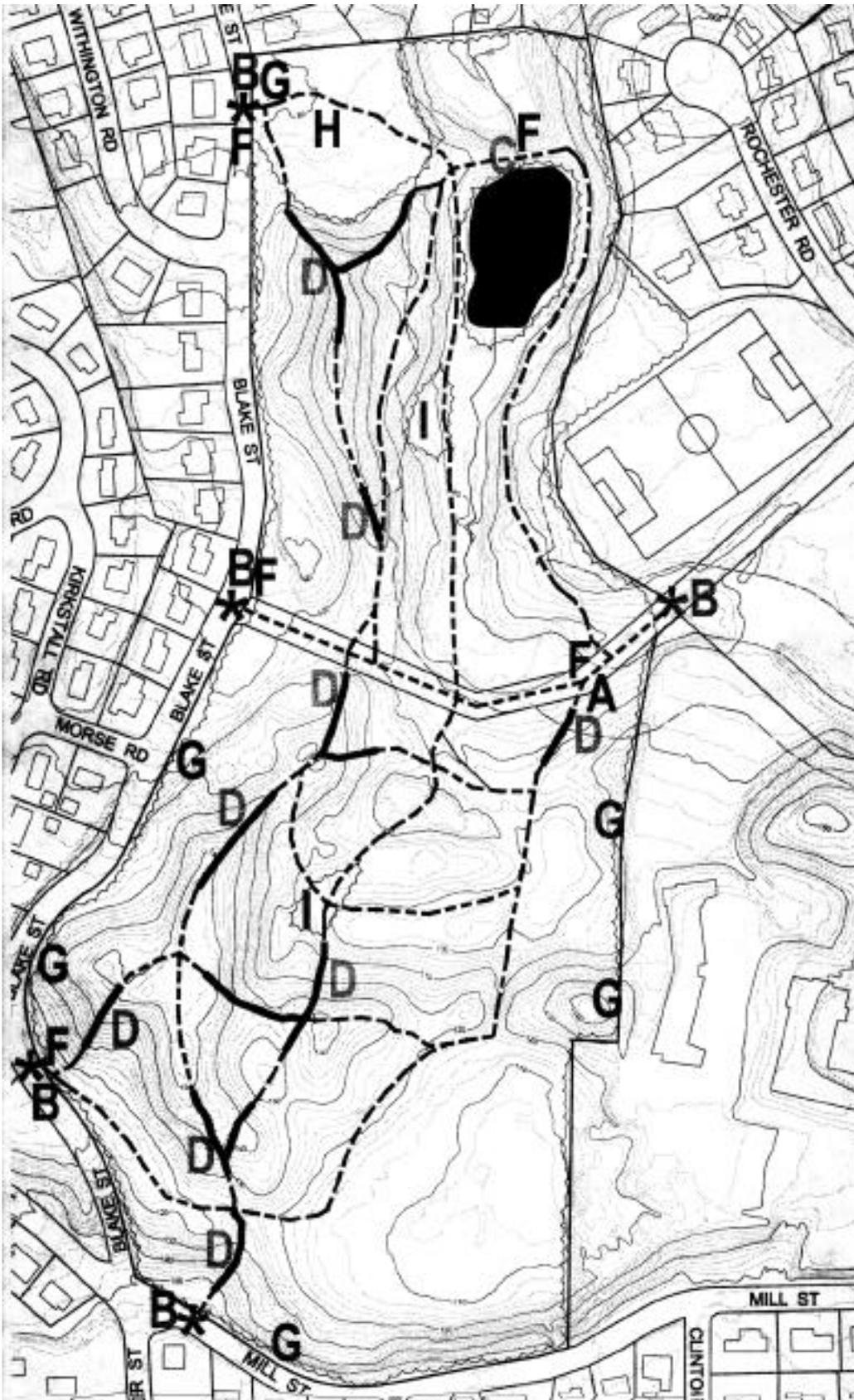
## Edmunds Park Preliminary Plan

By Mike Clarke

Edmunds Park is a hilly 33 acre passive recreation area in Newton Centre bordered by Mill St., Blake St. and Colby Rd. just off of Walnut St. adjacent to the Boston College Newton campus. Edmunds Brook winds through the northern portion of the park and empties into a large wetland that was constructed as a skating pond. The trails in the park are heavily used all through the year and repairs are needed to support their intensive use.

As part of BC's special permit agreement with the city for its recently constructed soccer fields, the university agreed to assist in preparing a master plan for improving the park. The university's landscape architects have submitted a preliminary master to the Parks and Recreation Commission, which can be accessed at: [www.ci.newton.ma.us/Parks/EdmundsM.pdf](http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Parks/EdmundsM.pdf)

**Code:** **A.** Entrance on Colby Rd. between BC's soccer fields. **B.** Five other entrances. **C.** Outlet of Edmunds pond at weir bridge. **D.** Walking paths. Dark lines indicate erosion. **E.** Areas needing plant maintenance. **F.** Proposed sites for signage. **G.** Park perimeter. **H.** Flat open space. **I.** Stone chimneys.



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**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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**Please renew your membership for 2001.**

\_\_\_\_ New Member

\_\_\_\_ Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual member	\$20
Family membership	\$25
Sustaining member	\$35
Donor	\$50
Patron	\$100
Additional Contribution	\$_____
Total	\$_____

Please make check payable to: **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

**Mail to:**

**Newton Conservators**

**P.O. Box 590011**

**Newton Centre, MA 02459**

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**Nomination for Environmentalist of the Year**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for nomination \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Nominated by (optional) Name Address Telephone E-mail

*Send Nominations to:* Doug Dickson, 17 Oxford Rd  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

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