



**NEWTON
CONSERVATORS**

SPRING ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961

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Where is Woodcock Meadow? Why Does it Need to be Saved? How Can You Help?

By Jon Regosin, Chief of Conservation Science for the National Heritage & Endangered Species Program of Massachusetts, and Beth Wilkinson



MAP: SUZETTE BARBIER

Where is Woodcock Meadow?

Woodcock Meadow is located on a small hilltop in the city-owned Nahanton Park, overlooking the Charles River and near the Newton Community Farm.

Why Does the Meadow Need to be Saved?

The meadow is important in itself because it is the only grassland of its type, a warm-season grassland, left in Newton. It is dominated by Little Bluestem grass interspersed with other native plants such as bush clover, asters, and goldenrods.

Grassland environment, so important to many creatures — especially birds, is increasingly rare throughout the United States. The State of the Birds 2014, co-authored by the nation's top bird science and conservation groups, reports that grasslands have declined by 40% in the United States since 1968 as formerly open space has been developed into residential and commercial properties.

Our little piece of grassland is not under attack by developers. Instead, Woodcock Meadow is being threatened by encroaching trees (the invasive black locust as well as a group of native white pine trees) and invasive shrubs and brambles, such as dewberry. The photos at right illustrate how much of the meadow has been invaded in the past fifteen years.



Aerial photographs showing meadow habitat loss over time. Note woody vegetation intruding into the center of the meadow, as well as encroachment at the edges.

Ideally, the meadow would have only 15 to 20% native shrub and small tree cover, including red cedar, scrub oak, blueberry, gray birch, and sumac. Instead, the larger trees are beginning to fill the meadow, thus, reducing its function as a meadow.

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Like all meadows, Woodcock Meadow (along with all the shrubs surrounding it) has been home to migratory songbirds, wildflowers, bees and other pollinators, and many butterflies. As the grassland is diminished, so, too, will the population of those valued inhabitants, among them the American Woodcock.



American Woodcock

The Meadow is named for the American Woodcock, the only member of the sandpiper family that is adapted to woodlands and meadows rather than shoreline habitats.

They are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. Woodcocks winter in the southeastern United States and arrive back in Massachusetts by at least the middle of March and even as early as February and begin their courtship activities soon after. Woodcocks have been shown to return to the same area year after year. (Mass Audubon reports a study in Quabbin in which 80% of 84 banded males returned within a mile of their capture site.)

Many local birders eagerly await the annual return of the woodcocks. The male begins the show at dusk with an aerial display, rocketing into the sky and back down again, with an unmistakable sound that's a combination of high-pitched vocal chirps and the noise made by air rushing through notches in outer feathers. Once the male lands, he struts around the ground and first calls "took-oo" and then makes a mechanical-sounding "peent." Each session lasts up to an hour and includes ten to twenty flights.

The dominant male in control of any territory mates with several females, who nest in slight depressions in the ground. Most nests are found within short range of the singing grounds in abandoned fields or open mixed forest and brush-land just like that surrounding our Woodcock Meadow. The male aggressively protects his singing grounds from other males through migration time from mid-October through mid-November. He does not help with the rearing of the young. The continuing presence of the woodcock makes our meadow even more valuable.

In 2011, the Conservators hired Mass Audubon to create the 2011 Nahanton Park Management Plan. Their plan lists

the restoration and management of Woodcock Meadow as a high priority.

Although the City has supported past volunteer management efforts by the Newton Conservators and Friends of Nahanton Park, available funds are scarce, and such efforts have not been able to keep up with the need, and urgent action is now required to save the Woodcock Meadow.

How Can the Meadow Be Saved?



Woodcock Meadow

With the help of a team of advisors whose professional experience includes designing, executing, and reviewing restoration

plans for similar projects, the Conservators have joined with the Friends of Nahanton park to create a two-phase project followed by a third phase of ongoing maintenance to preserve the meadow.

Phase 1 will include the removal of larger trees that have become established in the middle of the meadow. As has been approved by the City in the past, this phase will also involve volunteers selectively removing smaller saplings and shrubs. This phase will include a licensed herbicide applicator directly applying very small quantities of herbicide to some of the freshly cut stumps (particularly Black Locust) to prevent re-sprouting.

In Phase 2, approximately 40 trees (primarily invasive black locust and some overgrown red cedar), most relatively small, would be removed as well as the aggressive groundcover that harms the native bluestem grass. This phase will include continued volunteer-based monitoring and management of shrubs and small saplings.

Phase 3 is the maintenance phase, which will require occasional mowing of the field, perhaps every two to three years in the fall. Continued volunteer monitoring, along with woody-plant control using hand tools, will supplement the mowing. Introduction of appropriate native plants such as sweet fern, juniper, alder, and dogwood will be done as funding allows, as will York raking or other techniques to limit the buildup of thatch and organic material.

How Can You Help?

There are three ways that concerned citizens can help.

① Volunteer: Watch for announcements from the Conservators and Friends of Nahanton Park, who will be sponsoring volunteer work days to help clear and remove brush. Check future newsletters or both websites: www.NewtonConservators.org and www.NahantonPark.org.

② Donate: Some of the work is too big for volunteers, and services of a contractor will be needed. Our Conservation Advisor and an officer of the Friends of Nahanton Park

have joined together to issue a challenge grant. They will donate \$1000 if there are matching grants from within the community. Already, we have the first \$100 of matching funds. It will be a great start for Phase 1 if we can raise the remaining amount to receive the challenge funds!

③ Voice your support for this important project: Tell your friends and neighbors — in hopes that they will help make the restoration possible. Notify your City Councillors and the Mayor's office that you care about this project.

With all of us working together, we will be able to watch the flight of the American Woodcock for many decades to come! ■

A Conservation Partnership



Friends of Nahanton Park,



Please Donate Now!

Your donation via Newton Conservators is tax deductible.

Online secure: Go to <http://newtonconservators.org/donate.htm>, and put "Woodcock Meadow" in comment field on the donation form.

Or mail check payable to Newton Conservators, with "Woodcock Meadow" on memo line, to
P.O. Box 590011, Newton MA 02459

The History of Woodcock Meadow

Starting in the late 1890s, the land that we now call "Woodcock Meadow" was owned by the Xaverian Brothers, a religious institute dedicated to Roman Catholic education, who ran the Working Boys Home. The Working Boys Home, an imposing brick building that now houses the offices of the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center, was home to boys who had lost their parents. The boys would work for half of each year and attend school for the other half.

(The Working Boys Home was not far from the Winchester Street Newton City Infirmary, formerly the city's almshouse. For more on the history of the city's almshouses, see NC

board member Michael Clarke's article on them: http://newtonconservators.org/miscbackupfiles/almshouse_history_2012.pdf)

In 1951, the US Army leased the land to house an Anti Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalion. With the decreased need for air defense after World War II, there was only one AAA battalion left by 1949. However, with the advent of the Korean War and the escalation of the Cold War, air defense became a primary concern again. In 1951, two active-duty battalions were stationed in the Boston area, one of them at the site of our Woodcock Meadow. In all, there were twelve firing sites in a circle around Boston.

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The Army occupied the land in Newton through June 1958. The site included an access road, command post, mess hall, latrine, gun platforms, searchlights and an ammunition magazine. It had sewer, electrical, telephone and water services. Also on site were a radar and two above-ground 1500-gallon oil storage tanks.

In 1958, the Army cancelled their lease and returned control of the land to the Xaverian Brothers, who continued to run

the Boys Home until the 1970s. In 1980, the city purchased the land to create Nahanton Park.

The next time you enter Nahanton Park, take a few seconds to imagine how it must have looked in the early 1950s...

✿ Beth Wilkinson

Woodcocks at Nahanton Park

Every spring, small groups of people gather in the half-open meadow above the soccer fields in Nahanton Park as the sun goes down. They are waiting for the unusual mating displays of the American Woodcock.

Woodcocks are landlocked shorebirds with big eyes, oversized beaks and chunky bodies. They probe for earthworms and similar organisms in the earth with their long beaks. Their eyes are set back in their head, providing good stereoscopic vision while they have their long sensitive beaks buried in the earth. They have such unusual and droll appearances that they have several nicknames, which include “bog sucker” and “timberdoodle.” They nest in the northeast and winter in the southeastern United States.

They are classified in the same family as many of our ordinary sandpipers, the family Scolopacidae. It is interesting to muse about how a sandpiper evolved to such a position in life, far from any ocean.

After our monster snow cover last spring, the woodcocks showed up to begin courting on about April Fools Day. My records over the past ten years show that more often they come in the middle of March. They want the snow mostly gone and the ground thawed out so they can probe for worms and other bugs with their flexible upper mandible.

Their courtship display begins shortly after the sun goes down. You wait until all the robins, cardinals, grackles and catbirds fall silent. Dusk is deepening, but it is still light. You do not want a rainy night, both for your comfort and because the woodcocks don't seem to like raw, rainy evenings any more than we do.

The attraction for most people is the courtship flight. A



American Woodcock

male woodcock will stand in one spot and give a loud call, “PEEENT!” It sounds like someone holding their nose firmly and calling “Pete!” The peenting male will usually turn after a couple of calls and then sound as though he is much farther away. He might be very close to you but may be hard to see. His plumage is a mottled brown and black that blends in with dead leaves very well, as you see in the photo. At Nahanton Park there are often several competing males. As you stand in the middle of the meadow they may chase

each other, zooming right past you, chittering and cackling angrily. But soon one woodcock will have voiced enough peents and will begin flying up over your head. They defend the area where they peent, but not the overhead flying area.

When you have listened to extended peenting you need to listen carefully for the sound of twittering wings, as a male woodcock spirals upwards over your head. This will happen quite suddenly and with no warning. They go quite high and can be a challenge to keep in sight. Usually you can

spot them as they spiral upwards. The twittering wings can be used to help locate the bird. When they reach the peak of the spiraling flight the twittering ceases. The bird then begins an erratic spiral downwards, making a whimpering, chirpy sound. If you can keep the bird located during this erratic flight, it will tolerate being looked at, even with a flashlight, after it lands in its peenting area.

Woodcock mating is completely without bonding. Males will mate with any female who allows it to happen, usually right after a display flight. Females will visit several different display areas and mate with different males. Males take no part in rearing the young.

The female scrapes out a spot on the ground in an area with a lot of dead leaves. This takes place in woods or brushy fields. She lines the scrape with dead leaves. The whole family fits well into this sort of camouflage. As with many sandpipers, the downy young are mobile very quickly. They can start foraging after just a few days. The mother feeds them at first and keeps them close to her. The chicks become independent of the mother after about five weeks.

Woodcocks migrate to the southeastern United States for the winter. They fly at night. During migration they can turn up in odd places and will attract attention because of their odd appearance.



American Woodcock

The habit of nesting on the ground may cause population problems as we continue to develop more and more areas and bring along our cats and dogs. Woodcocks are a unique part of our world.

The displaying grounds in Nahanton Park are a treasure that the citizens of Newton should preserve. The wet woodlands along the adjacent Charles River provide a corridor of woodlands that will not be developed for stores and

housing. This conjunction may allow the woodcocks to continue their courtship and to rear their young successfully for years to come.

The Newton Conservators encourage you to get out of doors this spring and experience something new in the natural world. Woodcocks might fill that bill.

Photographer Bob Stymeist, who took the woodcock photos for this article has a photo gallery at the following link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mountauburncemetery/galleries/72157626386819448/>.

✿ Pete Gilmore

Donate to the Newton Conservators When Shopping on Amazon.com



Amazon Smile is a program through which Amazon donates .5% of most purchases (yes, \$5 of every \$1000) to a nonprofit (501c3) organization of your choice.

How do you use Amazon Smile? Instead of going to Amazon.com, you go to Smile.amazon.com. On your first visit, you will be asked to choose a nonprofit organization to receive the bonus donation. Enter "Newton Conservators," and you are ready to go. The rest of your shopping proceeds exactly the same as if you had logged in to Amazon.com initially. You will not need to log in again each time you return.

Some Conservators board members have been using Smile.Amazon.com for almost a year, and it has worked smoothly. We've received regular quarterly payments for eligible purchases by a transfer to the Conservators bank account.

If you have any further questions about the program, check the FAQ page: <http://smile.amazon.com/about>.

We are not encouraging members to abandon local shopping (and, in fact, offered our local booksellers a listing on our website to support them). However, if people do make purchases on Amazon, it would be nice to have them benefit us.

Collectively, the donations will add up over time. Our first bonus check was \$40. With more members participating, the proceeds will be significant, possibly covering some of the costs of maintenance at our properties.

President's Message

As spring approaches, the Conservators are beginning several exciting projects to help to stop the steady encroachment of invasive plants and to preserve unique landscapes.

The first project will be at Woodcock Meadow, and the cover story for this issue explains the work to be done there. The woodcocks are expected back by the middle of March; therefore, the heavy work (which will include the removal of some trees encroaching on the meadow) must be done by then or delayed until after breeding season. The City's forestry department will be responsible for most of that phase. Late in the summer, we will recruit volunteers to remove invasive shrubbery and vines.



Secondly, we are in the planning stage for a series of projects in Cold Spring Park, which could be the “poster child” for invasive species in Newton. Items under discussion are a kiosk that contains information about the invasive plants (such as *Japanese Knotweed*) and beneficial native plants in the park, a walk with small signs to indicate the location of both types of plants, a demonstration plot to show how invasive plants can be removed and then replaced with native plants, and a large-scale project to remove the two types of buckthorn that have replaced almost all of the native trees in the understory. If buckthorn is not removed, there will be no more woods in Cold Spring Park when the current mature trees die — just a massive spread of invasive buckthorn.

Throughout the growing season, there will be a variety of “pulls” to remove invasive plants in Nahanton Park, Cold Spring Park, and other conservation areas in Newton. The list at the back of this issue shows the pulls that have been scheduled so far. More will be listed in the next issue. Please share the information with your hearty friends and neighbors.

This year, the citywide Newton Serves will be on May 1. The Conservators will have four projects that day: garlic mustard pulls at Cold Spring Park, at Dolan Pond, and at Blue Heron Bridge and a clean-up of the pond along the trail at Cold Spring Park. Online registration will be available on April 1st: www.newtoncommunitypride.org/NewtonSERVES-volunteer.php



Newton Serves is only the first event in a whole month devoted to sharing information about invasive plants. Starting on May 2, there will be an exhibit at the library to show the invasive plants found in Newton. The two cases near the checkout desk will contain pressed examples of the plants (created by Bruce Wenning, the horticulturist at The Country Club and a board member of the Ecological Landscaping Association) as well as a selection of books you might enjoy.

Next on the schedule is our Annual Meeting and Dinner on May 4. Professor Bryan Connolly, Assistant Professor in the Biology Department at Framingham State University, will give a presentation on invasive plants in our region. *(Look for the unusual centerpieces we have planned!)*

At 7 pm on May 31, Bruce Wenning will end our Invasives Month with a presentation at the Newton Free Library on the species of invasives found in Newton and what we must do to fight them.

We hope that you'll be able to join us for some of these events to fight the scourge of invasive plants in the city. We're also going to be starting on an expanded mission to plant stronger native plants in their stead, and it would be great for you to join us in that journey, too.

 Beth Wilkinson

Don't miss the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 4!



PHOTO: JULIE AND MORGAN CAMPBELL

The Connolly Family

most common invasive plant species in Massachusetts. The topics covered will include ecological impacts, invasive species origin and spread, species identification, and common control methods. A short section on new invaders to the state will be covered as well as a discussion on biocontrol and early detection rapid response.

Dr. Bryan Connolly is an Assistant Professor of Biology at Framingham State University; he is also President of the New England Botanical Club. Bryan's previous

Our guest speaker at this year's Annual Meeting and Dinner will be Professor Bryan Connolly.

Professor Connolly will focus on the

professional roles have included being Massachusetts State Botanist for Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, as well as being the volunteer coordinator for the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England through the New England Wild Flower Society. He is a coauthor of "The Vascular Plants of Massachusetts: A County Checklist, First Revision" and has published sixteen scientific articles.

The annual meeting and dinner will be held on May 4 at the American Legion Post 440 at 295 California Street in Nonantum. A social hour will begin at 6:00 pm; dinner will begin at 7:00, to be followed by a brief annual meeting, an awards ceremony and then Prof. Connolly's presentation.

You can register for the meeting by going online at www.newtonconservators.org or by returning the response form in the invitation that will be sent to all members at the end of March. ■

**If you haven't renewed your membership already, now is the time.
And consider a gift for a conservation-minded friend.**



NEWTON CONSERVATORS
PO Box 590011
NEWTON CENTRE
MA 02459

2016 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

YES! Please renew my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- | | |
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Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Visit our website at www.newtonconservators.org if you wish to renew your membership online.



Fritillary

Photo by Suzette Barbier

Exotic Invasive Plant Control Hand Tools for Homeowners

By Bruce Wenning

The cutting, digging and plant-pulling tools that I use for controlling the spread of exotic invasive plants on nonprofit conservation lands are no different from what I recommend to homeowners and beginning gardeners.

There are many tools to choose from, but the best tools to invest in should be of quality and durability. Hopefully, they will serve you for many years to come and will prove to be satisfying for your continued use for invasive-plant control and general garden maintenance around your home.

Hand tools used by green-industry professionals are more expensive but prove to be worth the investment as compared to bargain-priced tools because they are made of higher quality materials and have been designed and tested for proper fit, long-term comfort, ease of use, and they can be repaired if broken. Some of you may have experienced the frustration of buying a gardening hand tool that breaks without warning after only limited use. Then, you're stuck with the great difficulty of trying to buy replacement parts—a frequent no-win battle.

There are several brand names of tools to choose from, and looks and price should not be your primary reason for purchasing. If you cannot decide which brand to buy or you are loyal to a particular brand, make sure that it has replacement parts. Lower-grade hand tools end up being “throw-away” tools once they break because the bolt needed for hand pruner repair or the saw blade that just snapped in half while pruning a dead limb can not be replaced at most hardware stores. The hardware outlets will suggest that you contact the manufacturer. To be fair, some manufacturers will help you, but it will take longer than an outlet that sells replacement parts in its catalog.

Hand Pruners



Fig. 1

There are several brands and models to fit your budget and needs.

Hand pruners can cut woody vines, shrubs and branches up to one inch in diameter.

Most professional ones are ergonomically designed for continuous use on a daily basis. I like the bypass cutting head

(blade) design because it produces a sharper, cleaner cut on living plant material than the anvil cutting head, which is best for cutting dried-out wood or dead wood.

I like Felco® because they have replacement parts and are ergonomically designed (see figure 1). For a well made, less expensive brand, Corona® is excellent. I use both.

Loppers



Fig. 2

Fig. 3

PHOTO: BRUCE WENNING

handles provide better cutting leverage on big stems than the short handles of hand pruners do.

Both bypass and anvil cutting heads are available (see figures 2 and 3). If you only want to purchase only one lopper, I suggest the bypass head for pruning living material. The bypass also works fine for dead wood less than one inch in diameter.

Hand Saws



Fig. 4

PHOTO: BRUCE WENNING

An extended handle pruner is called a “lopper.” The cutting head is larger and can accommodate larger diameter stems up to two-and-a-half inches depending on the size of the lopper. The long

Pruning saws come in all sizes depending on the size of the plant material you want to cut (i.e., branch, limb, log). Generally, these saws are called “arborist’s saws.” They are very sharp and cut

when you pull the saw toward you whereas, a “carpenter’s saw” cuts when you push it away from you. Therefore, the arborist saw “cuts on the pull,” and the carpenter’s saw “cuts on the push.”

These arborist hand saws have saw teeth that are arranged to cut very effectively with fewer movements than saws that cut when you push the saw over wood. Depending on size, some are fixed-blade or non-folding, and some are folding saws that are easier to carry or place in your pocket when

folded up back into the handle (figure 4). Mostly, I use the six-inch folding arborist saw for cutting dead limbs, shrub stems and any living plant material greater than one inch in diameter.

Most of the professional quality saws will have replacement blades. This is very important because it is not uncommon to break or dull a blade with misuse. Most are ergonomically designed and are very efficient at cutting stems and limbs with ease. These are the saws that you see arborists and estate gardeners using on a regular basis. Most have brightly colored handles to assist the user at finding them if they are temporarily misplaced while working around the yard or in woodlands.

Woody Plant-pulling Devices



I use the orange-colored WeedWrench™, which, unfortunately, is not for sale anymore.

If you have access to one, it is very efficient at pulling out woody plants up to two-and-a-half inches in diameter at ground level. Members of the Ecological Landscape Alliance went to Cold Spring Park to demonstrate the WeedWrench™ and later reviewed it in a recent article: <http://www.ecolandscaping.org/07/product-reviews/product-review-weed-wrench>.

There are two new plant-pulling devices on the market that can be bought in replacement of the WeedWrench™: one is called the EXTRACTIGATOR™, which is made in Canada. The www.extractigator.com website will have more information including pricing.

The second one is made in Oregon and is very similar to the popular WeedWrench™ that many people in conservation work have used since the 1990s, and it's called THE UPROOTER™. The UPROOTER™ is made very well and would be my first choice after having many years of experience using the WeedWrench™. Go to www.uprooter.com for more information including pricing.

All of these devices use a plant-trunk-grabbing jaw mechanism to pull (via leverage) woody exotic invasive

plants out of the ground with ease. These devices are excellent tools for all single-stemmed woody plant removal. There is no need to use herbicides when using these devices successfully.

They do not work effectively on Asiatic bittersweet vine (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) because the wood is soft and the vine growth habit is not straight enough to fit in the jaw mechanism (at least on large vines). They also do not work effectively on Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) because it is a non-woody plant and the jaw will crush this herbaceous plant, breaking it, and—with leverage—will separate the crushed stem from the root, leaving the root mass in the ground.

Vines, when small, are easily hand-pulled out of the ground, and Japanese knotweed can be dug out or mowed repeatedly for best control without using herbicides.

Hedge Shears



Hedge shears are excellent for cutting small-diameter woody vines that are one half inch or less in diameter, such as Asiatic bittersweet, porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) and black swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*), and non-woody invasive ground covers, such as goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*) and Japanese knotweed, to name a few.

Hedge shears of professional quality are best bought by mail-order or at landscaping trade shows. See resources below. I bring this up because hedge shears are frequently over-priced at most hardware stores and arborist outlets. The Barnel® brand (in figure 6) is under \$60.00 in supply catalogs, but I paid \$150.00 for this item at a local arborist supply store. Check around for prices before you buy.

If you do not want to hand-pull herbaceous invasive plants like garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), goutweed or small woody vines, you can periodically cut them back effectively using hedge shears.

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Note: You can use a weed cutter with a double-edged blade on a long handle to swing at the weeds while walking. This tool will be less strenuous on your back.

Mattock



This heavy-duty hand tool is used for hard-to-pull invasive plants. A mattock is used for cutting roots and breaking up compacted soil and forcefully digging out deep roots. The

mattock that I use has a cutting blade for roots on one side and a chopping blade for digging out soil on the other side. Check this tool out on the Forestry Supplier's website. You can buy one at a local hardware store, too.

Soil Knives



There are several brands of soil knives on the market, and all are very good. They are used for weeding, cutting through sod, cutting small roots of all kinds of plants, and they serve as

effective trowels for planting various flowers and other small landscape plants.

The soil knife that I use is called the 'Hori-Hori Soil Knife,' and it is from Japan. It has a serrated edge (figure 8) for effective sod cutting, weeding and for cutting roots of woody and herbaceous plants. Soil knives are excellent for digging out herbaceous exotic invasive plants and/or cutting them to ground level as if using a machete. You will be on your knees a lot when using this tool, so invest in a kneeling pad to save your back and knees.

Soil knives are most effective in basic gardening tasks where invasive weeds are growing in close proximity to desired garden annuals and perennials. In this situation, the soil knife allows you to be more precise in weed extraction than a mattock or hand trowel would.

Resources

For more information about the tools and brands I have presented, check the following mail order outlets.

Forestry Suppliers: www.forestry-suppliers.com

Orchard Equipment and Supply, Inc. Conway, Massachusetts: www.oescoinc.com

Both of these outfits have competitive prices for pruners, saws and soil knives and carry brands "proven in the industry" for professionals.

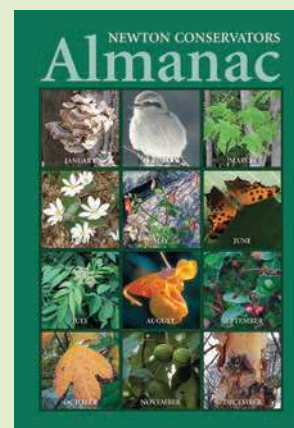
Bruce Wenning is the horticulturist at The Country Club, Brookline, Mass and has served on the Ecological Landscape Alliance (formerly the Ecological Landscaping Association) Board of Directors for 13 years. ■

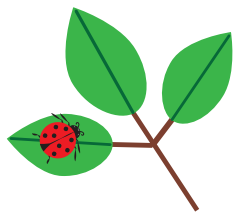
Enjoy the Beauty of Spring!

Shop online at www.newtonconservators.org/books.htm to purchase Newton Conservators publications.

Discounts for members: *Almanac* is \$19.95 + shipping, and the *Trail Guide* is \$9.95 + shipping.

Buy today!





Don't miss the second annual

June Doin!!!

In Nahanton Park

Saturday, June 11, 2016



Come and enjoy this park, which includes riverfront, community garden plots, meadows, wooded hillsides, wild blackberry bushes, wetlands and a pond—all on a plateau overlooking the river valley.

Fishing Tournament • Bird Walks • Nature Walk and Tree-Climbing Demo with Eric Olson • Walk to meet the Trees of Nahanton Park • Invasive Plant Walk and Pull • Scavenger Hunt for Children • Nature Activities for Children • AND MORE . . .

We had a great time last year, and it will be even better this year!

Look for more information in May in our e-Bulletin, on our Facebook page, and on our website: www.NewtonConservators.org.

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 55 years ago in June 1961.

The Newton Conservators Newsletter® is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and March. Deadlines for these issues are the first Friday 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 or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to bethwilkinson@mac.com. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Newton Conservators Invasive-Plant Pulls Spring 2016

Newton Conservators, Newton's land trust and open space organization, sponsors walks in the spring and fall. We also fight invasive plant species to preserve and improve the native habitat at our parks and conservation areas. Sessions may be weather dependent — call the leader if in doubt. Check our website (newtonconservators.org) for updates to this schedule.

About the Plant Invaders



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Garlic Mustard, native to Europe, was brought here in the 1800s as a medicinal and garden herb and is now an invader of our backyards, parks, forests, and conservation areas. It quickly covers vast areas, including low light forested areas, shades out other plants, chemically alters the soil to inhibit germination of competitor seeds, and alters habitat for native insects such as butterflies. In areas where it is just starting, it takes only a small effort to eliminate—it is a biennial easily identified and pulled when the second year plants are flowering in April/May. If not, each plant will scatter hundreds to thousands of seeds that will become first year plants the next year or will remain as viable seeds for several more years. Because the seeds stay so viable, the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Our efforts are effective. Garlic Mustard can be controlled with easy hand pulling, vigilance, and determination. The areas worked are much improved and require only periodic visits to catch stragglers to avoid re-infestation. The areas NOT worked are worse. **We need more help to get them under control.**



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Japanese Knotweed is a bamboo-like invader from Asia that can create dense 8' tall single-species stands. It is a tough adversary, not because it's spiny or strong or even particularly hard to pull, but because any small root fragments left behind spring back to life the following year. Scientists seek biological control agents, but until then we must control by hand. Persistence pays with this species, and eradication is possible, but it takes several years to truly finish the job.

Our sessions also tackle black swallow-wort, multi-flora rose, tree of heaven, and black locust.

Sunday, April 24, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Invasives Pull at Sawmill Brook Conservation Area.
Opposite 120 Vine St., Newton, MA 02467
www.newtonconservators.org/26sawmill.htm

Sawmill Brook Park is a lovely, long, natural trail that connects Newton to West Roxbury. It has garlic mustard and black swallow-wort infestations at its entrances and along Lagrange St. and Wayne Road borders. We will spend a few hours pulling at each entrance and along Lagrange and Wayne, patrolling previously worked areas. In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Meet at the Vine Street entrance. **Leader is Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Saturday, April 30, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Garlic Mustard Pull at Dolan Pond (NewtonSERVES Project). 76 Webster Park, Newton, MA 02465
www.newtonconservators.org/5dolan.htm

Meet at the Webster Park (a street off Webster Street) entrance of the Dolan Pond Conservation Area in West Newton. (Street parking is available there and at the other entrances at Stratford Road and Cumberland Road.) We will tackle garlic mustard stands in off-trail corners of the property and a few patches of rosettes in previously worked areas. Come help us eradicate this soil-damaging invasive from this gem of a pocket park. Crews also removed nearly every knotweed stem from one area, but knotweed removal takes years to complete, and each time it gets easier. We will mix in some general nature study, so bring binoculars for observing birds and other creatures that make this vernal pool area home. In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. **Leader is Ted Kuklinski, 617-332-7753.**

Sunday, May 1, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Cold Spring Park Invasives Pull (NewtonSERVES Project). 1200 Beacon Street, Newton, MA 02461
www.newtonconservators.org/14coldspring.htm

Cold Spring Park is being invaded by garlic mustard, knotweed, and other species. We will spend a few hours checking the Cochituate Aqueduct walk, to keep it under control after previous years' pulls and will work on the meadow and parking lot areas. In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Enter the park at the Beacon Street entrance. Turn left and go to the far end of the parking lot (circle) to meet group. **Leader is Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Sunday, May 1, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Cold Spring Park Landfill Cleanup (NewtonSERVES Project). 1200 Beacon Street, Newton, MA 02461
www.newtonconservators.org/14coldspring.htm

Decades ago, part of what is now Cold Spring Park was used as a trash dump. For years, large pieces of metal debris littered the edge of a small seasonal wetland area in the park. In 2011, the Conservators sponsored a very successful cleanup project on Newton Serves day, with many volunteers including a Boy Scout troop, taking part. We now want to go back to finish the cleanup effort. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided. Enter the park at the Beacon Street entrance. Turn left and go to the far end of the parking lot (circle) to meet group. **Leader is Dan Brody, 617-332-5418.**

Sunday, May 1, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Invasives Pull at Blue Heron Bridge (NewtonSERVES Project). Near Super Stop & Shop, 700 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02472

www.newtonconservators.org/4charlesmoody.htm

We will continue to work along the Charles River Greenway at this bridge site, helping the Trustees of the Reservations with their stewardship of the floodplain forest, mixing in nature study, so bring binoculars and an insect net and hand lens if you have them. Park at the Watertown Super Stop & Shop (700 Pleasant St.) at the corner furthest from the store. There is a path entrance: turn left, and follow path to the Blue Heron Bridge. Or park at Albemarle Rd. or Nevada St., a block away from the river.

Trip leader is Eric Olson, 617-872-9928.

Sunday, May 15, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Invasives Pull at Blue Heron Bridge #2 (repeat visit). Near Super Stop & Shop, 700 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02472

www.newtonconservators.org/4charlesmoody.htm

We will continue to work along the Charles River Greenway at this bridge site, helping the Trustees of the Reservations with their stewardship of the floodplain forest, mixing in nature study, so bring binoculars and an insect net and hand lens if you have them. Park at the Watertown Super Stop & Shop (700 Pleasant St.) at the corner furthest from the store. There is a path entrance: turn left, and follow path to the Blue Heron Bridge. Or park at Albemarle Rd. or Nevada St., a block away from the river.

Trip leader is Eric Olson, 617-872-9928.

Saturday, May 21, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Cold Spring Park Invasives Pull #2 (repeat visit). 1200 Beacon Street, Newton, MA 02461

www.newtonconservators.org/14coldspring.htm

Cold Spring Park is being invaded by garlic mustard, knotweed, and other species. We will spend a few hours checking the Cochituate Aqueduct walk, to keep it under control after previous years' pulls, and work on the meadow and parking lot areas. In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Enter the park at the Beacon Street entrance. Turn left and go to the far end of the parking lot (circle) to meet group. **Leader is Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Sunday, May 22, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Nahanton Park Invasives Pull. Near 507 Winchester Street Newton, MA 02461

www.newtonconservators.org/30nahanton.htm

Many native habitats, including grassland and open woodland habitats, are threatened by invasive plants. They out-compete native plants, reduce biodiversity and negatively impact birdlife. Nahanton Park is one of our open spaces suffering from infestations of invasive plant species, including black swallow-wort, multi-flora rose, tree of heaven, garlic mustard, and black locust. Join us to improve the beauty and diversity of this special park by spending a few hours cutting back/removing these invasive species. Sturdy shoes, long pants, long sleeves and work gloves are recommended. Meet in the large parking lot off Winchester Street. **Leaders are Duane Hillis and Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Sunday, May 29, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Japanese Knotweed Pull at Hammond Pond. Near 309 Hammond Pond Parkway, Newton, MA 02467

www.newtonconservators.org/18webster.htm

Japanese Knotweed is a bamboo-like invader from Asia that can create dense 8' tall single-species stands. It is a tough adversary, not because it's spiny or strong or even particularly hard to pull. But any small root fragments left behind spring back to life the following year. Scientists seek biological control agents, but until they find some, we are stuck controlling the plant by hand. Persistence pays with this species, and eradication is possible, but it takes several years to truly finish the job. Bring pitchforks, garden spades, and hand pruners, if you have them. Meet at small parking lot off Hammond Pond Parkway at Route 9 adjacent to pond at "The Street" mall. **Leader is Eric Olson, 617-872-9928.**

Sunday, June 5, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Cold Spring Park Invasives Pull #3 (repeat visit). 1200 Beacon Street, Newton, MA 02461

www.newtonconservators.org/14coldspring.htm

This session will be followed by a 12-2 Invasive Plant educational walk through Cold Spring Park led by Bruce Wenning, horticulturalist. Cold Spring Park is being invaded by garlic mustard, knotweed, and other species. We will spend a few hours checking the Cochituate Aqueduct walk, to keep it under control after previous years' pulls, and work on the meadow and parking lot areas. In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Enter the park at the Beacon Street entrance. Turn left and go to the far end of the parking lot (circle) to meet group. **Leader is Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Sunday, June 12, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Houghton Garden/Webster Invasives Pull. Opposite 210 Suffolk Rd., Newton, MA 02467

www.newtonconservators.org/19houghton.htm

We are tackling garlic mustard and black swallow-wort near the entrance of Houghton Garden where it borders the T Track crossing to Webster Woods and near the deer park. Help us keep these invaders out of Houghton Garden! In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Meet opposite 162-210 Suffolk Rd. (off of Hammond Street) at the entrance to Houghton Garden. **Leader is Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

Saturday, June 18, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Charles River Quinobequin/Hemlock Gorge Invasives Pull. Near 2 Ellis St., Newton, MA 02464

www.newtonconservators.org/21hemlock.htm

We have expanded our efforts to control garlic mustard, knotweed, and black swallow-wort infestations inside beautiful Hemlock Gorge Park, and also in the adjoining lovely walking trail along the Charles River at Quinobequin Rd. Help us keep the invaders out of these beautiful parks! In case of poison ivy, wear long pants and garden gloves. Trash bags will be provided; the plants must be disposed of as trash, not as yard waste. Meet at the parking lot at corner of Quinobequin Rd. and Ellis St. at Rt. 9 intersection. **Leaders are Jerry Reilly and Katherine Howard, 617-527-1796 (home) or 617-721-2571 (cell).**

WALKS SCHEDULE SPRING 2016

www.newtonconservators.org



Please note: Walks meet at different times. Some trips are weather dependent. Please call trip leader if in doubt.

Saturday, April 2 at 1:00 pm (RAIN DATE: APRIL 3)

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF VERNAL POOLS: FOREST AND VERNAL POOL EXPLORATION AT WEBSTER WOODS

Join us in Webster Woods, Newton's largest conservation area, as we walk the woods and explore the large vernal pool found there. Vernal pools, because of periods of drying, do not support breeding populations of fish. Many organisms have evolved to use these temporary wetlands, where they are not eaten by fish. Join us as we search obligate vernal pool species, including fairy shrimp, Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs. The amphibians are the stars of the show, but you will also watch for mammal tracks and learn about trees and other forest plants. Sampling equipment will be provided; bring hand lenses if you have them. We will walk even in the rain, so dress accordingly.

Meet at the end of Warren Street on the western edge of Webster Conservation Area. For anyone not up to a 1-mile hike (round-trip), you can meet up with the group at 2 pm in the back parking lot (far back) of Congregation Mishkan Tefila; the vernal pool is right there.

Trip Leader: Eric Olson (Cell phone on day of outing: 617-872-9928)

Saturday, April 9 at 10:00 am (RAIN DATE: APRIL 10)

WALK AROUND THE WABAN HILL RESERVOIR

Come take a short walk around the Waban Hill Reservoir site, the City's newest open space, purchased this past spring using Community Preservation Act funds. Once a backup reservoir to the state's water supply system, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) deemed it unnecessary and disconnected it prior to the sale. This 5-acre parcel in Chestnut Hill now falls under the jurisdiction of the Newton Parks and Recreation Department while the Conservators hold its conservation restriction, ensuring it remains a passive park in perpetuity. The reservoir's dam is steep but its water is entirely fenced for public safety and the pedestrian entry on Manet Road is accessible, leading to a level ¼ mile walk on grass. Parking is available on any of the surrounding streets.

Trip Leaders: Carol Schein, Newton's Open Space Coordinator (617-796-1507)

Saturday, April 23 at 12:00 pm

QUINOBEQUIN RIVER WALK

Join Waban's Henry Finch and storyteller Jerry Reilly for a walk along this portion of the DCR's Upper Charles Reservation. We will look for the scenic and beautiful aspects

of this less well known connector park between Hemlock Gorge and the Leo G. Martin Golf Course. Acquired by the state in the 1890's, this 3/4 mile stretch of the Charles has reflected many historical periods over the past centuries. We will circulate a landscape design plan from the Olmstead firm, generated at the time of the state taking, as well as other historical documents. The walk will follow the volunteer-maintained dirt path that parallels the river and is very flat for the most part. Long pants and shirts advised.

Meet at the DCR parking lot at the Ellis street ramp at 12:00 p.m. (It's a short walk from either the Waban or Elliot T stop as well as from the Aqueducts.)

Trip Leaders: Jerry Reilly, Henry Finch, and Maureen Reilly Meagher (617-999-5300)

Sunday, May 10 at 8:00 am

NAHANTON PARK MOTHER'S DAY BIRD WALK

Nahanton Park offers a mix of woodlands, wetlands, edge habitat and meadows along the Charles River, making it one of the best birding spots in Newton for both migratory and resident songbirds. Likely finds include brightly colored warblers, vireos, and orioles. Also expect bluebirds, scarlet tanagers, swallows and brown thrashers. Enter the park at the Nahanton Street entrance next to the river. Parking is available inside the park. Bring binoculars if you have them. Beginners as well as experienced birders are welcome. Boots are recommended. Walk will be cancelled in steady rain. Co-sponsored with Friends of Nahanton Park.

Trip Leaders: Alison Leary (617-821-5619), **Haynes Miller** (617-413-2419)

Saturday, May 14 at 8:00 am (RAIN DATE: MAY 15)

BIRD WALK AT COLD SPRING PARK

This 67-acre parcel has ample wooded areas, open fields, a brook and wetlands. It is one of the places in Newton where you may hear the call of the Great Horned Owl and observe spectacular songbirds like the rose breasted grosbeak and the indigo bunting. Also frequently found at the park are many favorite migrants such as the red eyed vireo, the wood thrush, and a variety of wood warblers. Bring binoculars if you have them. Beginners as well as experienced birders are welcome. Enter the park at the Beacon Street entrance. Turn left, and go to the far end of the parking lot to meet group.

Trip Leader: Pete Gilmore (617-969-1513)

Sunday, May 15 at 2:00 pm

TAKE A REAL HIKE IN NEWTON: DISCOVER THE NEWTON AQUEDUCTS

A 5 mile hike through woods, meadows and fields along the Newton sections of the Sudbury and Cochituate aqueducts. This is a steady but not fast hike. Participants should be in sufficiently good shape to keep up with the group. (There are cutoffs for those who wish to shorten the hike). Meet in front of the Starbucks coffee shop near the Waban MBTA station.

Trip Leader: Henry Finch (617-964-4488)

Sunday, May 22 at 10:30 am

WEBSTER WOODS WALK

Come and (hopefully) see the beautiful Lady's Slipper orchids. Meet at the end of Warren Street for a 90 minutes walk through the Newton Webster Conservation area, including the Vale and Bare Pond. The tour will be led by BU Professor of Plant Ecology and life-long Newton resident Richard Primack, who will point out notable trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, and probably salamanders.

Trip Leader: Prof. Richard Primack (617 332 1684)

Saturday, June 5 from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

INVASIVE-PLANT WALK: LEARN TO IDENTIFY THEM

What are the invasive plant species found in Newton and what harm do they do to the ecosystem? Newton Native Bruce

Wenning is an invasive plant specialist and horticulturist. Join Bruce for a professionally guided walking tour of Cold Spring Park to learn how to identify several types of invasive plants and to learn what you can do in your own yard to safely remove them. Bruce will explain how different invasive plants spread and what removal methods are effective on each. He also will discuss the important topic of how to properly dispose of the plants once removed.

Trip Leader: Bruce Wenning (617-962-0646)

Saturday, June 25 at 11:00 am (RAIN DATE: JUNE 26)

HOUGHTON GARDEN FERN WALK

This garden remains from the Houghton Estate and is now owned by Newton. It is part of the Webster Conservation Area complex near Hammond Pond that runs from Rt. 9 north beyond the MBTA Riverside line.

The garden, only lightly managed now, retains a variety of flowering plants and a surprising diversity of ferns. We will see more than a dozen fern species and one club-moss.

Park on Suffolk Road (off Hammond St.) and meet near the gate at Woodman Rd.

Trip Leader: Don Lubin (617-254-8464), <http://nefern.info>, don@nefern.info

PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT : JERRY REILLY, SUZETTE BARBIER (2), DAN BRODY

ADDITIONAL SPRING EVENTS

1. Please donate your time for Newton Serves on **May 1**! See listing in the Invasive-Plant Pulls section in this newsletter for the details.
2. Hear Bryan Connolly, professor at Framingham State University and former State Botanist, talk about invasive plants at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, **May 11**!
3. Come to the Newton Free Library on **May 31** at 7:00 pm to hear Bruce Wenning talk about invasive plants in Newton!
4. Don't miss the second annual June Doin' at Nahanton Park on Saturday, **June 11**. There will be events for everyone in the family. Check the listing earlier in this newsletter.
5. Check out the summer issue of the newsletter for walks after **June 25**!



NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
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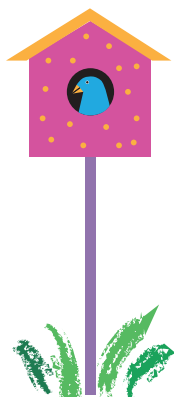
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Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961

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Broad-winged Hawk
Photo by Haynes Miller

Go Green! ...and all the other colors of the rainbow. You can view this newsletter at www.newtonconservators.org/newsletter.htm. To elect not to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, update your membership profile at www.newtonconservators.org