

# - W S L E T T E

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

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Wild Turkey Fanning

Mature Tom Intimidating First-year Tom in Presence of Bored Hen

### A Few of Newton's Nesting Birds

By Pete Gilmore

his is the prime season for chickrearing by the birds that nest in Newton.



By the time that this summer issue is in

Turkey Wattle

your hands, many birds will be raising their second brood of this summer.

One large and unmistakable wanderer through our yards is the Wild Turkey. These birds were exterminated from Massachusetts as the land was cleared, and they were hunted. The last known native Wild Turkey was killed on Mount Tom in 1851.

MassWildlife tried to reintroduce them four times between 1914 and 1947, using birds from game farms, but each attempt failed. In 1972 MassWildlife got permission from New York State to live-trap some Wild Turkeys and release them in Massachusetts. This worked very well.

The estimated population is now over 15,000 birds in our state. A flock of about forty of these large birds was seen on Winslow Road in Waban late this spring. At dusk, they flew up into trees to roost for the night ---it was quite a sight! People do not know what to make of something as large as a Wild Turkey up in a tree. They seem to be, like bumblebees, far too large and clumsy for their wings to get them aloft. Another engineering marvel by Mother Nature!

The young, called poults, start appearing in early June. Often an older, experienced hen will supervise the poults of several other hens; you can see several hens with their offspring, all together.

Hunting these birds is now legal in Massachusetts, with the spring season already over and the fall season coming up, from October 24 to November 5. Only one Wild Turkey can be taken each day, with a total allowable limit of two Wild Turkeys per year. There are strict regulations on the guns and archery that can be used in this hunting.

Wild Turkeys spend the winter with us, finding food even when the ground is covered in snow. Life is not easy for them, then.



A much smaller but unique bird that nests along the Charles River is the Belted Kingfisher. They are pretty hefty birds, weighing about half a pound. These birds nest in tunnels in riverbanks, where they raise their

Belted Kingfisher

young .The tunnels slope upwards from their entrances in order to keep water from soaking the chicks.

Both parents cooperate in digging the tunnel, with the males doing more of the digging — this work usually takes them about one week. The resulting tunnel is about three to six feet long.

These birds are monogamous for the season but may pair up with new mates each year. The female Belted Kingfisher, pictured above, is more colorful than the male. She has a rusty tan band of color below the blue-gray band on her breast. The male has only the blue-gray band.

Belted Kingfishers eat aquatic prey, including fish and crawfish. The young have special acids in their stomachs to digest small fish bones and scales. When they are older, they cough up pellets, which can be found under Belted Kingfisher perching spots.

Kingfishers have a monotone, loud rattle as their call. They have a wacky appearance that seems a perfect match with their rattling call. They could have been used in Walt Disney's cartoons instead of Woody Woodpecker. (A visit to earlier times can be had by finding "Woody Woodpecker's call" on YouTube. Try to imagine what Mel Blanc would have done with the Kingfisher call.)

The adults find an exposed branch over water and perch there to watch for prey. When one spots an appropriate meal in the water, it dives in, plunging headfirst into the water and grabbing the prey in its beak. They can also be seen hovering above the water, looking for food. Because they nest in banks, look for them along the Charles River near places where there are somewhat high riverbanks. As long as there is open water in the winter, you can find these birds. They are harder to find in the winter as some do migrate to safer, more southern waters.

A much smaller bird is the Brown Creeper, which nests under the bark of trees. In contrast to the two larger and noisier birds above, this common species is small and quiet and difficult to see. Its behavior is most like the more easily spotted White-breasted Nuthatches that visit our feeders during the winter. In my experience Brown Creepers are not usually seen at feeders. They are known to eat suet and seeds, however, so it is possible that they visit some feeders.



They crawl up the bark on the trunks of trees. They spiral around the tree, always going upwards, whereas nuthatches will crawl down as well as up. They find insects and insect eggs in the crevices in the bark. Their beak is small and curves downwards.

Brown Creeper

They sing a high-pitched warbling song up in the canopy of big trees in the spring. Their more usual call note is a thin, high note that is easier for young people to hear. The male and female Brown Creepers look alike.

In the picture you can see some of the white underparts on the bird. These are often hidden against the trunk of a tree and are not seen by the observer. You also see the incredible camouflage that their plumage provides when viewed against the bark. The stiff tail supports this little bird as it steadies itself on the bark. In this photo, a parent Brown Creeper is bringing a small moth to its nest site, behind the crevice in the bark where the bird is perched.

The female builds the nest behind a loose piece of bark on the trunk of a tree. Often a dead tree has an appropriate spot. The male helps by bringing dried grasses, twigs, spider web strands and insect cocoons that the female uses to bind the twigs and grasses together to glue the nest structure in place. Both parents bring insect food to their young.

It is a challenge to try to observe this common bird that slips past most of us. Look for them in Newton parks that have large, mature trees. They are permanent residents here, so one can see them at any time of year.





A final bird to look for during the summer is the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. In this species, the more usual color contrast between the males and females occurs. The male, pictured at left, has striking black and white plumage over most

Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak

of its body, with the beautiful rose-colored triangle on his breast. Both genders have the large, gross (large) beak.

The song of the male is described as "the song of an American Robin who has taken voice lessons;" it is lilting, very cheerful and sweet.



beauty with a very eye-catching white line, called a supercilium, over her eye. Her photograph appears at left.

There was a Rose-

The female has

a more subtle

Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak

breasted Grosbeak nest in the upper gardens at Nahanton Park in Newton two years ago. It was in some shrubs, about eight feet from the ground, around the edge of the gardens. Perhaps this pair took advantage of the nearness of humans to deter predators. Both birds inspect possible nest sites and share in the building of the nest. The result is a loose construction of twigs, grasses and plant stems and is lined with finer material of the same sort. Both birds incubate the eggs, with the female spending more time at this task. The female usually takes the entire night shift. When the birds exchange places on the nest, they sing quietly to each other. They share the feeding of the young birds and are mostly monogamous for the season.

Males will challenge other male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks if they sing, but will tolerate them if they do not. Females, on the other hand, will actively attack other females who get near their mates or nest. Our numerous Blue Jays and Common Grackles are serious egg and chick predators for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. The parents will become very aggressive if either of these species approaches their nest.

In contrast to the other three birds described, Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks do not spend their winters with us. Even though their large beaks are good for cracking open seeds, they depart in the fall for Central America, the south of Mexico, and northwestern South America. Many of them fly over the whole Gulf of Mexico in a one-night flight. Others fly around the Gulf, through Mexico. They reappear in Cold Spring and Nahanton parks in Newton during early May each year.

These beautiful and interesting visitors to Newton's open spaces are here now. Perhaps you know them already. In any case, it helps all of our souls to go into nature. We in the Newton Conservators urge you to take advantage of your own open spaces. Use them or lose them.

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### Summer's here!

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

Discounted prices for members paying by credit card: Almanac \$18.45, including shipping; Trail Guide \$8.95, including shipping.









May 2016 may have been our busiest month ever.

## Thanks to everyone who made our annual meeting, the four Newton Serves projects, our varied and wonderful walks, the productive invasives pulls throughout the city, the library talk by Bruce Wenning, and the second annual June Doin' so successful!

At the annual meeting, Bryan Connolly gave a great presentation to make sure that all of us are familiar with the most common invasives that are taking over the open space in Newton. See Margaret Doris' article for more details, and check out the Reflections on the State of Our Organization on page 13 for a summary of some of our work this year.

### Two land concerns continue to need your support.

1. At our April meeting, the board of the Conservators voted to support the Friends of Herrick Green in their effort to preserve the 2+-acre open space when Andover Newton Theological School sells their property at the end of the summer. For more information, see the informative article by Brian Kinney and Philip Warburg, Co-Chairs, Friends of Herrick Green. The Conservators have agreed to provide fiscal sponsorship for the Friends of Herrick Green, receiving contributions on their behalf and then using those funds to pay their verified expenses. You may make contributions to that cause at NewtonConservators.org. Please specify "Herrick Green" in the on-line comment box or on the memo line on your check.

**2.** Webster Woods continues to be of great concern to us. Boston College now owns the land. It is time to make sure that they and Mayor Warren know how important it is to preserve that land, which provides a critical connection between the state and city conservation land on either side of it.

This issue of the newsletter contains an update from Jacob Stern, the Community Organizer for the Friends of Webster Woods, for whom the Conservators also provides fiscal sponsorship. Sign up with Jacob for continuing information: jacobstern2@gmail.com.

There is a "Save Webster Woods" sign in my yard, and almost every day someone stops to ask me what it means. If you want to help spread the word with your own sign, Jacob can help you with that, too.

At the June Doin', Newton Conservators advisors Jon Regosin, Chief of Conservation Science for the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, and Eric Olson, Senior Lecturer at Brandeis' Heller School for Social Policy and Management, discussed the presence of wood frogs at Bare Pond, a vernal pond on the BC property. Because wood frogs need both a wetlands area and a higher forested area, it is rare to find them in urban landscapes. Bare Pond is one of those unusual places.



WOOD FROG PHOTO: JIM HARDING, COURTESY OF MICHIGAN.GOV

We love to hear from you. Write to President@NewtonConservators.org with your thoughts and suggestions.



### West Nile Virus in Newton

ast year, ten blue jays died in just my Newton Centre yard during the months of July and August. The birds had no signs of trauma, and one dropped out of a tree and died at my feet. It seemed likely that they were suffering from some disease.

The first bird died two weeks after the Massachusetts Health Department found mosquitos carrying West Nile Virus in Newton Centre. The year before, four blue jays died in my yard during those same weeks.



Culex pipiens

Although West Nile Virus has been found in hundreds of bird species, the corvid bird family, which includes blue jays and crows, and also robins are particularly susceptible to West Nile Virus.

I called Mass Audubon after I found the third blue jay. By the time the seventh bird died, Andrew Vitz, the state ornithologist, expressed concern. I asked him to test the dead birds in my yard to see what was causing the deaths. The state health department no longer tests dead birds (having found that testing just mosquitos is sufficient for tracking the locations in which the disease is present), and he could not get the test done in Massachusetts. Fortunately, the National Wildlife Services came to the rescue. By the time the ninth bird died. Randall Mickley in that office found a lab in Madison, Wisconsin, that would autopsy a bird.

I kept the ninth bird in my freezer for three weeks until all arrangements could be made and then gave it and the tenth dead (non-frozen) bird to Randall, who drove from western Massachusetts to pick them up. The results were that both birds were infected with West Nile Virus, and wildlife folks assumed that all ten birds were killed by the disease.

What does that mean, and how does it affect those of us who live in Newton?

Knowing that there is a sufficient population of disease-carrying mosquitos to kill ten birds in my small yard, I decided to learn more about the disease and to make sure that my family and guests protect themselves from

mosquito bites, especially at dusk and dawn, when the West-Nile-carrying mosquitos are active.

WNV first was detected in the Western Hemisphere in New York in 1999, and it arrived in New England about a decade ago. The state has found it in Newton mosquitos all three years since the summer of 2012. In 2015, WNVinfected mosquitos were detected in the following local cities and towns: *Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lexington, Lowell, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Natick, Newton, Quincy, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Wakefield, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley, Wilmington, and Winthrop.* 

The primary residence of the virus is in birds. Mosquitos get the disease when they bite an infected bird and then can pass it on to the humans (and other birds) that they bite subsequently. If an infected bird flies to an area that does not have the disease, the whole cycle can begin anew in that area when that bird is bitten by the local unaffected mosquitos.

The mosquitos suffer no ill effects from the virus. They are the "vector" that spreads the virus, which is a threat

### Discourage Mosquitos from Breeding and Biting

- Patch any torn screens, making sure they are tightly attached to all your doors and windows.
- Wear lightweight, long sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors
- Look around outside your house for containers and other things that might collect water . Turn them over, regularly empty them, or dispose of them. Make a regular inspection of your yard after every rainfall, or if you use sprinklers, and look for any pooled water. Even a half-cup in a can be a mosquito breeding ground.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling bins and trash cans that are left outdoors so that water can drain out.
- Clean clogged roof gutters; remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of rainwater.
- Turn over plastic wading pools, play toys and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Think about taking down birdbaths. If not, change the water in birdbaths every few days; aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with hungry fish.
- Keep swimming pools clean and properly chlorinated; remove standing water from pool covers. Ditto for outdoor grill and furniture covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.
- Don't use electric bug zappers, as they kill helpful insects too, Use citronella candles instead.

Continued on page 6



to humans as well as birds. According the Connecticut Department of Health, "The virus is maintained in the mosquito's salivary glands. During blood feeding, the virus is injected into the animal. The virus then multiplies and may cause clinical signs in a susceptible animal." The incubation period for people usually is two to six days but can be as long as 14 days.

According to Massachusetts Department of Health statistics, there were six severe cases of the disease detected in humans in Massachusetts in 2014; there were eight severe cases of the disease in 2015, and two of them died. People over sixty years old are at greatest risk of the more severe form of the disease.



Although other animals seem to be much more resistant to the disease than humans and birds are, it has been

Eliminate Stagnant Water

found in bats, cats, dogs, horses, chipmunks, squirrels, skunks, and domestic rabbits. Unlike birds, however, affected humans and other animals do not develop enough of the virus in their bloodstreams to pass it on if they are bitten by another mosquito.

70% to 80% of people who are infected with the virus feel no ill effects. Approximately 20% develop flu-like symptoms. At the other end of the spectrum, less than 1% of those infected develop debilitating paralysis and fatigue or contract life-threatening brain inflammation. Recent research revealed that the virus may also move to the kidneys over time, causing possibly fatal disease.

Although the disease has been found in humans in every month of the year, 94% of the cases occur in the span from mid-July through the end of August (according to the Centers for Disease Control).

No drugs have been shown to be effective to treat either the immediate or the long-term symptoms of West Nile Virus, so prevention is imperative. That is especially important because scientists assume that the prevalence of the disease will increase as the effects of climate begin to be felt. That's true because higher temperatures seem to be strongly correlated with the spread of the disease.

In our region, the disease is carried by *Culex pipiens* mosquitos, which are the most common in our area, but it also occasionally occurs in other species such as *Culex restuans*, which also is found in Newton.

How does Newton try to prevent the presence of mosquitos carrying West Nile Virus? The city, working with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project, puts *Bacillus sphaericus*, a bacterium that is toxic to mosquito larvae but not other creatures or people, in catch basins to prevent the larvae from growing to be adults. Our lakes and ponds usually aren't treated because they're thought to have predators that will help to control the population and because they are not stagnant. (However, some small ponds and a larger kettle pond such as Crystal Lake that doesn't have the inflows and outflows that often keep lakes fresh, have areas that are very shallow and still. It might be worth investigating whether mosquitos breed at the edges of those bodies of water.)

After hearing about the great loss of bird life in my yard within a block of Crystal Lake, the officials involved with mosquito treatment in the city discussed the issue and decided that there is at least one non-functioning catch basin that has not been treated and should be treated this year. That was great news.

What more can Newton residents do to protect themselves from mosquitos? Check the box on pg. 5 for some suggestions for steps to protect yourself from mosquito bites.



The most important point to remember was summarized by the Cambridge Board of Public Health, "In New England, the mosquitoes that carry West

Water in Old Tire Becomes Mosquito Breeding Area

Nile virus are 'container breeding' species. These mosquitos lay their eggs in still or stagnant water found in catch basins, roof gutters clogged with leaves, old tires, flower pots, bird baths, swimming pool covers, buckets, cans, barrels, and other places where water can be trapped."

🦑 Beth Wilkinson



### All About Zika

Mosquito life cycle

he last time an infectious virus caused an epidemic of congenital defects in the United States was more than 50 years ago, when a German Measles (rubella) epidemic caused an estimated 30,000 still births and 20.000 children to be born with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), a condition characterized by blindness, deafness and/or intellectual disabilities.

The development of a vaccine against the rubella virus the late 1960s has proved remarkably successful; in 2004 the World Health Organization verified that in the United States, rubella and CRS were eliminated. However, this past winter word came that another virus is implicated in a new outbreak of congenital birth defects. An alarming number of babies with microcephaly

Aedes aegypti It takes about 7-10 days for an egg to develop into an adult mosquito. Female mosquitoes lay eggs in containers that hold water. oae live in the water. T velop into adult, flying squitoes in 2-3 days. Eggs hatch within a few Larvae live in water They develop into pupae in as few as 5 days.

which approximately 75% of residents were infected. Six years later another large outbreak occurred in French Polynesia, and in April 2015, a massive outbreak was recognized in Brazil. Since then the Zika virus has been spreading quickly throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean. Optimistic at first, most researchers now concede it is only a matter of time before Zika establishes a beachhead in North America.

Earlier this year, researchers were minimizing the likelihood of Zika coming to the United States. The only mosquito known to transmit Zika, Aedes aegypti, or the vellow fever mosquito, is found in significant numbers only in the southern US (the only New England state with a recorded *Aedes aegypti* population of any

note is New Hampshire). However, they were soon forced to acknowledge that another mosquito, Aedes albopictus, or the Asian tiger mosquito, can also harbor the virus. Aedes albopictus first made its first US appearance in Houston, TX, in 1985 in a load of used tires from Asia, and by 2000 it had made its way to Massachusetts, where it's been implicated in the spread of EEE and continues to display an affinity for used tires. Aedes mosquitos usually bite during the day, peaking during early morning and late afternoon/evening, so usual dawn-to-dusk protection routines are not helpful.

West Nile, which is predominantly spread by culexspecies mosquitoes, made its first American appearance in the summer of 1999, when the New York City health department realized that an outbreak of a new kind of encephalitis was moving through the area. Within a month, 37 people had been identified with the same perplexing neurological syndrome, which seemed to be caused by a virus, and four had died. At the same time, veterinarians at the Bronx Zoo were encountering unusual numbers of dead birds: exotics, like flamingos, and city birds, primarily crows. The zoo vets' concern allowed the CDC to connect the dots: West Nile virus, which was well known in Europe, but had never been seen in this country before, had arrived.

Birds, with their long flight range, bring both West Nile and EEE to mosquitos with far more limited travel range. That may be the only silver lining in the Zika pandemic.

Continued on page 8



(abnormally small head) and other brain defects are being born in Brazil. The culprit? A bite from a common mosquito.

"It looks like Zika is inhibiting development of the brain, not just small head size, and it's associated with stillbirths," Peter Jay Hotez, MD, PhD, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, told Everyday Health. "That's why I called it the virus from hell, because it really is something terribly evil happening that's blocking the brain of the unborn baby."

The rubella virus is spread by casual human contact, like a sneeze. In Massachusetts, we have two mosquito-borne viruses: West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE or "Triple E"). They can cause serious illness, even death, especially in the elderly or those who are already compromised by other diseases, but fortunately such occurrences are rare. Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly apparent that Massachusetts must brace for the arrival of a third mosquito-borne virus: Zika.

The Zika virus — named after the Zika Forest in Uganda - was first identified in Ugandan monkeys in 1947 and in people in Nigeria in 1948. For decades Zika posed little problem, occasionally causing disease in a few people in African and Asian countries. In 2007, however, a major outbreak on Yap Island in Micronesia occurred during



Unlike West Nile and EEE, Zika has no known avian hosts. Instead it favors non-human primates, something we have a notable dearth of in North America. However, also unlike WNV and EEE, Zika can be transmitted by a man, even if asymptomatic, to his sexual partners. Such a case has already been documented in New Hampshire, when an out of the country traveller unwittingly brought the infection home to his female partner. It's not unreasonable to expect that other travellers will gift New England mosquitos with the virus, which some may then pass it on to other humans. There is also growing concern that Zika is implicated in the development of Guillain-Barré syndrome, an oftendevastating neurological condition in children and adults.

As we go to press, the CDC is preparing to release a "blueprint for action", guidance for when the first cases of locally transmitted Zika occur in the continental United States. "We know that Zika is a completely unprecedented problem and the front-line response is going to be crucial," Dr. Anne Schuchat, the CDC's deputy director, told the New York Times. "The summer is starting, and the mosquitoes are coming." The CDC is not expecting an epidemic of Brazilian proportions - mostly because most homes have window screens and many have air conditioning - but officials worry that a Zika outbreak could be difficult to identify and fight because 80 percent of the people infected with the virus experience no symptoms.

In the meantime you can keep up to date by regularly checking in with the CDC http://www.cdc.gov/zika/ and the Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/ dph/programs/id/epidemiology/providers/mosquito/zikavirus.html and keep safe by implementing good mosquito control practices at home.

- Margaret Doris

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



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Yellow Warbler Photo by Suzette Barbier



### Herrick Green: An Iconic Newton Center Landscape in Peril

By Brian Kinney and Philip Warburg, Co-chairs, Friends of Herrick Green



Herrick Green From Colby Hall

hose venturing up Herrick Road, just a few blocks from the Newton Centre T stop, may have noticed a procession of yard signs emblazoned with the words, "Keep Herrick Green!"This message reflects the growing alarm among neighbors of Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) following its announcement last November that it would be selling its Newton Centre campus.

Over the past two decades, ANTS has sold off several portions of its historic property in an effort to keep the seminary afloat amidst ever-shrinking enrollment. The sale of the School's remaining 22 acres will end nearly two centuries during which ANTS and its predecessor, the Newton Theological School, have occupied this hilltop site — a dramatically beautiful spot steeped in Newton history.

The heart of the ANTS campus is a cluster of buildings some modern, some more than a century old — graciously spaced around a leafy quadrangle. Leading up to the campus along Herrick Road is a broad, tree-lined meadow that opens onto a dramatic hillcrest view of Colby Hall, a steepled gray stone building dating back to 1866, displaying a handsome blend of Second Empire and Romanesque architecture.

Herrick Green, as neighbors call this grassy hillside, was once a pasture used by the Theological School for livestock grazing. Today, it is widely enjoyed by pedestrians and dog walkers, by summertime picnickers, and by sledders, crosscountry skiers, and snowboarders during the winter months. Located just a few blocks from Newton Centre's Piccadilly Square, Herrick Green offers visitors and residents welcome relief from the commercial bustle nearby. It is this unique landscape, an iconic site in Newton Centre's history, that the Newton Conservators and the Friends of Herrick Green, a neighborhood group with more than 100 signatories supporting its efforts, have joined together to preserve.

Among the factors favoring the preservation of Herrick Green is its size: it's no more than three acres, or a small fraction of the overall parcel slated for sale. Also important is its location, in the heart of the Newton Theological Institution Historic District, which includes the ANTS campus and surrounding residential streets replete with well-maintained Victorian homes from the late 1800s. The District is officially recognized by the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

The District's historic designation may slow down, but will not likely prevent the demolition of buildings on the ANTS campus quadrangle. Colby Hall's protection is more assured, thanks to an extraordinarily long-term lease that ANTS signed a few years ago with the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, giving it full use of the building and surrounding property for the next three centuries.



Herrick Green enjoys more limited protection under a viewshed easement jointly held by ANTS and the Hebrew College. This easement,

Herrick Green Alternate View

signed in 1999 when ANTS sold 6.3 acres of its land to the Hebrew College, forbids any development other than a sidewalk and agreed-upon signage on a stretch of land extending from the bottom of the Green, at the corner of Herrick Road and Herrick Circle, up to the far side of Colby Hall. Triangular in shape, the viewshed easement covers about half of Herrick Green. (See map next page.)

As an agreement between two private parties, the viewshed easement leaves neighbors feeling very uncertain about the fate of Herrick Green following the sale of the ANTS campus. We fear this idyllic hillside will be blanketed with buildings. Representatives of the Friends of Herrick Green





have met with ANTS president, Rev. Martin Copenhaver, and Hebrew College president, Rabbi Daniel Lehman, to urge that the Green's current viewshed easement be honored. They have also called for preserving the full

Herrick Green Easement Plan

expanse of the gently sloping meadow leading up to Colby Hall. Both educational leaders have said that they recognize the importance of this historic landscape, yet they have given no concrete assurances as to its status following the sale of the ANTS campus.

According to Rev. Copenhaver, an undisclosed buyer is now carrying out due diligence on the property. A final agreement is not expected before late summer.

The Newton Conservators will support the Friends of Herrick Green in monitoring developments before and after the sale of this beautiful campus. We will also work closely together to ensure that plans for the property respect the historic value and extraordinary beauty of Herrick Green.



Herrick Green In Winter

#### What you can do:

- Join the Friends of Herrick Green by going to their website at www.friendsofherrickgreen.org.
- Support the Friends of Herrick Green by making an earmarked contribution to the Newton Conservators at http://bit.ly/1ZoPgID
- Write to Newton City Councilors to register your support for preserving Herrick Green.
- Volunteer your time to the Friends of Herrick Green. Contact co-chairs Brian Kinney (Bkinney@ bmkinvestments.com) and Phil Warburg (pwarburg@ verizon.net) for further details.

### Webster Woods Update

by Jacob Stern, Community Organizer for the Friends of Webster Woods

It's been almost nine months since Congregation Mishkan Tefila first announced the plan to sell their property to Boston College. The notion that Boston College could develop the wooded portion of the land and destroy an irreplaceable public asset prompted an immediate community outcry. Neighbors from across the city have come together as the "Friends of Webster Woods" to fight to preserve Newton's largest forest.

The Friends have been working hard to send a clear message to the city and to Boston College that the land is off-limits for future development. It's difficult to miss the eye-catching navy blue "Save Webster Woods" lawn signs that have started popping up across Newton. Most recently, the Friends of Webster Woods invited Mayor Warren to tour the property in question. Over one hundred residents turned out to demonstrate their support for the cause. Mayor Warren, joined by Councilors Lisle Baker, Ruthanne Fuller, and Vicki Danberg, pledged to begin the appraisal process and to prepare to negotiate with Boston College now that the sale has closed. Stay tuned for updates, as the process is far from over.

If you'd like more information about the campaign to save Webster Woods, visit the Friends of Webster Woods' Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ fowwnewton) or email Jacob Stern (jacobstern2@ gmail.com) to request a lawn sign. ■



### **Annual Meeting and Awards**

he Newton Conservators 55th Annual Meeting, held on May 4, 2016, reflected the concerns of the nation at large; illegal aliens, attacks from within, the urgent need for rapid response. Fortunately, the discussion was a lot less contentious than it's been in the larger political arena.





Bryan Connolly

about the new invaders to the Commonwealth, suggesting methods of biocontrol, early detection and rapid response.

Conservators' President Beth Wilkinson gave a quick recap of the Conservator's year. Highlights included the first annual June Doin', a family friendly day at Nahanton Park that included a fishing competition, bird walks, a fern walk, and an invasive plant pull; City approval of the Conservators' three-part plan to remove trees from the Woodcock Meadow; collaboration with the Friends of Webster Woods to advocate for the preservation of the Temple Mishkan Tefila land; successful advocacy for reduced hardscape in the Cabot School renovation and expansion plans; review of proposals for a master plan for Waban Hill Reservoir; successful expansion of our invasives removal efforts; and the decision to join with conservation groups throughout the state in the Climate Change Adaptation Coalition and with many of the same groups in supporting Green Budget, which implements Governor Baker's suggestion that 1% of the state budget go toward environmental programs.

Following tradition, the Conservators also presented three awards:

#### The Environmentalist of the Year Award



The Environmentalist of the Year Award is presented by the Newton Conservators to an individual or group who has made a distinguished environmental contribution to our

*Jon Regosin, David Backer, Bob DeRubeis* community. The 34th annual award honored an entire flock of environmentalists for their work to reclaim the open space of Woodcock

Meadow at Nahanton Park for the annual flights of the American Woodcock. Those recognized included Jon Regosin, Chief of Conservation Science at Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Bob DeRubeis, Newton Parks & Recreation Commissioner; Marc Welch, Newton's Director of Urban Forestry; and the rest of the Woodcock Meadow Team of Suzette Barbier, Chris Hepburn, Duane Hillis, Katherine Howard, Eric Olson, Larry Smith, Bruce Wenning, Beth Wilkinson, and the members of the Forestry Team in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Woodcock Meadow is not under attack by developers but 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 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. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife lists them as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). 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 be the population of those valued inhabitants, among them the American Woodcock. But thanks to the efforts of our award winners, the Woodcocks have already found the more open meadow and are again using it this spring.

#### Charles Johnson Maynard Award



Jon Orren, Bill Hagar, Thomas Gwin

Charles Johnson Maynard was a naturalist and ornithologist who was born in Newton in 1845. Each year the Conservators give the Charles Johnson Maynard Award to recognize efforts "to improve biodiversity,

habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection."This year the Conservators recognized two individuals, Thomas Gwin and Jon Orren, for their work at Newton North and Newton South High Schools to educate and to inspire the next generation of Newton's conservationists and scientists.

Jon Orren is a chef of many hats. Jon is a teacher at Newton South High School (NSHS) for more than 200 students in culinary arts, nutrition, food science, and special education life skills classes. He also directs NSHS's Sustainable Agriculture Program and advises the students who manage the school's 2,500 square foot organic garden



and composting program. And if that's not enough, Jon is Education Committee Chairperson for the Newton Community Farm. Jon is a certified culinary instructor and food handler with many years of experience as a personal chef, food writer, and cook in numerous Boston and New York City gourmet restaurants. As part of his culinary adventures, he also launched, owned, and managed a successful specialty pickle business in NYC for many years. Jon is a graduate of Newton North High School and Columbia University.

Tom Gwin just can't seem to quit. Recently called out of retirement to be Newton North High School's Interim Science Department Head, Tom had been Principal at Winchester High School for 13 years. But before that he'd influenced thousands of Newton students as he taught at NNHS from 1986 to 2003, fifteen years of those as the Science Department Head, and for nearly nine years as a science teacher at F.A. Day Junior High School. Tom is always on the lookout for new ways to engage students with conservation and science, whether it is in his role as manager of the Newton North Science Department Blog or encouraging NNHS Advanced Placement Biology students in conducting a study of salamanders in Edmunds Park. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Tom has M.A. in Technical and Professional Writing from Northeastern University and an Ed.D in Educational Administration from Boston College.

### The Directors' Award

The Directors' Award for 2016 recognized Attorney Leigh Gilligan, a partner at the firm of McCarter & English in their Environment and Energy practice group, for her legal



expertise and guidance in creating the Conservation Restriction for the Waban Hill Reservoir. Lee was recognized as a Massachusetts *SuperLawyer* for 2004–2015 and is listed as a Leader in her Field by Chambers USA.

Beth Wilkinson, Leigh Gilligan

"Without a doubt, she was a super lawyer for the Newton

Conservators!" enthused Conservators president Beth Wilkinson as she presented the award, going on to explain, "I first heard about Leigh when fellow NC director Willis Wang recommended her as a perfect lawyer — and pro bono at that — to help us with the conservation restriction for the Waban Hill Reservoir."

The Conservators team, while committed, had no previous direct experience with drafting a conservation restriction. "She quickly explained what we needed to know, talked with the City's team on our behalf," said Wilkinson. "She worked with Bob Waddick to produce the first draft of the conservation restriction (called a CR by those "in the know") and then with the Conservators' board to work on the amendments that we felt would do most to protect the land for future generations."

But Leigh's support doesn't stop there. "Fortunately for us," said Wilkerson, "she has agreed to help us again with the CR for Nahanton Park." ■

- Margaret Doris

### 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**<sup>©</sup> 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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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Pete Gilmore, Margaret Doris, Brian Kinney, Philip Warburg, Jacob Stern and Beth Wilkinson. As always, thanks to Doug Leith for his excellent proofreading.



## June Doin' 2016!





### Our President's Reflections on the State of Our Organization

### From the Annual Meeting on May 11, 2016

2016 has been a busy and productive year for the Newton Conservators! Congratulations and thanks to all the members who have helped us to accomplish these valuable projects:

**June Doin'** — The first June Doin' took place at Nahanton Park soon after our 2015 annual meeting and was a terrific day that included a fishing competition, bird walks, a fern walk, three nature events led by Eric Olson, a planting opportunity from the Newton Community Farm, and an invasive plant pull.

This year's second June Doin' on Saturday, June 11, promises many of the same events — and even more varied events. Look for canoeing demos, a salamander hunt, tours of Woodcock Meadow.

**Woodcock Meadow** — We are very proud of this year's work at Woodcock Meadow. Trees had encroached on the native grassland so much that the meadow was beginning to disappear. The number of American woodcocks using the meadow for their amazing annual mating displays (see more information in our spring newsletter) was decreasing significantly.

We presented a three-part plan to remove trees from the meadow to the Parks and Rec Department and Commission and received the approval of both. We were delighted that the Forestry Department did the first large set of removals, and our team of volunteers spent two days removing brush.

The Woodcocks have already found the more open meadow and are again using it this spring.

Later this year, we hope to begin work with the Parks and Rec Department and the City Law Department on the conservation restriction for all of Nahanton Park.

**Waban Hill Reservoir** — After the annual meeting last year, the state approved the conservation restriction, which we helped draft, for Waban Hill Reservoir.

This spring, I worked with project leader Carol Schein and City Councilor Ruthanne Fuller to review the eight proposals that firms submitted to create a master plan for the property. Weston and Sampson emerged as the best team to do the project.

Carol Schein led an informative Conservators walk to this property on April 9.

Over the next few months, Weston and Sampson will conduct three public meetings to learn what city residents would like on the site. If you have an interest, please watch for the announcements and attend.

**Webster Woods** — Throughout the past year, we've worked with the Friends of Webster Woods to advocate for the preservation of the land that's been home to Temple Mishkan Tefila for decades. The temple had preserved the beautiful wooded land that forms a critical link between city and state conservation land and contains a vernal pool that is home to many salamanders in the spring.

Sale of the land to Boston College is scheduled to occur this month, and the future of the wooded section of the land is uncertain. We will continue to talk with city staff and to reach out to Boston College in hopes of maintaining a portion of this land as open space and preserving it as a biological access path between the city and state parcels.

**Cabot Park** — When the proposals for the renovation and expansion of Cabot School were unveiled last year, there were plans to put a teachers' parking lot in Cabot Park and to locate a paved roundabout for student drop-offs as well as paved playground areas in the park. After we participated in a small City subcommittee and presented our thoughts to members of the Parks and Rec. Commission, city councilors and the design team, we were delighted that the plans for a parking lot and the roundabout were dropped and that the paved area was reduced.



**Invasives Work** — Our invasives-removal season opened with three projects for Newton Serves and quickly progressed to many other sites in the city. Our volunteers started with the earliest garlic mustard and then expanded their work to include black swallow-wort, Japanese knotweed, and Oriental bittersweet.

The work is satisfying, and we see ongoing progress wherever we work. However, the invasive plants continue to spread throughout the city. Conservators groups will continue to work on removing invasives this summer, please join them if you can. (See the schedule in the spring newsletter.)

**Wider Horizons** — We joined with conservation groups throughout the state in the Climate Change Adaptation Coalition. The goal of the group is "the establishment of a comprehensive adaptation management plan in response to climate change" for Massachusetts. In addition, we joined with many of the same groups to support the Green Budget, which implements Governor Baker's suggestion that 1% of the state budget go toward environmental programs.

**Annual Tasks** — In addition, we did upkeep on the properties we own, did active monitoring of the city properties for which we hold the conservation restrictions, awarded grant money to teachers and students throughout the Newton schools and to the Environmental Science Summer Program, and led walks in many of the city's open spaces.

**The Future** — As much as we delight in all that members have done this year, we must keep our eyes turned to the future — to the work yet to be done. We have to continue the work we've started as well as the following projects:

- We are concerned about the future of 122 Islington Road, a 5.6 acre property with frontage on the Lakes Region of the Charles River adjoining Norumbega Park Conservation Area, and will assist efforts to obtain a conservation restriction, as listed on the City's Open Space Plan.
- Herrick Green at the Andover Newton Theological School also is at risk of being developed. We have given our support to the Friends of Herrick Green, and there will be more work to do.
- We would like to train people throughout Newton in what needs to be done to identify and remove invasive plants. There is more work to be done than our volunteers can manage. We have discussed taking on an intern to help us with that work.
- We would like to start discussion groups and projects with students at both of the city's high schools.

We Need You! If you would like to work on one of those projects—or have ideas of your own, please talk with a member of the Conservators' board.

Beth Wilkinson

### Thanks very much to our friends for their generous and continuing support!

#### **S**ponsors

Nahanton Paddler, Platinum Sponsor: Lucy Stair

Dolan Pond Nester, Gold Sponsor: Charles River Canoe and Kayak

*Crystal Lake Swimmer, Silver Sponsor:* Lalor and Patricia Burdick, Crystal Lake Conservancy, Shaevel & Krems, LLP, and The Village Bank

*Newton Community Farm Harvester, Friend of Newton Conservators:* City Councilor Ruthanne Fuller, Kevin Newman Landscape & Tree, Inc.





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# NEWSLETTER

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IN THE SPRING ISSUE:

A Few of Newton's Nesting Birds 1
President's Message
West Nile Virus in Newton
All About Zika
Herrick Green: A Landscape in Peril9
Webster Woods Update
Annual Meeting and Awards11
June Doin'
President's Year End Reflections



**Scarlet Tanager** *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