

President's Message

Dear Conservators,

Don't miss the final list of our fall walks at the end of this issue. Debuting this year is Brooks Mathewson's bird photography walk on October 20. (Please note that the time has changed since the preview list from the summer newsletter.) There are perennial favorites, too: Bill and Dottie Hagar's Canoe and Kayak Trip at Nahanton Park will start off the season on September 29. Haynes Miller and Pete Gilmore will lead bird walks in October; Henry Finch will take hikers along the Aqueducts. Chris Hepburn will lead the final event on October 27 with a modified version of his geology walk, which will extend beyond Newton's borders for the first time (see "Introduction to the Bedrock Geology of Newton elsewhere in this newsletter").



Eric Olson examines the leaves of this tree of heaven in Cold Spring Park.

The board of the Conservators is pleased to announce a new member: Barbara Bates, who wrote the cover article on Canada geese. Her skills as a naturalist already have been very helpful.

Throughout the summer, Conservators' volunteers have removed invasive plants in our open spaces, including Cold Spring Park, Woodcock Meadow at Nahanton Park, and Houghton Garden. As fall begins, the work will continue with groups of students and volunteers from the Charles River Watershed Association joining our volunteers.

You can see trees of heaven, black swallow-wort, and Japanese knotweed (and many more invasive plants) growing in most of our conservation areas — and also along highways, parking lots, and small open spaces throughout the city. It is impossible for our relatively small crew of volunteers to control those plants everywhere they grow. We are concentrating on several large areas, and even there, it sometimes feels like a losing battle. Please remove those plants where you find them. You can find more information about them on our website: <https://bit.ly/2C7IINV>

Many people are not aware of the problems posed by trees of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Here is an explanation from the Nature Conservancy:

"Why should we be concerned about the tree of heaven? **It is a prolific seed producer and can thrive in even the most unfavorable conditions with little management.** Its rapid growth also means that it can crowd out nearby native plant species, and its aggressive root system can cause damage to pavement, sewers and building foundations."

Trees of heaven can be found in Cold Spring Park — and many of Newton's smaller parks. If you want to see large stretches of them, just look as you drive along the Mass Pike into Boston. Once they are established, removing them is not as simple as just cutting them down. Herbicides are required. The best solution is to pull the young seedlings. The Penn State Extension provides a good guide to identifying the tree: <https://extension.psu.edu/tree-of-heaven>

Update on preserving Webster Woods: As I write this, the Webster Woods Advisory Panel is preparing for its September 4 meeting. The Conservation Commission submitted a pre-acquisition proposal to the Community Preservation Committee for funding for expert advice to help the City to obtain permanent protection for 300 Hammond Pond Parkway. The CPC public hearing is scheduled for September 13. This fall, the Advisory Panel will be soliciting public support for this process. More news to come.

Wishing you a fun fall in Newton's open spaces,

Beth Wilkinson