



Celebrating our 40th Anniversary!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Spring Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

April/May 2002

The Roadside Geology of Massachusetts

JAMES SKEHAN TO SPEAK AT CONSERVATORS SPRING LECTURE MAY 8th



James W. Skehan, Professor Emeritus of Geology at BC, will present "The Roadside Geology of Massachusetts" at the Newton Conservators Spring Lecture – May 8 at 7pm at Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library

Sparkling beaches, tidal estuaries, and granite headlands ornament the Massachusetts coast, while giant folds of gneiss and schist crisscross the interior, squeezed up from between colliding continents like toothpaste from a tube.

If you've sometimes wondered about local geologic formations, come hear geologist James Skehan speak on his book *The Roadside Geology of Massachusetts* on Wednesday, May 8,

7:00 PM at the Newton Free Library (330 Homer Street), in the third talk in the Newton Conservators Lecture Series.

Professor Skehan's book explains the geologic history behind the rocks and landforms visible from the state's highways, including such well-known historic features as Bloody Bluff, Beacon Hill, Plymouth Rock, and Walden Pond. Interspersed

through the guidebook are tales of pioneering geologists such as Harvard's Louis Agassiz, the first to propose that continental glaciers—not the remnants of Noah's Flood as early settlers had imagined—polished the state's bedrock and deposited its enormous boulders and sand plains. Numerous maps and photographs reveal ancient volcanoes, marble potholes, colorful minerals, dinosaur footprints, and the first commercial railroad, built with blocks of Quincy granite.

Longtime teacher and researcher James W. Skehan is a professor emeritus in the Department of Geology and Geophysics at Boston College and director emeritus of Weston Observatory, a research center for the study of earthquakes, the origin of mountain systems, and the movement of the Earth's tectonic plates. He holds a doctorate in geology

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SAVE THE DATE!

NEWTON CONSERVATORS ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

Wednesday, May 29th

6:15 PM Noyes Hall

Andover Newton Theological School

See page 3 for details

(Roadside Geology, continued from page 1)

from Harvard University as well as a master's in theology from Weston College. As a Jesuit priest and a geologist, he actively promotes dialogue on science and religion.

Professor Skehan is also co-author of the classic local guide *The Geology of Newton* which was published by the Newton Conservators. This publication covers such local geologic points of interest as Hammond Pond Reservation, the Webster Conservation area, Oak Hill, the Nahanton Street outcrops, Hemlock Gorge, the Claflin school, and Edmands Park. The geologic bedrock features of Newton were formed as part of a volcanic chain located on the margin of the Gondwanan Supercontinent (what is now the northern fringe of South America and Africa before they split apart).



Autographed copies of Professor Skehan's books will be available for purchase before and after the lecture.

In reviewing the Roadside Geology series (11/16/01), New York Times writer James Gorman had this to say, "Here are a few things to do on a highway trip: Play 20 Questions,

plug your kids into some sort of electronic anodyne, lose your mind. Here's another idea: Look for gneisses and amphibolites; seek out scarps, klippen and fault slices. Head for the Silurian boundary. Instead of feeling miserable and confined, feel the bones of the earth as you ride past the exposed evidence of the planet's history... That's roadside geology, road food for the mind and eye." After this lecture, you will never drive down the Mass Pike the same way again!

This lecture is co-sponsored by the Newton Free Library and the Newton Conservators. For further information, please call the Library at 617-552-7145 or the Conservators event coordinator, Ted Kuklinski at 617-969-6222 (dolanpond@aol.com).

Ted Kuklinski

President's Letter

Last weekend, I was invited to speak at the Massachusetts Land Trust Conference to tell the latest chapter in the story of the Newton Conservators. I described the many techniques we used to get the Community Preservation Act passed: website, coalition, endorsements, kick-off party, fundraising, lawn signs, "dear friend" letters, letters-to-the-editor campaign, gatherings in homes, brochures mailed to all voters, and email to recruit poll workers.

The audience was impressed. We couldn't do that much in our towns, some said. Yes, you can, I replied. If you have a group such as the Newton Conservators behind you, then you have all the support you need.

For us Newton Conservators, the CPA was just one more victory in a long series of specific campaigns over the last 40 years, each dedicated to ensure that treasured places are preserved and enhanced on our community. Our small group of a few Newton Conservators, along with others from historic preservation, recreation and housing groups, had never passed a tax increase. But then again, when the Conservators first advocated for the city to buy Webster Conservation area, the Conservators had never done a thing like THAT before either.

We've had many "firsts" since we started out and, with your help, we are prepared to take on the next "first", whatever that may be.

Lucy Caldwell-Stair

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in February, April, June, September and November. Deadlines for these issues are the fifth of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles by email in MS Word or rich text format to dgdickson@rcn.com. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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

Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Rep. Ruth Balser, Doug Dickson, Bill Hagar, Judy Hepburn, Rep. Kay Khan, Ted Kuklinski, Eric Reenstierna, Lucy Caldwell-Stair and Brian Yates. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading services.

ANNUAL DINNER—MAY 29

The annual meeting and dinner of the Newton Conservators will be held on Wednesday evening, May 29, 2002, in Noyes Hall at Andover Newton Theological School. The meeting will begin with a social hour at 6:15 PM, during which posters and other information will be displayed from the school educational programs the Conservators have funded over the past year. Dinner will be served at 7:00 PM and the evening program will begin at 8:00 PM.

A short business meeting will be followed by presentation of the annual Environmentalist of the Year Award and two Directors Awards (see following article.) The evening speaker—details of which were still being finalized as of this writing—will round out the program. All members will receive invitations by mail shortly.

Doug Dickson

Environmentalist of the Year **NEWTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE TO RECEIVE AWARD**

Three awards will be given at this year's annual meeting. The Environmentalist of the Year Award will be given this year to the Newton Community Preservation Alliance for their success in achieving passage of the Community Preservation Act in Newton. Made up of representatives of various groups, the Alliance worked for more than a year to build support for the CPA.

Led by Jim Broderick, the group included several members of the Newton Conservators. Larry Burdick served as treasurer and Mike Clarke, Lucy Caldwell-Stair, Eric Reenstierna, Annamaria Abernathy and Doug Dickson each played key roles. Other organizations represented in the Alliance were U-CHAN (United Citizens for Housing Affordability in Newton), the League of Women Voters Newton, the Green Decade Coalition/ Newton, and various historic preservation advocates. Newton Youth Soccer and Newton Girls' Soccer played a key role as well.

The Environmentalist of the Year has been awarded to groups three times in the past. In 1982, the Newton Commonwealth Improvement

Corporation was cited for its work in preserving the Newton Commonwealth golf course. In 1986, the group that produced Newton's first open space plan was recognized. And in 1996, the Commonwealth Avenue Task Force received the award for its successful design for renovation of this historic boulevard as a linear park.

Two other awards will be given in recognition of Conservation Restrictions given to the city. Alex and Ginny Wilmerding will be presented with a Directors Award for their generous gift of a CR on land adjacent to Webster Conservation Area.

CHP Trust, which owns land adjacent to Hammond Pond, will also receive a Directors Award for their gift of a CR along the shore of the pond. This will prevent future development on the pond frontage. The Conservators recognized Alderman Lisle Baker last year for his work in negotiating this restriction with CHP Trust.

Doug Dickson

Jim Broderick to Receive EPA Award

Jim Broderick will be honored with an Environmental Merit Award from the EPA for his leadership of the Community Preservation Alliance.

Jim was instrumental in organizing the Alliance. He pulled together a diverse group of interests, including advocates for open space, recreation, affordable housing, and historic preservation. Jim served as Chairman of the Alliance and spoke in favor of adoption of the Act at neighborhood meetings, before the Board of Aldermen, and on Newton Cable TV. Jim was diligent in educating the public about the intricacies of the Act and how it would affect Newton. He organized the funding effort for pamphlets, yard signs, and a mailing that reached all Newton residents.

No one knew how the vote would turn out. With the economy in recession, many expected the voters might turn down a spending appeal. The vote was close, but the supporters prevailed. Jim's hard work and the hard work of the Alliance he chaired paid off, and as a result Newton can preserve more of what makes it a livable community for all of us.

Jim will be honored in a ceremony at Faneuil Hall on May 1.

Eric Reenstierna

Mayor Cohen Meets with Board on Override Referendum

Most of the media's coverage of the upcoming Proposition 2½ override referendum has focused on Newton's schools, firefighters and police, and little has been said about the impact on our parks and conservation lands. Mayor David Cohen attended the April 3rd meeting of the Board of the Newton Conservators in order to speak in support of the override. In his remarks, he addressed some of the related open space issues.

The Mayor said that failure to pass the override would cripple the Planning Department in its ability to go forward with Newton's Comprehensive Plan. He had hoped to add a part-time staff person to work on both the Open Space Plan and the Comprehensive Plan, and this position would not be possible without the override. Although Newton recently completed a Phase 1 (draft) Open Space Plan, which was mainly for the purpose of continuing our grant eligibility from the State, further plans to move to Step 2 and create a thorough and comprehensive Open Space Plan would be seriously jeopardized.

The \$25,000 for upkeep of conservation land that has been budgeted annually for the last several years would also be scrapped. The Parks and Recreation Department, the Mayor said, has already had "to nibble at its recreational programs." He praised the job Parks and Recreation Commissioner Fran Towle has done at keeping programs and maintenance running despite cuts. However, without an override, Newton Soccer and Little Leagues would have to pay to get their playing fields lined and there would be less field maintenance, including less frequent grass cutting and clean-up of debris left around the fields.

While Mayor Cohen spoke mainly about the cuts that would occur if the override failed, one Board member asked the Mayor whether passage of the override would provide any money for new initiatives for parks and open space, beyond catch-up funding for already delayed maintenance. The Mayor made no promises in this regard, but he expressed his view that the schools would not continue to need the large budget hikes seen in the last few years. The three reasons he cited were that the student population is plateauing, classes have

now been reduced to appropriate sizes, and the spike in special education growth appears to be reaching its natural limit. The Mayor expressed hope and expectation that the passage of the override and an end to the current recession will bring in money for modest new initiatives on the city side of the budget.

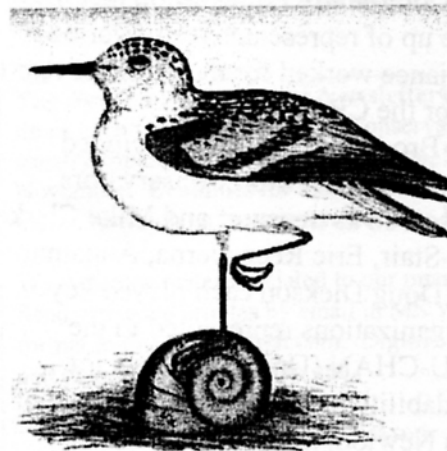
The Board of the Newton Conservators has decided to remain neutral and take no position on the override referendum. But we strongly urge all members to educate themselves on this issue and cast their ballots in the April 30 special election.

Judy Hepburn

Jackson Homestead Opens New Exhibit **WALKS AND TALKS WITH NATURE:** **CHARLES MAYNARD** *Newton's Naturalist*

On April 20, the Jackson Homestead, Newton's museum and historical society, opens a new exhibit on naturalist Charles Johnson Maynard. By the turn of the 20th century, Maynard was a nationally known ornithologist, respected for his research and various natural history publications.

Charles Maynard was born in West Newton in 1845, attended Newton public schools and began life as a farmer. Self-educated in natural history, he conducted extensive research on the vocal organs of birds. He published a number of books, newsletters



A plate drawn by Charles Maynard

and articles in scientific journals. His bird books, in particular, are notable as the first to use color plates, drawn and colored by the author employing a process he originated. In addition to books on birds,

his works included a naturalist's guide, a manual of taxidermy, and books on butterflies.

(Continued on page 5)

Maynard helped found the Newton Natural History Society in 1878, an organization formed in part to introduce natural history into the curriculum of Newton's public schools. He developed a new method of instruction that required students to observe facts in nature and to reason about those facts and form their own conclusions. Maynard published a magazine for teachers of primary grades called *Nature Study in Schools*.

A self-educated naturalist with a deep love of nature, the multi-faceted Maynard made his living as a taxidermist. If he were alive today, he would be leading Spring and Fall Walks for the Newton Conservators, among his other pursuits.

The new exhibit is co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and includes items from the collections of the Audubon Society, the Peabody Essex Museum and the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University in addition to material from the Jackson Homestead's own collection.

Doug Dickson

***Look for the exhibit about the
NEWTON CONSERVATORS
In recognition of our 40th Anniversary
When you visit the
JACKSON HOMESTEAD
This spring and summer!***

Report of Land Trust Group

The Newton Conservators' Land Trust Group met in February and March and has been reaching out to landowners who seek advice for open space protection.

The group met recently with Helen Heyn, who possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of the various parcels in Newton that remain unprotected, including many that have geologic significance and wildlife habitat value. Helen gave the group background information on a number of parcels that have been on the city's open space list for many years. Helen has been active in conservation in Newton for decades and remembers the period from the 1960s through the 1980s, when funding was

more available for acquisitions than it has been in recent years. She especially stressed the need for protection of land that is valuable for flood control and strongly recommended an effort to protect the West Kessler Woods on the city's south side, a parcel adjacent to Saw Mill Brook that is important to the prevention of flooding in that area.

Various members of the group attended a statewide land trust meeting in Worcester, visited potential acquisitions in the field, met with land owners, and joined the Community Preservation Committee at its initial meetings. Funding from the CPC will facilitate acquisitions that have been "on hold" for more than a decade. The intent of the land trust group is to seek gifts of land or easements when these serve a landowner's purpose. The group will work with the city and the Community Preservation Committee to make purchases when purchase is the appropriate method of acquisition.

Eric Reenstierna

CPC CONTINUES TO MEET Begins study of needs, possibilities and resources of the city

The Community Preservation Committee has held three meetings as of this writing and has others scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, Thursday, May 2 and Thursday, May 16. The meeting on April 23 will focus on historic preservation activities and needs in Newton. Past meetings have focused on housing, open space and recreation. In these sessions, the committee has attempted to come up to speed on current planning and activity in the various spending categories designated by the law.

From this base of knowledge, the CPC will determine what gaps exist, how best to close those gaps and how to set spending priorities in the four areas covered by the CPA.

In May, the CPC will begin to wrestle in earnest with organizational issues. How will it reach out to the public? How will proposals be assessed and recommendations made to the Board of Aldermen? When will public hearings be held and how will the need for staffing be determined? The answers to these and many other open questions will need to be finalized in the near term if the committee's desire to move aggressively in the development of a

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(CPC Meetings, continued from page 5)

funding plan is to be realized. Initial funds become available on July 1, 2002, and the 100% state match will come on October 15th.

At its second meeting, the committee elected Jeffrey Sachs, an appointee from the Housing Authority, as its chairman. Doug Dickson, a mayoral appointee for recreation, was elected vice-chair.

CPC meetings are open to the public and all are invited to attend. An opportunity is available at every meeting for comments, questions and suggestions from anyone who chooses to speak. Come make your views heard.

Doug Dickson

MISSION

Newton Conservators, Inc.

The Newton Conservators promote 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 40 years ago in June 1961.

Invasive Species Bill Filed

Rep. Kay Khan provided this update on the critical issue of invasive species control and legislative efforts to provide funding for these programs:

"The control of non-native invasive vegetation in our waterways has been one of my leading environmental priorities throughout my four terms in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. In my first days in the House in 1995 I joined other elected officials and residents of Newton in working to secure state funding for cleaning out non-native plants from the Charles River Lakes District. Ever

since, I have helped lead the effort to keep the Lakes District free of non-native vegetation that spreads aggressively and chokes the waterway if left unattended.



Harvesting of water chestnuts, an invasive non-native species, in the Lakes District of the Charles River

"Through the years, with financial and logistical support from the MDC, we have made a great deal of progress in curbing the annual regeneration of non-native species in the Charles. As my efforts have proceeded there has been increasing recognition throughout the Commonwealth of the problem of invasive non-native species. Concern about this issue has grown as the problem of non-native vegetation invading waterways has become more widespread in Massachusetts. As a result, state legislation seeking to address this issue on a statewide level is now under consideration on Beacon Hill. The proposals that are moving forward on Beacon Hill will build upon the success we have worked to achieve in Newton and play an important part in long-term efforts to improve and maintain the health of lakes and rivers across Massachusetts.

"An Environmental Bond bill that is before the House of Representatives would provide significant funding for statewide efforts on 'prevention, control and elimination of invasive species' as part of the Commonwealth's watershed initiative. In addition, S.2025 has been filed in the Legislature entitled, 'An Act to Create an Exotic Aquatic Species Control Program.' These measures would begin

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(Invasive Species, continued from page 6)

to provide the financial resources and organizational support within the executive branch that is necessary to establish a coordinated effort to keep our lakes and rivers safe for recreation and healthy for wildlife and native vegetation.

"The prioritizing of invasive aquatic plant control has received the endorsement of experts in watershed protection. A Blue Ribbon Committee on Lakes and Ponds, convened by the State Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, produced an Action Strategy that included invasive species management as one of six leading issues.

"In addition, the federal government has authorized \$50 million to the Clean Lakes Protection program for the protection and restoration of the nation's lakes, rivers and ponds. A portion of this money, when appropriated, will be available to the Commonwealth for the cleanup of invasive plants in rivers and lakes.

"I am proud that the burgeoning statewide movement to control non-native aquatic vegetation began in our own backyard. I will continue to work with Newton residents and public officials on keeping Newton's lakes and waterways healthy and with environmentalists from around the State to expand the campaign to prevent the spread of harmful aquatic non-native species."

Rep. Kay Khan

Brief Updates

News of interest from various sources

Grant Approved for Burr School

The Newton Conservators have provided initial funding of \$880 for a Garden Classroom project at Burr Elementary School. The project involves the development of a garden linked to education programs in the school. The Garden Classroom will be a multifaceted, self-sustaining project aimed at giving all of the Burr students an opportunity for environmental education in a unique setting, a living laboratory that fosters meaningful study of science. The garden plots and outdoor classroom will allow students to learn the fundamentals of scientific study, organic gardening, environmental stewardship, and more. By experiencing nature first hand, the children's curiosity and zest for learning

will flourish, as will their appreciation and responsibility for nature and all living things.

Bill Hagar, Chair, Grants Committee

Hemlock Gorge Annual Cleanup

The Friends of Hemlock Gorge will hold its annual clean-up on Saturday, April 20, starting at 10:00 AM in the meadow opposite the Mill Falls complex. The Friends will also cover the circular dam in the CRWA Run of the River on April 28. For more information, visit the Friends of Hemlock Gorge website at www.channnel1.com/users/hemlock.

Brian Yates

Update on The Terraces

A proposal by the developer of The Terraces to pay a fraction of the cost of replacement trees required under the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance was denied by the city. More than 600 protected trees will be removed from the south side of Institution Hill in Newton Centre to make way for the project. The developer argued that the Ordinance was not intended for projects of this scope and that an exception should be granted. Following the denial, the developer submitted an appeal, then withdrew it, apparently intending to re-survey the site in an effort to reduce its liability under the law. This will be an interesting test of the city's resolve in enforcing the Tree Preservation Ordinance, which was clearly meant to address projects like this one. In fact, this was one of the projects used as an example when the Ordinance was being debated before the Board of Alderman.

Doug Dickson

No Net Loss Bill Passes Senate

Rep. Ruth Balser writes that S.1109, the No Net Loss bill she has championed, was recently passed by the Senate. The bill was weakened a bit, as that was the only way to get it passed. Some options were given to school construction in very dense districts. The purpose of the bill is to require that any conversion of public open space for other uses, such as the construction of schools, be offset by the creation of an equivalent amount of open space elsewhere in the community. Statewide environmental organizations approved the changes for purposes of political pragmatism. Now, it is in

(Continued on page 8)

EVENTS CALENDAR

Tuesday, April 23, 7:30 PM
Room 209, Newton City Hall
Community Preservation Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 24, 7:30 PM
Room 202, Newton City Hall
Newton Conservators Board Meeting

Monday, April 29, 7:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
The Green Decade Coalition/Newton ENVIRONMENTAL SPEAKER SERIES
BioTech Food: Dishing Up Trouble
Martha Herbert, MD, PhD, of MGH;
Jonathan King, PhD, of MIT; Linda Setchell

Wednesday, May 8, 7:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
NEWTON CONSERVATORS LECTURE
The Roadside Geology of Massachusetts
James Skehan, Professor Emeritus, BC

Thursday, May 2, 7:30 PM
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Thursday, May 16, 7:30 PM
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Monday, May 20, 7:00 PM
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Newton's Drinking Water System
Frank DePaola and Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA, and Bob Rooney, Newton DPW

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7:00 PM Dinner, 8:00 PM Program
Noyes Hall, Andover Newton Theological School
NEWTON CONSERVATORS ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

If your mailing label is marked in pink, your membership has expired. Please renew today!



*Celebrating our
40th anniversary*

Newton Conservators Membership Form

PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • 617-969-8661 • www.newtonconservators.org

- ☐ YES, I'd like to start/renew my one-year membership with the Newton Conservators to help preserve open space in Newton. I'll receive informative newsletters and emails and be invited to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities.
- ☐ I'd like to make an additional tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Newton Conservators: \$ _____

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- ☐ Individual member \$25
☐ Family member \$35
☐ Sustaining member \$50
☐ Donor \$75
☐ Patron \$100

All amounts are tax deductible

NAME _____

STREET _____

VILLAGE _____

ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

April/May Newsletter

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MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- | | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual member | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family member | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining member | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor | \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100 |

All amounts are tax deductible

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____ ZIP _____

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

April/May Newsletter



the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

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