



NEWSLETTER

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

SPRING ISSUE

WWW.NEWTONCONSERVATORS.ORG

APRIL/MAY 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD GOES TO CRYSTAL LAKE CONSERVANCY



The Newton Conservators' 2009 Environmentalist of the Year Award goes to the Crystal Lake Conservancy, for its advocacy for a grand vision for the open space around Newton's great pond, Crystal Lake. The Newton Conservators applaud the work of the Crystal Lake Conservancy in fostering the acquisition of the new parcels at Crystal Lake, ensuring the long term health of Crystal Lake, and supporting the improvement and maintenance of an expanded lakeside park. The award will be presented at the Conservators' annual dinner on Wednesday, May 27 at Post 440 in Nonantum.

Crystal Lake is one of Newton's great public resources, providing opportunities for swimming, boating, walking,

fishing, and simply contemplating nature. In the last two years, the timing was right for the City to expand its public holdings on the lakeshore. The City acquired one property at 20 Rogers Street via eminent domain with the use of CPA funds. The City then acquired a second property at 230 Lake Avenue, which was the "missing link" in connecting these holdings with the City-owned land at Levingston Cove.

Throughout what became a contentious process involving the Community Preservation Committee, aldermanic committees, and the full Board of Aldermen, the members of the Crystal Lake Conservancy were tireless in their efforts to bring about a contiguous Crystal Lake park. For

their part, the Newton Conservators participated in the process and helped to fund a Crystal Lake Master Plan. Given the new property configurations at Crystal Lake, a task force has been working with a design firm to develop a new plan including a redesigned bathhouse, swimming area, and reconfigured parking lot. The Crystal Lake Conservancy has played a key role in developing this plan with its citizen based advocacy and fundraising.

Charter members of the Crystal Lake Conservancy have been active in the Crystal Lake Task Force - Janice Bourke (who is chair of the CLTF and is also involved with the Newton Highlands Area Council), Robert Fizek (a local architect whose website at www.betterlake.com and artful renderings encouraged discussion), Schuyler Larrabee (whose experience in reuse planning for the state was invaluable), Srdjan Nedeljkovic (a lake advocate, researcher into historical ice-out on Crystal Lake, and physician), and Barbara Wales (a real estate expert who provided helpful property valuation information). Members of the Crystal Lake Task Force, the CPC, the Board of Aldermen (especially Ward 6), the Newton Planning Department, and Newton Parks and Recreation Department, all played key roles in bringing about the new vision for Crystal Lake.

Donations to the Crystal Lake Conservancy may be currently directed to the Newton Conservators, who have agreed to act as the interim agent while the group achieves non-profit status. Contributions may be sent to The Newton Conservators, PO Box 590011, Newton MA 02459 with "Crystal Lake Conservancy" noted on the check.

Also at the annual dinner, the Conservators' Charles Maynard Award will be given to David Backer, for his energy and dedication to the Environmental Science Program, conducted each summer with the participation of students. David has provided crucial leadership for a program that benefits the city by helping young eco-students explore environmental studies in the field.

Directors' Awards will be given to Carol Stapleton of the Newton Parks and Recreation Department, Aldermanic Board Chairman Lisle Baker, and former Conservator Board of Directors member Sue Avery.

Dinner will be provided by Sabra Restaurant of Newton Centre. Adele Dryer will entertain on piano. Tickets may be ordered online at www.newtonconservators.org/events/dinner2009invite.htm.

- Ted Kuklinski and Eric Reenstierna
- composite photo on page 1 by Dan Brody

THE NEWTON ALMANAC

The Newton Conservators' Land Management Committee is writing a book featuring the native plants and animals found in Newton's open spaces.

This book will be an almanac showing what to look for in Newton's open spaces on a monthly and seasonal basis. It will include native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, ferns, fungi, birds, butterflies, dragonflies, bees and mammals.

The Newton Conservators would like community members to help create this almanac by contributing photographs they have taken of native New England plants and animals found within the City of Newton. The Newton Conservators will not pay for photographs, but will give credit to photographers whose photographs are chosen to appear in the almanac.

The almanac needs clear, close-up digital photographs that show the unique characteristics of each particular plant, insect or animal. If you have non-digital photographs (from the olden days) you can have them scanned to create a digital JPEG (".jpg") file before submitting them.



Great Spangled Fritillary (photo by Pete Gilmore)

Label your submissions with the name of the plant or animal and your initials. Here is an example of how we would like files to be named: "red-tailed hawk BS.jpg" – with the BS the photographer's initials. We need to be

able to easily identify the subject of the photograph and the photographer from the file name. We do not plan to include invasive, non-native plants, or plants that do not grow in New England.

The almanac will also show scenic views of our open spaces in Newton. If you have photographs of an open space such as a conservation area or the Charles River that you would like to submit please label the photograph with the name of the open space and your initials such as “cold spring park BS.jpg”.

We plan to print the Newton Almanac in time for the 2009 winter holidays, so there is still time for you to go out into our open spaces and take photographs. If you have photographs that you would like to donate please send them to bsw1@comcast.net.

- Beth Schroeder
President

LOWER FALLS BRIDGE UPDATE

Alison Leary of the Conservators' Board of Directors has written in The Newton Tab about the Lower Falls Bridge and trail proposal. The article that follows updates her earlier work.

The Newton Conservators has come out in support of the railroad bridge conversion project in Newton Lower Falls. Local residents have raised concerns about the project, including the prohibitive cost, predictions that such a pathway would “destroy the village character,” or that it would adversely impact the environment. Others are concerned that it would add to parking problems in the area. Still others cite pending lawsuits, or question why we are rushing into this without more studies being done. Has this project turned into our “bridge to nowhere”?

First, let's look at the facts. The \$1.6 million estimate that has been quoted would be the cost of a trail segment going all the way from Wellesley to the Riverside MBTA station. The design and restoration of the bridge itself has been estimated by the DCR to cost \$242,000. This would all be paid by the DCR. The Newton Lower Falls bridge project would only involve DCR property up to Concord Street. The \$400,000 is the cost estimate of both restoring the bridge and creating a path to the bridge from both sides of the river from Wellesley to Concord Street only. This would include either a grass pathway or putting down a

very eco-friendly, durable pervious concrete or asphalt surface, which is yet to be determined.

The Wellesley side of the trail will connect to 25 miles of trails which are highly valued and used by both Wellesley residents and people from the surrounding towns. On the Wellesley side of the Charles River, National Development, the company that is developing the old Grossman's property, has plans to build a direct access path from the bridge to Washington Street with easy access to the Wellesley trails, and a river walk that will connect the bridge trail to existing DCR trail land. On the Newton side of the river, the trail will connect to an existing DCR trail to the Leo J. Martin Golf Course. The goal is to provide a wide ranging network of trails that will connect to already existing Newton, Wellesley, Weston and Natick trail systems. Not everything can be done at once, but this project is part of the larger statewide greenway trails system and has the support of many highly capable individuals and organizations. This includes the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, the Wellesley Board of Selectman, the Wellesley Trails Committee, the Charles River Watershed Association, the Newton Conservators, the League of Women Voters, The Newton Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force, and the DCR.



photo by Dan Brody

The lawsuit that some residents had filed stating that they own the land has already been found to be without merit by the Massachusetts courts. The land has been “abandoned” for so many years that it is easy to see how abutters come to think of the land as their own. Often these public rights-of-way become a sort “no man's land,” littered with yard waste and compost (which can actually be good habitat for sparrows and wrens and small mammals like raccoons, skunks and red foxes). The Conservators take the position that we can both optimize

wildlife habitat with plantings that encourage greater species diversity and create a pedestrian friendly pathway.

The benefits to the community and the environment far outweigh any risks. Any transportation corridor that does not involve motorized vehicles makes sense. This country has spent the last 100 years prostrating itself to the automobile at great cost to the environment, our economy and our own health. Let's look at the big picture and realize now is the time to invest in our future by reducing our dependence on motor vehicles and fossil fuels.

Are we rushing into this prematurely? The bridge has been abandoned since the 1970s. The DCR and the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission have spent many months on this project. The feasibility study is 90% complete. The state has done many rail to trail conversions already. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Living near this type of pathway almost always enhances property values. It will be a wonderful addition to the unique character of the village of Lower Falls, and to our surrounding communities.

Recently, the DCR has included the restoration of footbridges in the state funded Accelerated Bridge Program that allows for a \$3 billion investment over the next eight years in Massachusetts bridges. One of the reasons the DCR identified the old Lower Falls truss bridge as needing improvements is the fact that it is currently a safety hazard. Despite attempts at blocking and fencing off the bridge, it continues to be used as a footbridge, and the need for improvements really becomes a public safety issue, as much as an access issue.

DCR plans to host a public meeting in early May to solicit public input on the proposed design for three Newton footbridges and the Lower Falls Rail Bridge Conversion project.

- Alison Leary



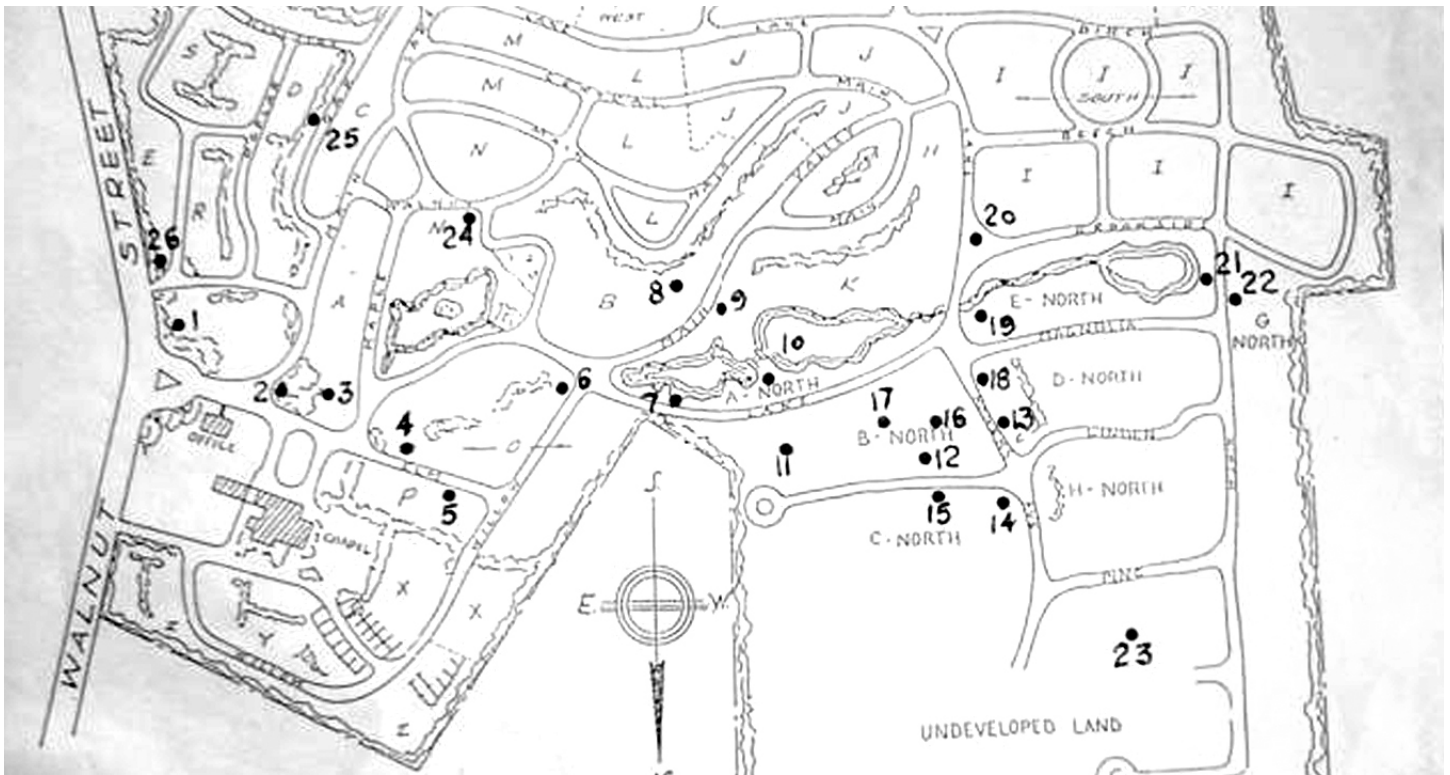
EURASIAN TEAL AT COLD SPRING PARK

A Eurasian Teal was discovered in Cold Spring Park. The discovery was made recently by Pete Gilmore, Newton Conservator birder and Board Member. The Teal, together with a few Mallards and a pair of Wood Ducks, was present through much of March and was quite striking. It was resident in Cold Spring Park along the trail which goes from the end of the Beacon Street parking lot across the footbridge at the end of the soccer field. The trail has a pool on the right side and a swampy area on the left. The Teal had been feeding and resting in the pool, usually toward the back. The visiting Teal has been delighting numerous birders and photographers (some with very long lenses). It does not appear to be a shy bird and was very active, feeding with the much larger mallards.

- Ted Kuklinski



Teal (right) at Cold Spring (photo by Mike Simons)



A QUIET PLACE TO WALK IN ALL SEASONS

Frank Howard chose the Newton Cemetery as his adopted space. This is his "Adopt-a-Space" article, one in a continuing series by Members of the Conservators' Board.

Thoreau wrote, "live each season as it passes." A lovely place to enjoy at least once each season is the Newton Cemetery. After a visit to the Newton Free Library, a short walk south on Walnut Street brings you to the entrance of about one hundred acres of open space. Awaiting you are four ponds fed by Cold Spring Brook, 26 specimen trees, and graceful hillsides. One of the trees, the Tulip Tree, produces yellow flowers in the spring. Migrating warblers are often seen there flitting about after insects. In the summer colorful wood ducks may be seen in the ponds. Then the Blue Atlas Cedar is at its peak color. In the fall the Marshall Maple is brightly colored. In the winter a Red Tail Hawk might be seen in the sky over the Paper Bark Maple with snow dusting its cinnamon bark. At www.newcemcorp.org, a photo tour of the beautiful waterways, trees and grounds in different seasons can be viewed. In addition, the hours of visitation as well as other information are available. Visitors are welcome. At the office just inside the gate visitors can obtain a free map

locating the 26 specimen trees with their common as well as scientific names.

Author Thelma Fleishman has written *The History of the Newton Cemetery*. It is an engaging story, rich in information, starting with the good works of twelve Newton residents. The Newton Cemetery Association was organized in 1855. This group and those who followed them were thoughtful and generous community leaders.

In 1860 the Board of Trustees formally adopted the name "The Newton Cemetery." It was designed as a landscaped garden following the example of the Mt. Auburn Cemetery. They expanded the size and services of The Newton Cemetery and hired Mr. Henry Ross as Superintendent, who served with distinction for thirty-nine years. He was closely associated with The Massachusetts Horticulture Society. He and his staff made many improvements over the years. The introduction of perpetual care did much to insure the proper maintenance of individual graves. In time, the Trustees changed the exclusively Anglo-Saxon Protestant requirement to purchase a plot to the present "space available to persons of all creeds, denominations and races."

Author's Note: I wish to thank Susan Abele, Curator of Newton History Museum, for the opportunity to read Thelma Fleischman's manuscript, which is the basis of this article. Wishing to honor Thelma for her contributions to Newton History, friends and colleagues have formed a

committee to prepare *The History of the Newton Cemetery* for publication in 2009. *Thelma's marker in The Newton Cemetery* reads "Historian of Newton." For others wishing to remember *Thelma*, donations in her name may be made to the *Thelma Fleischman Archives Fund* in care of the *Newton Historical Society*, 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02458

- Frank A. Howard

GARDENING NOTES FOR SPRING

Spring is when our minds turn to gardening. When you visit the nursery to purchase plants it's very important to read the plant tags. Check for light conditions, soil/moisture preferences, height and width. Plants need to be located in the appropriate light conditions – sun, partial shade or shade. Some plants that grow in shade also flourish in sunlight and may produce more flowers in the sun. But it's important to know that they grow in the shade, because many plants do not. Plants may need damp soil or well-drained soil to thrive. Damp soil may be a little shady hollow in your backyard. Well-drained soil may be slightly sloped.



Second, remember that plants grow! Just because plants are small when you buy them doesn't mean they stay that size. If a plant grows to be 10' or higher put it along your property border, not under your windows. Plants that grow up to 4' high are best in front of your windows. If a plant becomes 6' wide, plant it 3' or 4' from the house or sidewalk so it still fits once it matures. An ornamental tree may grow to be 15' wide. If you plant it 3' from the house, only one side will grow and the tree will crowd

your house. Buying plants that fit the space eliminates crowding, letting plants take their natural shapes without having to be pruned. Plants shouldn't all end up looking like beach balls from pruning. Many shrubs have wonderful waterfall shapes that we don't get to see when they are repeatedly pruned.

Plant odd numbers. Use the 1, 3, 5 rule - use 1 large plant, 3 medium plants, and 5 small plants to make your garden plots more interesting. This is true for trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses. If you have one oak tree, three witch hazels and five hydrangeas in your garden, it becomes more interesting. Or one big ornamental grass, three medium grasses and five low grasses. If planting beds are narrow, have a group of three plants, then a single plant followed by another group of three. Use single plants as accents.

If you have three plants place them in a triangle, not a straight line. Read plant tags and allow enough room. It's all right if they grow together a bit, but you may also need to make your plant border deeper. Plant borders don't need to be three-foot-deep strips around your house and your property line. Eliminate some of your lawn and have borders curve around larger shrubs, groupings of shrubs and ornamental trees. Curved borders are more interesting and naturalistic.

All of the garden layers should be present in your garden: high canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, perennials and ornamental grasses, and lastly lawns or moss. Check your garden to see if one or more of these layers is missing. Some gardens have only two layers such as high canopy and grass. Others only have large shrubs and grass. This may be what is missing from your garden.

When you order plants from a nursery, use botanical names. A common name may vary, but a botanical name will give you a specific plant with specific characteristics. For example, *Clethra alnifolia* grows to be 10' high but *Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird' grows to be 24" high. The 10' high variety can go along property borders but only dwarf varieties should go below your windows. You won't need to prune *Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird'. Don't let pronunciation of botanical names intimidate you. Even experts often pronounce botanical names differently. Just take a stab at it. Typically pronounce each letter as you see it.

New plants need to be watered thoroughly once a day for the first week. After the first week, they will need water once a week for the entire growing season (unless there has been plenty of rain). After the first growing season, water if there is a drought. When a tree is brought to your

house from a nursery, up to 90% of its roots may have been removed. Newly planted trees are trying to survive and reestablish themselves using only 10% of their normal root systems. Plants will not survive if they are not watered. During the first year plants are said to “sleep.” They may not grow very much: they are trying to survive the move. In the second year plants begin to “creep.” The roots begin to spread out. In the third year, plants “leap” - meaning they are established and growing naturally.

Gardens evolve over time. Young shrubs and trees need open space so they have room to grow. You can use mulch, perennials or groundcovers to cover these open spaces until the shrubs and trees have reached their mature sizes.

Some plants should be removed. Invasive plants such as barberry, burning bush, Norway maple saplings and privet hedges should be removed. These plants have spread into open spaces in Newton and are pushing native plants out of their habitats. Native plant alternatives are beautiful and improve the ecosystem on your property.

Plants that were put in many years ago may now be pushing against your house, blocking first floor windows, walkways and driveways. You may go out and prune them regularly, but it is a losing battle. Plants that grow too big for their space should be removed. Think of overgrown plants like milk in your refrigerator. They have an expiration date and many of them are way past that date – take them out and start fresh. Plants are not window treatments. Buy draperies or shades if you need privacy rather than burying your windows behind giant shrubbery. You don’t need a 16’ wide and 10’ tall yew in front of your windows.

Happy gardening.

- Beth Schroeder
bsw1@comcast.net

BACKYARD BIRDING

I have a very modest, bare bones backyard, without a single tree, in one of the more treeless parts of Newton. Fortunately, there are a couple of trees that hang over our fence from the neighbors’ yards. There is a crabapple tree which most of my family complains about because of all the dropped fruit in the yard during the late summer. But I like it because it does provide food and cover for the birds that frequent my feeders. And I also like it because I saw a beautiful magnolia warbler foraging in it one spring day,

and any tree that attracts a magnolia warbler is always an asset. There is also a prickly ash tree that hosts a great blackberry vine, which also provides plentiful fruit in the summer. The blackberries attract the robins, cedar waxwings and the beautiful black and orange northern orioles. Last summer I planted a “bird and butterfly friendly” garden, and to the delight of myself and my children, we grew some towering sunflowers which attracted goldfinches and downy woodpeckers.

In the fall, winter and early spring I feed the birds. I throw my old Christmas tree out in the backyard, which provides a little more cover through the winter. I put up several feeders: a suet feeder to attract the woodpeckers and the nuthatches, a tube feeder which seems to attract primarily the house sparrows, and a more recently added “clinger” feeder for those agile chickadees, titmice and nuthatches. The clinger feeder was an effort to thwart the mobs of house sparrows that gang around my feeders like a plague of locusts. For those of you who don’t know, the ubiquitous house sparrow and the European starling are non-native species that were introduced in the mid-19th century and have since spread across the entire North American continent. To the dismay of many birders and conservationists we have seen the negative impact this has had on our native birds, notably the beloved eastern bluebird. The mistake of introducing these invasive species was quickly realized. One early conservationist, W.T. Hornaday, wrote of the house sparrows, “daily we see the unclean little wretches grubbing in the filth and microbes of the street, where no American bird will humble itself to feed.” I guess they were not his favorite bird either.

As a bird lover, I really have a hard time liking those gangs of noisy, piggy little European upstarts who just sit at the feeders stuffing themselves. They’re not like the chickadees and the nuthatches, who fly in to grab a sunflower seed and fly politely off to a nearby branch to enjoy their treat. Or the dark eyed juncos and song sparrows that concern themselves with the fallen seed on the ground. No, the sparrows just sit there and gorge themselves. I thought the clinger feeder would discourage the plump little sparrows, since there is no perch, and they are not quite as agile as the typical clinger birds. Well, after I hung it up, they figured out in about 90 seconds how to manage that feeder too, though they prefer the tube feeder with the comfortable perches so they don’t have to work so hard.

Sometimes I do have a grudging admiration for these persistent little birds that have so boldly taken over new territory and have become wildly successful at the same time. It is not unlike our own story. They have proven themselves hardy and adaptable; the consummate

generalists, they can eat almost anything and live almost anywhere. So now we have to put up with them, much like nature puts up with us-- the real blight on the earth.

I have compromised by putting the cheap store brand seed in the tube feeder, and putting the good stuff in the clinger feeder. So at least the other birds get a chance, and I spend less time fuming at my back window.

- Alison Leary

SPRING LECTURE

The trees of the Garden City of Newton have been under attack! Maybe you remember the invasion of the Winter Moths and the defoliation they have caused in the past few years, or perhaps you have been dismayed by the cottony evidence of the Woolly Adelgid on your hemlocks. Maybe you were wondering if the dreaded Asian Long Horned Beetle wreaking such havoc in Worcester could show up in Newton. Get answers to these concerns on Monday, May 18, at a lecture by an expert on the subject, Julie Coop, the Manager of Plant Health at Boston's tree treasure trove, the world famous Arnold Arboretum. Ms. Coop will discuss tree health issues, such as those above and what we should be doing about them.



Julie Coop

Julie Coop began her career at the Arnold Arboretum in 1988 as a grounds crew member at the Case Estates in Weston. She has worked as assistant superintendent and then superintendent of grounds and is currently the Arboretum's manager of plant health. She is a certified arborist with the International Society of Arboriculture and the Massachusetts Arborist Association and is a Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist.

This event is part of the Newton Conservators Lecture Series, a cooperative effort with the Newton Free Library. The lecture has been organized by the Newton Tree Conservancy, a new non-profit working along with the Arnold Arboretum to raise public awareness of the importance of Newton's urban forest.

The date and place are as follows:

Newton Conservators Spring Lecture
"Tree Pests and Tree Health:
Woody Plant Pests and Diseases"

Speaker: Julie Coop

Monday, May 18th 7:00 pm

Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium

Free to the Public

OTHER EVENTS

Sunday, April 26
Newton SERVES

Save the date for Newton's annual volunteer service extravaganza on Sunday, April 26. Check out <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/newtonseves/default.html> for more information. Contact Beverly Droz, 617-796-1290 (bdroz@newtonma.gov) if you are interested. Watch for further details on the over 50 local projects that will take place.

Wednesday, May 27

Newton Conservators Annual Dinner Meeting
Post 440 – 295 California Street, Nonantum

Join the Newton Conservators for their annual dinner meeting with speaker Richard Primack. His talk will be centered on a comparison of plant life in the Walden Pond area during Henry David Thoreau's time period and now. He will present material showing differences in flowering times between then and now, and also what changes in plants have occurred. He is also looking into the changing flora of Concord's botanical record to identify species that have become rare or locally extinct and those that have

become common over the past 150 years. Awards for Environmentalist of the Year and others will also be presented. For the first time you will even be able to buy your tickets online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/events/dinner2009invite.htm>. 6:15 pm will be a time for social gathering, 7 pm dinner and awards and 8 pm the program.

LETTERS

To the President,

I would like to express my absolute support for the proposed bridge renovation in Newton Lower Falls.

I know there are many opinions on the proposed pathway (not bridge); all of which are for another discussion. I have a 3rd grader (Angier) and pre-schooler (The Barn @ Lasell) and would very much like to eliminate the bridge as an imminent hazard in our neighborhood. The status quo option of do nothing or wait longer will not make this trestle safe or controversy end. The bridge is a **significant** danger to the safety of the kids/teens in the neighborhood in its current state and getting much worse every season with more railroad ties rotting away. Safety should be our number one priority, period. I fear that if the DCR does not fix the bridge with the money they now have access to, the project will begin the day after a child falls off resulting in injury/death accompanied by enormous lawsuits to the city/state.

*Alex Khan
19 St. Mary Street*

Corrections

In our last issue, a letter to the editor was attributed to "Michael Duffield." In fact, it should have been attributed to Michael St. Clair. Our apologies.

Also in our last issue, our new logo was described as "a masthead." The primary meaning of "masthead" is the part of a newspaper that lists its staff. A secondary meaning is the identifying logo at the top of page one, which is how we used the term. The better term is "logo." (Thanks to Richard Danca.)

The letter that follows is from Guive Mirfendereski, a Newton activist and opponent of synthetic turf. He has appealed a decision of the Newton Conservation Commission. Mr. Mirfendereski maintains the SynTurf.org Web site.

To the Editor,

On April 16, 2009 (10 AM), the Massachusetts DEP will conduct a site inspection of the wetland area adjacent to Newton South High School. The inspection is pursuant to the Wetlands Protection Act and is in response to an appeal from a group of Newton residents who believe the Conservation Commission's conditions for permitting the athletic complex project at the high school do not protect the wetlands from potential and actual harm from off-gassing, leaching and dusting of substances from artificial turf fields. One of the issues raised in the residents' appeal is the probability of the area being home to a vernal pool. A photo-essay about this wetlands area is available at "The Forgotten Marsh" on www.joepublius.com.

The concern over synthetic materials was heightened in 2007 when tests by the non-profit Environmental Human Health, Inc., of North Haven, Connecticut, showed the need for more tests to measure the effect of the harmful substances that emanate from the crumb rubber used on fields. The Connecticut state legislature is considering a moratorium on new turf fields until a state-funded study of artificial turf is concluded. California has sued turf manufacturers for the violation of labeling laws pertaining to lead content of the product. In New York City, after many months of debate, city officials have announced that as their turf fields age, the crumb rubber will be replaced by eco-friendly infill.

Echoing similar concerns over the effect of turf materials on human health and the environment, in January of this year, Newton's Board of Aldermen unanimously (22-0-2 absent) adopted a resolution that called on the Mayor to "ensure that the installation of synthetic in-filled turf athletic fields on city-owned property shall use sustainable, recyclable, lead-free, non-toxic products to the maximum extent feasible."

A useful site for learning more about artificial turf is www.SynTurf.org. To get on its non-disclosed distribution list, write to guive@aol.com.

- *Guive Mirfendereski*

The Newton Conservators Officers and Directors 2009

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Jane Sender, *Vice President*
AnnaMaria Abernathy, *Secretary*
Katherine Howard, *Treasurer*
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Greer Hardwicke
Frank Howard
Peter Kastner
Ted Kuklinski
Alison Leary
Eric Reenstierna
Larry Smith
Willis Wang

IT'S WAR – ON PLANT INVADERS

You will notice that this year's Spring Walks include working sessions to remove invasive plants from several of Newton's conservation areas. We are fighting the invasion of Garlic Mustard and Japanese Knotweed. This is to continue and expand on the efforts of a growing group of people who over the past 10 years have been working to control these plant pests at Dolan Pond and parts of the Charles River walkway.

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), a native of Europe that probably came here as a garden herb, has invaded our backyards, parks, forests and conservation areas. It is high on government lists of plant invaders threatening our environment. It will quickly cover vast areas, including low light forested areas, shading out other plants, chemically altering the soil to inhibit germination of competitor seeds, and altering the habitat for native insects such as butterflies. But in areas where it is just starting to invade, it only takes a small amount of effort to be rid of it. It is a biennial very easily identified and pulled when the

second year plants are flowering in May/June. If not pulled, each plant will scatter hundreds to thousands of seeds later in the season, which will become first year plants the next year and also remain as viable seeds for several more years. A good website on garlic mustard is this one from U Michigan:

<http://www.ipm.msu.edu/garlicAbout.htm>

May/June is a great time to get the garlic mustard out of your own backyard and your neighborhood. Last year I roamed my neighborhood and did as much as I could on my own. It was satisfying and an interesting way to meet neighbors who may have initially been surprised by the person creeping through their backyard, or concerned why I was picking their "pretty white wildflowers." This year, however, I have recognized that a troop buildup is needed. I will mobilize my neighbors and we will all work together.

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*; *Fallopia japonica*) was introduced in the late 1800s as an ornamental. Knotweed has now invaded the entire country, altering natural ecosystems and especially threatening waterways. It quickly spreads by seed and rhizome and forms dense ten-foot-tall thickets that exclude native vegetation. A member of the buckwheat family (*Polygonaceae*), it has smooth, stout stems that are swollen where the leaf meets the stem, and it is sometimes called "bamboo." Branched sprays of small greenish-white flowers in summer are followed soon after by small winged fruits, with triangular, shiny, small seeds. Once established, knotweed is very difficult to eradicate. Efforts at Dolan Pond and Charles River seem to indicate we are keeping even with it but continued effort is essential. Pulling individual plants and cutting back to eventually get root fatigue are methods being used locally.

Eric Olson, ecology professor at Brandeis, and Ted Kuklinski from the Conservators continue to be very involved with these efforts. We are also working with the City's Planning Department, to obtain permission from the Conservation Commission, as we must make sure that any work done in these areas and/or near any wetlands is done right, and is well planned and documented. We must not inadvertently harm any vulnerable habitat.

We hope to see you at an upcoming battle!

- Katherine Howard

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 47 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 April. 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 ericreen@tiac.net. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Dan Brody, Pete Gilmore, Frank Howard, Katherine Howard, Ted Kuklinski, Alison Leary, Beth Schroeder, and, as always, Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading.

If you have not already done so this year, use this form to renew your membership in the Conservators. Also, please consider a gift to support our work.



**NEWTON
CONSERVATORS**

*Celebrating 47 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form
PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • 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: \$_____
- Please do not share my name and address with other groups.

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
<i>All amounts are tax deductible</i>	

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____ ZIP _____

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



NEWSLETTER

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

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