

CONSERVATORS RECOMMEND OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES

The Newton Community Preservation Committee has held public meetings to hear how Newton residents want CPA funds spent. These meetings are important: they provide guidance to the CPC in its funding allocations. CPC funds have allowed the City to undertake projects that never could have been accomplished in the CPA's absence: Kessler Woods, Angino Farm, and the Habitat/open space project at Dolan Pond, to name three. The Community Preservation Act allows spending for acquisition of open space (and land for recreation), for historic restoration, and for affordable housing. As the city's land trust, the Conservators advocate primarily for open space. We have been instrumental in acquisitions of open space and have incorporated other CPA goals in our projects as well. On November 19th, in a public forum at City Hall, as President, I presented the CPC with the Conservators' guidance for new open space goals.

At meetings and by email, the Conservators' Board of Directors had taken the opportunity to "brainstorm" potential projects. We understand that some items we proposed may not meet current regulations of the Community Preservation Act. (In a recent court decision brought by a Newton citizens' group, the City was barred from using CPA funds to upgrade two existing recreation facilities. It remains to be seen if the bill sponsored by state Senator Cynthia Creem will amend the law enough and make more items on our "wish list" possible. Strong arguments can be made both for and against the proposed changes; the Conservators do not have a formal stance on whether or not the proposed bill should be adopted. Senator Creem's bill as submitted may allow CPC funds to finance improvements to existing recreational spaces.) Our discussion produced proposals that are fundable under existing CPA regulations, as well as others only fundable if regulations are amended.

Speaking for the Board, I let the CPC know that it would be useful to set aside CPC funds on a yearly basis to prepare for future opportunities to purchase large, costly open spaces if they come onto the market (such as all or parts of our golf courses). The city's golf courses function as some of our largest open spaces, but as open spaces they remain unprotected. We feel that conservation restrictions on Newton's golf courses would be beneficial, and we also



Newton Commonwealth Golf Course

suggested that the CPC fund acquisitions giving the City a right of first refusal at each golf course.

As a land trust and citizens group that advocates for Newton's open spaces, the Newton Conservators believe that our main priority is to preserve properties listed in the "City of Newton Recreation and Open Space Plan." Most acquisitions in the past have come from this list. An example of an important property in the Open Space Plan is vacant, wooded land behind Temple Mishkan Tefilah, which consists of about 10 acres with vernal pools located in the middle of Webster Woods.

CPA funding could also be used to purchase a larger portion of the Kessler Woods land owned by the Cornerstone Corporation. If this site is developed, the city will lose the opportunity to save an untouched natural site with beautiful rock outcroppings.

Rebuilding the historic railroad bridge in Newton Lower Falls would create a link between Newton Lower Falls and Wellesley for pedestrians, bicyclists and people with disabilities. This would also create a link for commuters who use the Riverside "T" Station.

We support funding for signage, maps, kiosks and trail markings for pedestrians, bicyclists and the disabled using trails in our conservation areas and along our aqueducts. Educating citizens about these areas would increase their value to all residents.

Dog walking brings many people into our parks and conservation areas. At present many owners allow their dogs to run free and do not clean up after their dogs. This creates an unsafe and unsanitary situation in our open spaces. Professional dog walkers are unloading large numbers of dogs into our parks to run unrestrained. We would like funding from the CPC to provide signage and pamphlets explaining dog walking regulations, bag distribution boxes and used bag receptacles.

We asked the CPC to consider funding for invasive weed control and support for related volunteer efforts for the Charles River. The Charles River forms more than half of Newton's boundary and a healthy, open river provides a great recreational resource.

The Cheesecake Brook Greenway's original design called for a tree-lined boulevard with a greenway to the Charles River. This could be a link for pedestrians and bicyclists including commuters, school children and recreational users. We suggested funding for a walking path along the brook from Watertown Street to the Charles River

Pathway. This is currently DPW land, and the greenway would create a recreational facility where none exists now.



Kessler Woods

As part of our advocacy for walking and biking trails, we support funding for Riverside Park to reestablish the hiking loop there and to improve access to the loop from the Newton side of the Charles River. The DCR is currently replacing the Recreation Road Bridge over I-95. The DCR also plans to repair the two Charles River pedestrian bridges that are part of the loop. The pedestrian tunnel under the Conrail tracks is currently the only access point to the loop from Newton. This tunnel needs cleaning, ceiling stabilization, and lighting. Access to the loop trails from Grove Street could be established by adding a pedestrian-grade crossing or overpass across the rarely used Conrail/MBTA connector track. This would let Riverside Center office building workers and the Grove Street neighborhood use the park. This would also help neighbors in the west end of Auburndale to walk to the Riverside MBTA station. Reopening the portion of the trail fenced off by the MWRA would re-establish a hiking loop and bicycle route from Recreation Road to Charles Street.

Neighborhood preservation should include planting trees to restore and preserve our historic streetscapes and landscapes. Additional funding to relocate overhead wires underground would also beautify our historic streetscapes and scenic roads and prevent the damage wires do to street trees and birds.

The small park at the intersection of Walnut and Crafts streets across from Day Middle School is one of the first public parks in Newton, purchased with funds raised by

private citizens. With a revision of funding regulations, CPC money could be used to restore and preserve this park.

It is the job of the Community Preservation Committee to make decisions as to how to allocate funds. It is the work of the Conservators (and others) to bring worthwhile open space projects to the CPC. The items on our “wish list” were brought up by individual members of our Board of Directors. We know that there are many other worthwhile projects in our city. We anticipate that, as we have in the past, our members will continue to develop new projects that will benefit the city.

- Beth Schroeder

WATER CHESTNUT HARVEST



*the author, with water chestnuts
(photo by Daniel E. Smith/Charles River Canoe & Kayak)*

Water chestnuts grew abundantly in the Lakes District of the Charles River in 2008. Fortunately, a great recruiting effort by the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) attracted many new volunteers to meet the challenge. Over 250 volunteers participated in hand-pulling over three weeks in late July to harvest over four dumpsters' and two dump trucks' worth of the invasive weeds.

Overall, the weeds were held in check during a good growing season. For the second year in a row, mechanical harvesting by Aquatic Control Technology (ACT) funded by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) made progress in clearing more coves and the edges of the main channel. An unusually wet month enabled the harvesters to reach more weeds in the shallower coves. Since the majority of seeds germinate within three years and some can remain viable for twelve years, at least two more years of mechanical harvesting will be required before there is a significant decrease in the surface area covered by the water chestnuts. The Lakes District of the river below Forest Grove and above Norumbega Park was again hand cleared of the weeds. Plants remain in Kingsbury Cove, around the shore in the E-Island area, and in the open water around Fox Island and Forest Grove.

Water chestnut covered up to 85 acres of the Lakes District of the Charles River during the mid/late 1990's. For eight years between 1995 and 2002, the MDC contracted for a comprehensive program of mechanical harvesting and manual hand-pulling of this highly invasive weed. Most of the area was cleared and the majority of the river remained weed free.

However, the water chestnut never completely disappeared, and several areas became heavily reinfested by 2005. The Lakes and Ponds Program of DCR has committed several hundred thousand dollars to mechanical harvesting over the past two years. Whereas hand-pulling was part of the contract in the 1990s, pulling weeds from the shallow areas near shore and from sparsely infested sites is now the responsibility of river users. Islington Peninsula residents joined together for a day of pulling in 2003 and soon were joined by their Waltham neighbors, but the water chestnuts spread too quickly for a one-day event.

This year the tremendous increase in volunteers solicited by Peggy Sunshine and Rebecca Wickham of CRWA enabled new areas to be cleared. If the number of volunteers can be doubled next year, there should be sufficient personnel to clear water chestnut completely from the main channel.

It is of interest to observe that those most excited by the project were often the younger volunteers. Children enthusiastically grabbed the plants to fill baskets. It is a great community project for Scouts, camps, and clubs looking for outdoor activities. To direct and train the volunteers it is necessary to have leaders (either volunteer or paid) to guide the volunteer efforts so as to be productive and rewarding for the participants.

Charles River Canoe and Kayak loaned up to 30 canoes to the volunteer efforts. Utilizing several hundred laundry baskets, volunteers gathered weeds by hand and rake. The operation was most efficient when powerboats were available to collect the baskets and transport weeds to the dumping sites. The dumpsters behind Watermill Center provided a convenient, although uphill, disposal site for the hand pulling around E-Island, and the dumpster at Forest Grove was an easy off load from both powerboats and canoes.

The Islington and Angleside neighborhoods again rallied with volunteers and boats to fight the weeds. Many thanks to the Angleside pontoon boat crew, ACT and Creonte Trucking, Watermill Center, Cygnet Rowing, CRWA and the many volunteers who made this year's harvest a success. Mechanical harvesting has been funded by DCR through Jim Straub of the Lakes and Ponds Program with the ongoing legislative support of State Senator Cynthia Creem and local State Representatives Kay Khan, Thomas Stanley, and Peter Koutoujian.

- Larry Smith

(Larry Smith is President of Charles River Canoe & Kayak and is a Conservators' Board Member.)

CROWS MOB OWL, WREAK HAVOC

Cold Spring Park is a large wooded area west of Newton Center and south of Beacon Street. It is a successful, multi-use park, with tennis courts, basketball, soccer and baseball areas, as well as a parking lot and Farmer's Market. Beyond these areas, in the more wooded part of the park is the Exertrail with posted stations for exercising various groups of muscles.

Currently, if you stroll along the Exertrail on a crisp fall day, you will encounter the "fearless five," five species of birds that are reliably active in the park throughout the winter months. These are the black-capped chickadee, the tufted titmouse, the white-breasted nuthatch, the downy woodpecker and the golden-crowned kinglet. The latter bird is usually more of a treat for people to see closely, as it is a striking but small and flighty bird. Usually you only hear it rather than see it, up high in conifers such as those along the Cochituate Aqueduct. The aqueduct runs along the southernmost boundary of the Park, between Duncklee Street and Plymouth Road. The golden-crowned kinglet's song is a distinctive three-syllabic call which is sung quickly with a high-pitched sibilant quality.

If you are lucky you will hear and then see them at a waist-high level, close to the Exertrail. Their flashy golden crowns are eye-popping sights in the fall and winter landscape. The male birds have a pretty orange center in the golden crown. Golden-crowned kinglets often travel with roving bands of chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and downy woodpeckers. If you see or hear any of these birds, look and listen for the others.



kinglet

Another regular resident of Cold Spring Park is the male red-bellied woodpecker. He has a brilliant red crown and nape, has a black and white pattern on his back, and is larger by far than any others of the "fearless five." His mate migrates south for the winter, while he spends his time surviving and excavating several nesting holes for next spring. He may roost in one on cold nights. When the female red-bellied woodpecker returns in the spring, she will go on an inspection tour, even with the current real estate risks, and select the best tree cavity in which to raise their family. Downy and hairy woodpeckers are also year-round residents of Cold Spring Park. A fourth woodpecker, the northern flicker, is here for the summer, but most of these birds migrate south.

Raptors that spend the winter in Cold Spring Park include large red-tailed hawks, screech owls and great horned owls. These raptors are often mobbed by the smaller birds who are threatened by them. Screech owls, which roost in the holes of trees, can be found by observing angry mobs of the fearless five. Screech owls come in gray and rufous color phases. Hawks and great horned owls are most often mobbed by crows. A hysterical mob of crows usually is going after a great horned owl. Imagine being a crow and having a huge, silent, night-flying predator that can take out your family and that lives in your neighborhood. These owls often roost high up in conifers like those found along the Cochituate aqueduct in Cold Spring Park. Their

distinctive hooting at dusk is another way to find them. Their call is usually a six-part hoo, hOO-hOO-hOO, hoo, hoo. They call during December and January during courtship and nest by February, even in the snow. Another way to see these owls and other birds in Cold Spring Park is to go on the Christmas bird count with local birders, including members of The Newton Conservators.

Of course, in other seasons, there are many more birds, wildflowers, butterflies, dragonflies and small animals in Cold Spring Park. It is a magical spot. Take a visit and look around.

- Pete Gilmore

NEWTON LOWER FALLS RAIL-TO-TRAIL GREENWAY

An old former rail corridor and bridge over the Charles River offers the potential to provide excellent recreational and smart growth opportunities to benefit the residents of Newton, including Lower Falls and adjacent communities. The rail corridor extends from Washington Street in Wellesley across an unimproved century old former rail bridge over the Charles into Newton. The property was ceded to the DCR in 1975 but remains undeveloped and unused.

Conversion of the bridge into a pedestrian trail would provide a walkable green environment to residents, plus access to trails on DCR land along both sides of the Charles River. In addition, a mixed-use retail development proposed on the Wellesley side would become attractive as a walking destination for Newton Lower Falls residents. Easy pedestrian access over the bridge would reduce traffic and parking congestion in the area. Eventually, a green trail could be extended over the entire length of the former rail corridor stretching all the way to the Riverside MBTA station. This would further enhance walking and bicycling recreation, as well as offer car-free access to public transportation facilities. It would also improve pedestrian access to the Leo J. Martin Golf Course and Weston Ski Track from Lower Falls and from Riverside Station.

A coalition of community groups is working to advance this vision, including the Newton Conservators along with the Newton Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force, the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, and the Charles River Watershed Association. The prospect of opening the



photo by Frank Howard

bridge to pedestrians has already motivated supporters in both Wellesley and Newton to raise funds to be matched by the DCR for detailed design studies. Funding is being sought from the Newton CPC to complete construction of the bridge and its approaches, to be matched by CPA funds from Wellesley and additional grants from the DCR. Finally, an earmark has been placed in the Massachusetts Environmental Bond Bill to cover a design study of the entire corridor for a green trail to Riverside.

The success of other local trails, such as the Minuteman in Lexington and Arlington, has shown the dramatic improvements in recreational opportunities and increases in neighborhood value that result. Having a local human-friendly green trail and access to open spaces will benefit neighborhood health, personal interaction, and relaxation. Providing pedestrian connections from Newton Lower Falls to the Wellesley retail development will make it easier for residents to leave their cars at home. Eventually, opening up the entire green trail with access to public transportation at the Riverside MBTA station will further contribute to the city's goal of reducing our carbon footprint by 20% by the year 2020.

Please voice your support for this project by writing a note to Alice Ingerson, the Newton Community Preservation Program Manager (ainingerson@newtonma.gov), with a copy to newtonbikeped@gmail.com. Thanks!

- George Kirby
(George Kirby is Chair of the Newton Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force.)

BIRDING AT NAHANTON PARK

No doubt that Newton is a wonderful place for people to live. But as a heavily built up suburb, it is limited to how much suitable habitat is available for birds and other wildlife.

There is one park on Newton where you can see birds that you would otherwise not commonly find in most parts of the city. These include birds of the forest, farm land, and open fields. And though no doubt we all enjoy seeing the bright cardinals, blue jays and house finches at our back yard feeders, it's always nice to see more variety. When I don't have time to do a day trip up to Plum Island or drive out to Great Meadows to do some birding, I head over to Nahanton Park. Where else in Newton can you see Eastern bluebirds, tree and barn swallows, bobolinks, vireos, and warblers? This 57-acre parcel boasts waterfront, open meadows, mixed deciduous woods, a small pond, and wetlands, as well as community garden plots and a canoe launch. Because of the diversity of habitat, it supports a great diversity of species. It is a favorite site for the Conservators' bi-annual bird walks. In May we held the Mother's Day bird walk at the park, and we were not disappointed. The group of about twenty people spotted a good variety of species, including an orchard oriole, a pair of blue grey gnatcatchers, at least two pairs of rose breasted grosbeaks, a brown thrasher, and many species of warblers.



bobolink

A large flock of migrating bobolinks raised a boisterous racket in the trees overhead. These are birds of open meadows and hayfields, of which we have very little in Newton, so seeing them here was a treat. These birds are champion migrants, often traveling more than 12,000 miles round trip from their wintering ground in the vast grasslands of southwestern Brazil and Paraguay and the pampas of Argentina to their breeding grounds in the central and eastern United States and southern Canada. Our birds were just passing through, on their way to the hayfields and open meadows of some of our more rural communities.

The park is also a good place in the fall to spot migrants. The large weedy fields are often hopping with many species of sparrows. On our fall walk in early October we spotted song, swamp white throated, savannah, chipping, and Lincoln sparrows. Most sparrows are considered rather plain birds. Often they are all lumped into the LBJ grouping (little brown jobs). But they really are subtly handsome birds. I think the swamp sparrows are especially beautiful with their rich rufous wings and intricate tapestry of warm stripes on their backs. And since they are primarily a bird of wetlands and swamps, as their name implies, they are another bird that most Newtonites won't see at their backyard feeders.

Near the group of nest boxes at the park, I spotted five or six bluebirds, most of them juveniles or females with one bright blue male. One of the most beloved of North American birds, the bluebird underwent a dramatic decline in the 1960s and 1970s, as its preferred habitat of forest edges and open fields disappeared with the decline of agriculture. It also faced stiff competition from introduced species like starlings and house sparrows for nest boxes. Pesticide use also likely contributed to its decline. Fortunately bluebirds have made a dramatic comeback with help from enthusiasts who put up nest boxes and monitor them to keep non-native species from nesting in them. Again, this is a species that is hard to find in most parts of Newton, but here in Nahanton Park there are some small areas of suitable habitat still available.

Protecting and preserving our open space is a primary goal of the Newton Conservators. Spending a little time birding in Nahanton Park underscores the importance of this goal, especially in our congested suburbs. The park supports a variety of birdlife that would otherwise pass us by if it were simply another housing sub-division. Every acre of land with a house or other structure is a loss of habitat for many birds and wildlife. It means fewer trees and green space for us all to enjoy.

- Alison Leary



*heron at Crystal Lake
photo by Linda Morrison*

TREE UPDATES

Newton Tree Conservancy Kick-off Event - On the unexpectedly glorious last Sunday of October, the Newton Tree Conservancy held its kick-off event at City Hall (photos and report on our website, newtontreeconservancy.org). It was a great day despite intense competition from worthy events at both Angino Farm and Arnold Arboretum. A guided tour of the amazing specimen trees of the Newton Cemetery was ably led by Cris Criscitiello (see related item below on our “Newton Sentry” maple). Afterwards, a tulip tree was planted on Commonwealth Avenue by a planting crew of Girl Scouts and other assorted shovelers, with dedication by Mayor David Cohen. Michael Dosmann, Curator of Living Collections at the Arnold Arboretum, gave an excellent lecture on the challenges and rewards of urban forestry, and Marc Welch showed us a fascinating review of the history of Newton’s forestry department. Duane Hillis and David Backer filmed the day’s proceedings, so we can look forward to viewing the programs on TV. Thanks to all the volunteers and supporters who made the day a success! The NTC now goes into implementation mode: a year-end membership drive and an educational event for the spring. Please see newtontreeconservancy.org for more information.

***Acer saccharum*, or “Newton Sentry”** - One of Newton Cemetery’s specimen trees is particularly famous: featured in the Tree Walk and also in Michael Dosmann’s lecture, the “Newton Sentry” sugar maple is a columnar form like no maple ever seen. It was first discovered in

1871 growing at Claflin School in Newton, and when the school was undergoing construction the tree was moved in about 1875-1880 to its current spot in Newton Cemetery at the Walnut Street entrance. In 1885 Arnold Arboretum obtained cuttings, one of which became its own specimen tree - see the interesting article at <http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1150.pdf>. The descendants of our tree can be purchased at local nurseries (also marketed as “*Columnare*”). This tree is perfect for a space-challenged planting site!

Acorns – are there really none? Google and blogs indicate that there are next to none in our region; however, I have heard of some exceptions, and various other parts of the country report bumper crops. Web searching indicates this is normal oak masting (the acorn crop is called “the mast”), with the occasional bumper crop that assures some seeds are left uneaten to survive to germinate, and the occasional year with fruits withheld keeping predators in line. (See the interesting review at <http://www.hastingsreserve.org/OakStory/Acorns2.html>) Theories of global warming and over-ample water this past season are vying with the claim that this is just basic, normal natural selection. In any case, things do not look good for Newton’s current squirrel population.

Asian Long Horned Beetle - After discovery of the ALHB in August 2008, the quarantine area in Worcester was increased in October to 62 square miles. As previously reported, the federal government is preparing to cut down infested trees and “inoculate” (chemically) neighboring at-risk trees. See the links to articles at our website. Marc Welch, the Newton Tree Warden, is active with the Tree Wardens Association and keeps close tabs on the ALHB efforts in the state. He says that officials now believe the Worcester infestation may have started about the same time as the infestation discovered in 1996 in Brooklyn, NY (thought to be imported from packing crates). Luckily, the ALHB appears to be slow to move from one tree to another. However, the location of the infestation in Worcester is also dangerously near a neighboring forested area.

- Katherine Howard
(Katherine Howard is President of the Newton Tree Conservancy and a Conservators’ Board Member)

GOLF COURSE PROTECTION

Newton's golf courses are not only golf courses. They are also important open spaces. The Conservators want to assure that they remain open spaces forever. One of the city's courses, the Newton Commonwealth, is in public ownership. That alone should assure that it will remain open space. But there is always the possibility that, at some future date, intentions may change. At the initiative of Alderman Baker, the City and the Conservators have begun negotiations to produce a conservation restriction for the Conservators to hold, to provide a further layer of open space protection for the course. The Conservators, as a land trust, hold conservation restrictions at other properties in the city. The matter is likely to go before the Board of Aldermen within the month. Look for updates on the progress of this proposal in coming editions of the Conservators' online email newsletter, the Newton Conservators' e-News. (Subscribe online at www.newtonconservators.org.)

PROGRAM NOTES: THE NEWTON CONSERVATORS' ENVIRONMENTAL SHOW

If you have missed any episodes of the Newton Conservators' Environmental Show over the past several years, you will be pleased to learn that they are available 24/7 on our new Blip-TV channel on the Internet. All you need to do is visit www.newtonconservators.blip.tv. Here you will find a listing of all our past Conservator-produced episodes along with detailed content descriptions.

Maybe you wanted to know about what you could be doing at our parks and open spaces, or along the Charles River, or about the plants you might find in Newton - which ones are bad and which ones are good to eat. There are shows on the wild creatures of Newton and how to prevent them from becoming a nuisance. Check out the history of Newton Angino Community Farm and even get tips on how to grow food in your own front yard. These programs and much more are all there for you online anytime.

The Newton Conservators pioneered putting our NewTV shows online several years ago but have recently migrated to **blip.tv**, a free hosting service which specializes in making episodic "shows" like ours available to a wider audience. We also have recently been approved as a non-profit member of YouTube, where you will be able to find some of our shorter video segments in the near future as well.

This December on NewTV in one of our early reprise episodes, "Recreational Opportunities in Cold Spring Park" explores one of Newton's most attractive open areas, with its combination of playing fields, exercise trails, walking paths, wetlands, woodsy spots, and scenic views. It is also home, in the summer, for the weekly Farmers' Market, which draws hundreds of Newton shoppers in search of fresh, locally grown produce. The show features interviews and action shots of people enjoying all that the park has to offer, from the "Three Explorers," a group of youngsters who take their nature study seriously, to joggers and exercise buffs who count on the park facilities for physical fitness. You will also be treated to an intimate view of Cold Spring Park, given a bit of its history, and offered a chance to join in a walk around its trails.

The [Environmental Show](#) is broadcast on the [NewTV](#) Blue Channel (Comcast Chan. 10, RCN Chan. 15, Verizon Chan. 34). Shows are broadcast Mondays, 3:00 p.m., Tuesdays, 1:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m., Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m., Thursdays, 12:00, 4:00 and 7:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. Videos of all previous Environmental Show programs (produced by either the Green Decade Coalition or the Newton Conservators) are available for viewing online at <http://www.greendecade.org/environmentTV.html>.

The Newton Conservators are seeking video-interested folks (young and old) to assist with producing, editing, promoting, and maintaining their NewTV and online Environmental Show.

- Ted Kuklinski



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: ARE THESE "BAD" TIMES?

Is the financial market meltdown creating a difficult life? It isn't helping, that's for sure. But, we need to look for the good things in life. It used to be said that the best things in life are free. Now America is called a consumer society. People who already own 42 sweaters are shopping for another. Do we really need 43 sweaters? Let's look around us and appreciate what we already have.

This is the end of a cycle of escalating spending on huge McMansions, marble bathrooms, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. Does a family of four really need a 5,000 square foot home? We can actually use our living rooms and eat in our dining rooms. Do we need to put additions on our houses? Do we need to design and install a home movie theater? The least expensive way to refresh the look and feel of your home is to buy paint and change the colors of your walls.

Instead of driving, take the time to walk to the village center in your neighborhood to visit the post office, bank or drug store. Get out into nature. Walk through conservation areas and around Crystal Lake. Don't use your car unless you really need to. Fill your bird feeder and enjoy identifying the birds. Put a few peanuts out for the squirrels. Wrap up in a blanket on your sofa with a book, music or film from the library. It's free. You don't need to "buy" everything. I bet you have books that you bought in the past but never found the time to read. Now is the time. Trade your favorite books with friends and neighbors, or exchange them at the Rumford Avenue recycling center.

Spend money on essentials like healthy food. Aim to eat the recommended five fruits and vegetables every day. Get out your recipe books and try a new recipe. Have family meals and invite your best friends over for dinner on the weekend. Remember pot-lucks. Nothing beats a pot-luck dinner with good company in the depths of winter. Build a fire in the fireplace and have a conversation with your family and guests. Play a board game with your children.

This is the beginning of a new era. It's truly a time to reduce, reuse and recycle. Buy less and buy quality when you buy. Own less and use what you have. Take care of the things you already own. Sew on those buttons, press your shirts and reorganize your closets. Donate what you

don't need to those in need. Give clothes you never wear to Dress for Success. Instead of buying gifts, pass on family mementos.

Recently on National Public Radio I heard a commentator explain that many Americans go into debt "buying things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't like." Let's live within our means and spend time with the people we love. Help those in need by volunteering. Live a simple life and spend time creating happy memories.

- Beth Schroeder

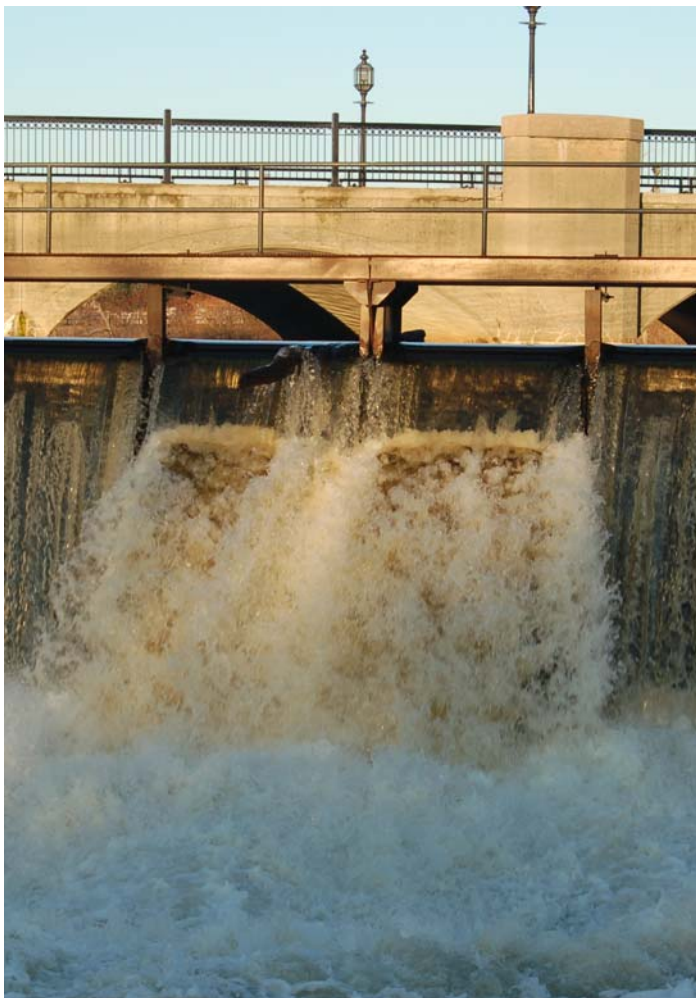
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NEW LOOK

The masthead of this issue introduces a new look for the Conservators' Newsletter. The masthead (as well as the logo) that it replaces served the Conservators well for decades. Our original logo depicts the city itself in the protective hands of our organization. And, certainly, that has been our function throughout the decades: to protect, explore, and help others to enjoy this city's open spaces. It is rare that a masthead lasts so long. The new logo and masthead were designed for us by graphic designer, Newton resident, and Conservator Pat Robinson, who has helped with the design of other Conservator media. We hope our new masthead and the new "look" that this newsletter takes on will serve us as long and as well as the last one did.



LETTERS

The letter that follows came to the Conservators' Web site in December from Michael St. Clair, who lives in Auburndale at a house on the Charles River at Wares Cove. Mr. St. Clair's letter provoked an email discussion among members of the Conservators' Board, with varied responses too lengthy to reproduce here.

The Charles River during the last two summers has been at its lowest level that I have seen in 32 years that I have been tracking the river. Larry Smith, the President of Charles River Canoe and Kayak who also has lived on the river for 35 years, confirms "that water in the Lakes District has been lower in the past few years than I have observed over the past 35 years."

Much of this problem seems to be several holes (missing planks) in the River St. dam in Waltham. The problem is the dam and river are fine when there is plenty of water, such as there is now. The real problem is in low water season such as July and August when use of the Charles by boaters and rowers is highest. When the water drops below the spill level at the top of the dam it continues to gush forth from several prominent holes below the spill level.

I have attached three recent photo of the dam - but it is almost impossible to see these holes when the river is high and the flow over the dam is heavy. One can perceive, however, the greater jets of water below the spill level which project slightly beyond the spill. In the last two summers, when water levels and flow were lower, one could easily see the gaping holes below the spill level and this has caused the river above the Waltham dam to be at its lowest level in more than a third of a century. The impact on riverine life (frogs, turtles, some fish) is significant since lower levels of water are much warmer and there are increasingly exposed mud flats visible during August.

I would appreciate a response from the Conservators and will try to supply more information if I am able.

- Michael St. Clair

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 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 ericgreen@tiac.net. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

Editor: Eric Reenstierna 617-969-5820
Production: Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

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

**December is the time to renew your membership. Use this form to renew.
A membership also makes a great holiday gift. Consider a gift to support our work.**



*Celebrating 47 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form

PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • www.newtonconservators.org

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.

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ Make checks payable to _____

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



NEWSLETTER

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

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Printed on recycled paper with minimum 20% post-consumer waste

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
P.O. Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

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