



*Working to preserve open space in Newton for 45 years!*

## ***The Newton Conservators***

# **NEWSLETTER**

Spring Issue

[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

February/March/April/May 2007

## **CONSERVATORS' SPRING WALKS – BY FOOT, KAYAK, AND CANOE**

It's never too early to think about spring. Even in February. In fact, what better time? The Conservators are planning for spring. Come May, the Conservators offer seven "walks," which range from a hike on the Aqueduct Trail to a tour of Crystal Lake and a canoe trip on the Charles. The cost is free. Trips are led by experienced guides who know what to look for along the way. The Conservators invite everyone - young, old, member or not. Bring a kayak. Wear your hiking shoes. Come with us to find the wild side of our city.

Conservators' President Bill Hagar leads a canoe trip on the Charles River's lakes region on June 10. Bill is a professor of biology at UMass Boston and knows the river's twists, turns, and hidden pockets from years of guiding this trip. Learn more in Bill's article in this issue.

Cris Criscitiello, an experienced birder, leads a bird walk at Nahanton Park on Mother's Day, a good date to view the spring bird migration along the Charles. Octo Barnett leads the season's first walk, in the Webster Woods off the Hammond Pond Parkway. Bare Pond, a vernal pool, should be full in spring. Webster Woods is used by groups for orienteering and rock climbing. Octo will share his knowledge of the compass and GIS.

Peter Kastner leads a tour of the Newton Cemetery on Walnut Street behind the library. The walk is scheduled for Memorial Day, a date that Peter finds appropriate, in light of the fact that many Civil War veterans are buried here. Two mid-1800s trends in cemeteries are in evidence at the Newton Cemetery, says Peter: whereas earlier cemeteries were placed in small, forgotten corners of

churchyards, Newton Cemetery and others memorialized the war dead in a prominent way as an "outpouring of national grief" and at the same time served as beautiful open spaces, with plantings and walking trails.

Don Lubin of the New England Wildflower Society leads a tour of Cold Spring Park, to find and identify ferns.

Lucy Caldwell-Stair leads a tour of Crystal Lake on Father's Day. Lucy is familiar with the pond's history. The tour will view the Hannon property, which the City hopes to acquire to expand the Crystal Lake public beach site. Henry Finch will lead a popular walk along the aqueducts, starting in Waban. Henry spearheads the Conservators' effort to make the aqueducts more accessible to the public.

Updates will be posted at the Conservators' Web site as the dates approach. Go to [www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org) for information.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT: ON THE CHARLES

Twice a year, Newton Conservators' canoe trips are crammed with special tranquility and enjoyment. The canoe trip begins at the rental center near the Marriott Hotel and heads either upstream or downstream. Some participants bring their own canoe or kayak while others rent a canoe. Most trips go downstream where there are several places to stop. The Charles River has numerous bends and is not a linear waterway like a canal. Each bend and turn has hidden wildlife that makes the trip more enjoyable. On some of the trips, we will bring plankton net and microscopes. This allows the children - and adults - to look at what plankton the river contains. A moving zooplankton under the watchful eye of a child provides a lesson in nature that the child will not soon forget. Not all wildlife is visible with the naked eye.

The trip takes us to many secluded spots along the Charles, and while you are on the water it seems that you are as far from the hustle and bustle of the city as possible. The swans swimming in the near distance bring a sense of tranquility. They usually spend their time located in lily pad areas and remind us of a distant past. Some trips, you would see a hawk circling about looking for prey near shore. The most frequent water visitors are ducks and turtles, sometimes with the two of them sharing the same protruding rock near the bank of the river. How the turtle knows it is not on the duck's dinner menu is another story.

The trip downstream is about five miles with members of the canoe group usually staying in contact with each other. Occasionally a canoe will move away from the group and go to the bank of the river to collect leaves or to observe a bird more closely. Our friend the blue heron is a favorite wildlife picture for those that bring cameras. We try not to disturb the heron, but sometimes it will take off with a slow beating of those majestic wings in some kind of slow motion ballet. A quote from Rachel Carson comes to mind when that happens: "Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."

Near the end of the downstream trip is the old Watch Factory. It is in stark contrast to the hidden passages and bends of the Charles that led up to there. The Watch Factory sits as a reminder of a recent past of activities along the Charles.

Normally, at the end of the trip we stop and share grapes, cheese and other tidbits and discuss what we have seen.

The trip back is as enjoyable as the first leg. At the end of the trip, you think about conservation efforts that have helped clean up the Charles River. Another Rachel Carson quote comes to mind:

"Those who dwell as scientists or laymen among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."

- William Hagar



# CYCLE PATHS

Newton has many miles of paths open to the public. Most are more suitable for pedestrians than cyclists but several miles of the Charles River Bikeway are in Newton, and the carriage road along Commonwealth Avenue is popular with cyclists and joggers. Except for the Bikeway, which was built and is managed by the Commonwealth, these trails are not marked. The best source of information on Newton's paths is the Newton Conservators' Web site.

Newton has a Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force to advise the Board of Aldermen on bicycle and pedestrian issues, and the Conservators actively promote paths. The benefits of paths are many: for the individual, healthy exercise and fresh air; for those who continue to drive, less congestion; and for the environment, less air pollution and a small reduction in CO2.

Cycling is allowed on all roads in Massachusetts except for limited access highways, but many people are afraid of cycling on roads which are shared with fast moving automobile traffic and are even more afraid for their children. The ideal cycle path is separate from the auto travel lanes and the exhaust smoke that goes with them.

What is probably the most used bicycle path in Greater Boston is the Minuteman Trail in Cambridge, Arlington, Lexington and Bedford, which follows a disused railroad right of way and, apart from road crossings, is quite separated from roads. The main problem with the Minuteman is overuse at weekends and holidays. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and parents pushing baby carriages share the path.

Bicycle and pedestrian paths have several uses:

- Utilitarian - riding or walking to school, to the library, to work;
- Exercise - mostly by local residents;
- Tourism

The Minuteman, at least in some sections, attracts all three kinds of users. It is a commuter bicycle route, it is an alternative to the highway, and it also attracts a significant number of touring cyclists from out of state, providing a pleasant way to visit several major historic sites.

Newton's paths may not see the same volume of use. But the Charles River Bikeway certainly attracts cyclists from outside the immediate area and has the potential to become part of a regional bicycle path network.

The Commonwealth Avenue carriage road provides a valuable east-west route from Brookline to Route 128. Newton Conservators Newsletter

The carriage road is also used by automobiles but can be shared with cyclists and joggers because cars are infrequent, are slow moving, and travel only one way.

Where a main road is wide enough, a bicycle path can be marked off to the right of the travel lane. The difficulties of this method include illegal parking, sections of road that are narrow, and intersections where the right hand lane become the right hand turn lane. These problems can be overcome by construction, but construction is expensive and sometimes controversial. Despite these problems, some neighboring towns have created bicycle paths using this method. We would be interested to hear from readers who have used marked lanes.

What is the future for bicycle and pedestrian paths in Newton? The easiest and lowest cost action is to mark existing paths at points of entry and provide guidance where existing streets are used as a part of the path.

Other ideas:

- to identify likely destinations for bicyclists - schools, subway stops, etc.
- to try to find routes to these destinations using less traveled roads that avoid heavily used thoroughfares
- to mark off a bicycle lanes on roads which are wide enough to allow this (The City has already done this on Nahanton Street.)
- to improve the surface of some portions of the Aqueduct Paths so that they are more easily used by bicyclists
- to determine if the preferred routes of any proposed regional bike or pedestrian paths might pass through Newton and to facilitate these paths.

- Gil Wooley

## ALIEN ATTACK PART II

*Our last newsletter featured articles on invasive species. Florrie Funk is a member of the Conservators' Land Management Committee, which is undertaking projects to control invasives. This article provides an in-depth look at the problem.*

Why is it important to remove non-native invasive plants?

The New England Wildflower Society defines an invasive plant as a non-native species that is capable of spreading aggressively and monopolizing essential resources of a

habitat – light, nutrients, water, and space - to the detriment of other species.

Life forms evolved on this planet not as individual species but as complex, interdependent communities of organisms we call ecosystems. Each species within an ecosystem depends on others to provide nutrients, circumstances necessary for reproduction, and limits to its expansion. For example, a plant may depend on a multitude of fungi and other soil organisms to decompose the remains of dead plants and animals, thereby releasing nitrogen and other nutrients into the soil in a form usable by the plant. It may also depend on specific insect species to pollinate its flowers so that it produces seeds, and on other animals to help disperse those seeds. This community also depends on a variety of herbivores, predators, fungi, bacteria and other pathogens to limit the growth of any one species so that a balance is maintained. This prevents one species from expanding its presence in the system to the point of extirpating others and weakening the biodiversity of the system.

The species that make up any given ecosystem evolved together over millions of years. Even though there is constant ebb and flow, overall, a balance is maintained. Studies have shown that the greater the biological diversity (*i.e.* the number of different species), the more able a natural community is to withstand drought, blights and other environmental stresses.

In our suburban communities, native species are weakened by loss of genetic diversity caused by habitat fragmentation. Imagine ever-smaller natural areas separated by ever-wider highways and developments. Small, isolated populations of plants and animals unable to exchange genes with other populations become inbred and die out.

Compounding this problem, alien organisms which did not evolve as parts of the local ecosystem have been introduced into our natural communities. They may have been brought here intentionally by horticulturalists or they may have arrived by accident in soil or imported products. Some alien plant species introduced into a new ecosystem do not survive. Others may persist as benign members of the community. But some, not limited by local herbivores or pathogens, or for other reasons not entirely understood, grow and reproduce rapidly. These may displace whole communities of native plants, causing quick reductions in biodiversity and even extinction of species.

Worldwide, invasive alien species are the second leading cause of species extinction. The leading cause is habitat destruction. A study by the North Carolina Botanical Gardens has found that 4,000 non-native species are grown outside of cultivation in the United States and that 79 of

these are invasive enough to cost \$97 billion in lost crops, failed recovery of endangered species, and control efforts. Invasive species have contributed to a decline of 42% of endangered and threatened species of the United States. More than 28% of the world's native species are threatened or endangered, which includes 200 species in Massachusetts.

The worst offending invasive plant species here in Newton are species that were planted (and continue to be planted) as ornamentals. Examples are Norway Maples, Japanese Barberry, Burning Bush, Oriental Bittersweet Vine, Japanese Knotweed (sometimes called “bamboo”), Common and Glossy Buckthorn, Asian Shrub Honeysuckles, and Tree-of-Heaven. Many of the characteristics that make a plant a good garden choice - rapid growth, disease resistance, easy propagation - increase the chances of its becoming invasive. All of these above-mentioned plants produce seeds that are carried by birds or wind into natural areas, roadsides, and vacant lots, where they germinate, grow quickly and reproduce. To those who don't know how to tell one plant species from another, these dense growths of vegetation might look like nature happily doing what it is supposed to do. And many of the invasive species are very attractive plants. However, the sight of dense patches of Japanese Knotweed or monoculture groves of Norway Maples should be a heartbreaking reminder of the many dozens of species that were once there but are now gone: wildflowers, ferns, grasses, shrubs, trees, plus the insects, birds and other animals that depended on them.

Many of Newton's residents are proud to consider themselves environmentalists but are not aware of the crisis threatening biodiversity in our parks and in our own back yards. How should we deal with the problem of invasive plants? There is no easy solution, but these are some of the things that individual citizens can do to help:

- Learn to identify invasive plant species and remove any that are growing on your property.
- If your property abuts a park or wooded area, be sure that your non-native landscaping materials don't spread across your property line. Never let your yard waste be dumped into natural area parks or conservation areas. Many common landscaping plants, especially ground covers such as English Ivy, Winter Creeper, Pachysandra and Vinca, reproduce vegetatively. Cuttings from them can root and spread aggressively. A walk along the boundaries of any of Newton's conservation lands can reveal damage caused by nearby homeowners' lack of awareness.

- Learn about native plants and use them in your landscaping. Rather than contributing to ecosystem fragmentation, your yard can be part of the solution. There are many beautiful native species that can be used to replace familiar but invasive ones.
- Encourage city officials to develop a plan for the removal of invasive plants and the reintroduction of native ones on city property. This is a daunting task but one that some forward-thinking local governments across the country have taken on. In addition to funding, it will require training of personnel, manual labor and lots of volunteer effort.
- Consider the possibility that cautious and strategic use of herbicides is sometimes the environmentally correct path. (The Nature Conservancy, The National Park Service and other environmental organizations have reached this conclusion.) Many plants, despite being cut down to ground level, re-sprout with renewed vigor. Removal of root systems can be impractical and also destructive to soil structure and other organisms. Soil disturbance usually increases germination of invasive plant seeds. There may be a slight chance of unwanted side effects in the use of products such as glyphosate, but if the alternative is dramatic loss of species, taking that chance may be warranted. Promising research has been done in biological controls, such as the introduction of beetles that eat Purple Loosestrife. But these methods are in the experimental stages and also may entail ecological risks.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has published “The Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List,” which includes many popular ornamentals, such as Norway Maple, Burning Bush and Japanese Barberry, that are now considered invasive. There is an importation and propagation ban on all of the 141 plants on this list, which means that the sale, trade, purchase and distribution of these plants is prohibited. This legislation is helpful in slowing the spread of these species, but in many cases, the horse is already out of the barn, so to speak.

On the Internet, information is available about landscaping with native plants, plant identification, and methods of dealing with non-native invasives. Good places to start are The New England Wildflower Society ([newfs.org](http://newfs.org)) and The Nature Conservancy ([tncweeds.ucdavis.edu](http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu)). The National Park Service

([nps.gov/plants/alien](http://nps.gov/plants/alien)) has fact sheets with pictures and descriptions of many invasive plants as well as suggested methods of controlling them. A web search of “invasive plants” will result in additional informative web sites.

It was once thought that if conservation areas could be purchased, set aside, and left alone, nature could take care of itself. Not anymore! The proliferation of invasive species has led to the realization that most forests and conservation areas must now be actively managed. If the invasive species are not controlled, overall species diversity will decline and the loss will be irreversible.

- Florrie Funk

## “MEATBALLS” IN THE GARDEN

Evergreen shrubs grew tight to my house like giant meatballs. Behind my house they were so big they took up one-third of my driveway. In front of my house I couldn't see out the windows. Every year I fought the “meatball” battle. If I cut too much off I had a sculpture of empty sticks – not attractive – and the shrub always grew back. It's just like a fad diet – you lose the weight but when you stop you gain back all those pounds plus more. Eventually I got so sick of those shrubs that I went out and cut them all down. I didn't miss them at all. I had an opportunity to replant and have a much more attractive garden.

I know I am not alone when it comes to fighting this battle. When I take a walk around any of Newton's villages, there is plenty of evidence of a meatball infestation: windows are blocked by yews; rhododendrons are so high that entire first floors have disappeared; white pines and Canadian hemlocks push against house corners; evergreen shrubs grow so close together on front paths that you need to walk sideways to get to the door. Overgrown foundation plantings have taken over.

If you choose to take on this battle, be sure to plan ahead. Picture your home with new foundation plantings. You could add an ornamental tree, smaller scaled flowering shrubs, dwarf evergreens, perhaps even some blooming perennials, ornamental grasses and ferns. Wouldn't that be delightful? You could present an attractive new face to the neighbors passing by.

But remember the hard lessons learned. Don't go out and buy cute little plants and put them two feet from your house. Each nursery plant comes with a tag that describes how wide and how tall plants will be when they are mature. Be sure to read these tags and choose plants that will fit in the space of your planting location once they are full-grown. Note which plants grow best in shade, partial shade or full sun. Go to your local library and pick up plant books, such as *Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs* or *The American Woodland Garden* and look at plant pictures. Make a list of plants you like before you go to a nursery.

You may have always wanted a small ornamental tree, perhaps a kousa dogwood, Japanese maple, magnolia or crabapple. Native New England understory trees such as American hornbeam (15-20' high and 12-18' wide) or a multi-stemmed shrub like shadblow serviceberry (10-20' high and 5-10' wide) would be ideal. They grow well beneath dappled shade created by larger trees on your property and they are happy to grow in our acidic New England soil.

Even smaller ornamental trees may grow to be twelve feet wide or more, so plant them at least six feet from your house. Remember, they are going to grow. These are living things. Also, don't put a plant that grows to be fifteen feet tall in front of your window. Strategically locate your new tree to the side so a few branches gracefully drape near panes of glass. Seeing spring blooms, fall colors or a songbird sitting on a branch when you look out your window is your goal, but you don't want to block the entire view.

Many lovely shrubs are available to add beauty to your home. Again, remember to read descriptions of width, height, and lighting needs. If they won't get too big, they can grow to their full size without pruning. Pruning often destroys a shrub's natural shape. For example, Clethra – a native plant - has wonderfully fragrant blooms in June when few other shrubs are blooming, but regular species Clethra can grow to be ten feet tall – much too big for most foundation plantings. If you want to use Clethra for a small space, buy a dwarf variety such as "Hummingbird". Clethra "Hummingbird" only grows to be two feet tall, just perfect for your garden, and it has the same fragrant flowers.

For a fun weekend project you could measure your front yard and put your plan on graph paper. Find the plant dimensions of your favorite plants and cut these shapes out on colored paper. Slide these shapes around until you have a plan you like. If you plant right, you can reduce maintenance work you will need to do in the future. Put the right plant into the right location, and leave enough

room for each plant to grow to its mature size without pruning. Happy gardening!

- Beth Schroeder

## VOLUNTEERS FOR TREES

Newton's Urban Tree Commission (UTC) needs volunteers.

The UTC is a City commission charged with assisting the City's Forestry department to accomplish forestry goals and advising on tree policy. The group meets once a month. We need members, and we also need volunteers who can work on projects, whether or not they wish to attend the meetings. Examples of projects could include writing tree articles for the Tab or for newsletters; helping with the UTC's Citizen Pruner program; researching how the City DPW can protect trees when doing sewer work (*i.e.*, the latest advances such as tunneling equipment); coordinating pruning policies with utility and cable companies; coordinating with utility undergrounding efforts; helping to get our Newton Tree Conservancy fundraising effort started; or other tree projects volunteers may be interested in.

Through all these efforts we strive to protect and promote the urban forest in Newton. If you are interested in helping the UTC, or would like more information, you are welcome to attend a meeting (currently held on the third Friday of each month from 7:45 am - 9 am in City Hall Room 202), or contact Chair Katherine Howard at [howard\\_katherine@hotmail.com](mailto:howard_katherine@hotmail.com).

- Katherine Howard





# THE “ENVI SCI” PROGRAM: WHERE DOES THE SCIENCE COME FROM?

*The Environmental Science Program is a summer program for Newton junior high and high school students. David Backer is the Executive Director. The Conservators are one of the program's sponsors.*



*Environmental Science Program students in science workshop on summit of Mt. Monadnock, July 2006*

One of the great things about the Environmental Science Program is that student leaders develop the program's science workshops and teach them in the field to the students. This is a long-standing tradition that has worked well for 40 years: teaching and learning about science – on the spot, in the environment, student to student.

The Environmental Science Program is a unique program for teenagers that began as a Ford Foundation Project in 1967. "Envi Sci" combines enjoying the wilderness with learning about the science of the environment in daily outdoor activities. The program centers around the idea that students learn best about their surroundings when taught by other students. Each year the leaders, who are all former students from the program, go through training to educate participants while they are hiking or biking or canoeing.

What makes the leader training period interesting is that it is totally organized and managed by the student leaders themselves.

It starts when the leaders, working with the college-age Director and Student Director, select students from the Newton Conservators Newsletter

summer just ended to become the new first-year leaders. These new leaders join the older leaders in regular meetings from January through June, during which they train to be leaders and help plan the science workshops.

The leaders propose and discuss topics for workshops to be covered in the coming summer. Some are taken from a list of topics taught almost every year, such as weather or ecology. Others are created by a leader who expresses an interest in a new topic.

A look at a typical calendar for the Program gives a good impression of the range of science workshops. There are botany walks in the forested areas of Newton and a “wild edibles” workshop that highlights local plants that can be eaten or cooked. There is a bicycle trip on the “geology loop” route that gives students a look at various rock strata in road cuts and exposed hillsides. There is also an early morning birdwalk that takes students into the field when the birds are becoming active.

The 12-mile canoe trip on the Charles River includes water-sampling to determine pH, salinity, turbidity, and other qualities. One year the program discovered an industrial pollution problem, which the City was able to correct.

There are also a night-time astronomy session and a study trip to the salt marshes and tidal pools of coastal Maine. During the “mountain sequence” trips, students can see the difference between real and false blueberries at the Blue Hills Reservation and learn about the false treeline on Mt. Monadnock, created by a human-made fire that was set to stop coyotes from killing livestock.

Some of the workshops are leaders' “Own Designs”, which are trips designed around a leader's own interest, at a location related to the special subject. Examples include a trip to the Frederick Law Olmsted Museum in Brookline and an orienteering class on how to interpret contour lines and trail markings on a topographic map.

The program ends with an exhilarating three-day backpacking trip up the highest peak in the Northeast, Mount Washington. Along the trail, leaders explain the specialized adaptations that plants and shrubs have made to the harsh weather conditions in the White Mountains. They teach why care is needed to avoid long-term damage to ground cover when hiking in the alpine zones above a certain altitude.

A recent second-year leader said that one of the things he enjoyed about the program is that “... every day is different; you go to different places and learn different things, and just have a great time.”

Another student who went on to be a leader for four years talked about how “amazing” it was to hear so much about the environment from the other leaders, and that “I would say that’s what I remember most about the environment ... it hadn’t come from school, but from these people who knew so much.”

Leaders eventually leave the program for college and jobs. Some have gone on to study oceanography, forestry, conservation, and other environmentally focused careers. But even students who do not become leaders still get a first-hand appreciation of the wilderness and the science behind the interactions between natural and human-made forces. Many students come back year after year to enjoy the experience again.

Anyone interested in learning more about the “Envi Sci” Program can go to the website, [www.newtonenvisci.org](http://www.newtonenvisci.org), which includes a link on the home page to a half-hour video show about Envi Sci produced with the Newton Conservators. You can also send email to [contact@newtonenvisci.org](mailto:contact@newtonenvisci.org) or call David Backer, Executive Director of the Program at 617-969-0288.

Registration for the summer of 2007 has already begun, so interested families should sign up now!

*- David S. Backer*

## **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 45 years ago in June 1961.*

# **LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA**

A community needs a land trust to accept gifts of open space from property owners who have served as good stewards of their land and want to see it preserved in its natural state. The gifts the Conservators have accepted in recent years have all provided important protection, including land on the fringe of the Webster Conservation Area at Newton Centre, land on Dexter Road near Laundry Brook, and a parcel at the headwaters of the Hyde Brook. Each has important features as habitat and open space. One may lead to other gifts that will piece together protection for a larger area at Hyde Brook, to keep the entire hollow in its natural state.

The Internal Revenue Service has made an issue of other kinds of gifts, those that are serve primarily as tax shelters and that preserve little of natural value. Bogus “land trusts” have been established that do little other than to accept such gifts.

To separate the gifts of value from others, it is important that a land trust establish criteria. Board member Larry Burdick has taken the lead, to assure that the Conservators’ criteria for land acquisition are consistent with those of the Land Trust Alliance, a national umbrella organization for land trusts. Criteria have been adopted by the Board and are available for review at the Conservators’ Web site.

Criteria in Newton differ from those in more rural locations where the focus is on large tracts. Burdick notes that it is important that the Conservators’ criteria allow for gifts of small parcels and “pocket parks,” which are among the types open space acquisitions that the Community Preservation Committee seeks to fund, as well.

*- Eric Reenstierna*



# CONSERVATORS' SPRING LECTURE: TRACKING THE WILD IN NEWTON

*On Monday, March 12, 2007, at 7:00 p.m., Nick Wisniewski and Valerie Major, Directors of the Walnut Hill Tracking and Nature Center, Orange, MA, will present a Lecture and Slideshow at the Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street, Newton Centre*



Have you ever seen paw prints in the snow and wondered just what creatures formed these interesting patterns? Learn to know if you have been visited by a raccoon, deer, fox, coyote, or even a fisher.

The Newton Conservators and the Newton Free Library host a lecture/slideshow by Nick Wisniewski and Valerie Major. According to the presenters, "Tracking is not just about finding a track on the ground; it can be a powerful tool for human change. In this day and age we often feel isolated, disconnected from the natural world and from other human beings. Tracking enables us to rediscover the connections that exist in the web of life. Tracking is the art of seeing, the art of observation, engaging our whole being."

In this lecture, you will learn what subtle clues can be used, such as tracks, signs of feeding, mating, and other behavior, to gain insights into the interaction of animals with each other and with their environments.

Nick Wisniewski and Valerie Major are experts on animal tracks and sign. They were both long-term students and apprentices of Paul Rezendes, master tracker and author of the seminal book, *Tracking and the Art of Seeing*, whose tracking school they have taken over after his retirement. Nick's on-going tracking projects include animal surveys for wildlife sanctuaries and a multi-year effort to document mountain lion track and sign in southern New England. A life-long naturalist, he became fascinated by tracking in 1984 after encountering fresh wolf scat and tracks while on an extended solo trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe

Wilderness Area in Minnesota. His passion is using animal tracking as a unifying method for nature study and exploration. Valerie Major began her life-long study of nature accompanying her father in the forests of Arkansas. She has taught outdoor skills to youth and adults for twenty-five years and keeps a link with her native heritage as a board member and teacher at the Eastern American Indian Cultural Center. Valerie encourages the spirit of inquiry and exploration through her primitive, experiential teaching method.

Copies of *Tracking and the Art of Seeing* will be available at the lecture. For more information, contact Ted Kuklinski, 617-969-6222, [dolanpond@aol.com](mailto:dolanpond@aol.com), or visit [www.newtonconservators.org/lectures.htm](http://www.newtonconservators.org/lectures.htm).



## NEWS IN BRIEF

- The effort to acquire the Hannon property at Crystal Lake adjacent to the City beach and bathhouse is at an impasse. The property owner, Pat Hannon, placed the property on the market for \$4.3 million. The City commissioned a private appraisal, which resulted in an opinion of value of \$2.3 million and an offer to purchase on the part of the City for that amount. Mr. Hannon responded with a counter-offer of \$3.9 million. The City has indicated that its offer cannot exceed the appraised value. There the matter stands. The Conservators have supported the City's effort at acquisition, to promote waterfront open space and expand a popular recreation site.
- The Durant-Kenrick Homestead is a 1732 house on Waverly Avenue with an adjacent lot. The house is one of Newton's oldest and is largely in original condition, having been maintained in the historic style by its owners, who over the years have allowed public access. The Newton Historical Society has proposed to protect the house with Community Preservation Act funds. The Conservators have supported the proposal, combining as it does historic and open space protection. A hearing before the Community Preservation Committee is scheduled for the evening of February 28 at City Hall.
- The Conservators' Annual Dinner is scheduled for May 30 at American Legion Post 440 in Nonantum, adjacent to the Charles River Pathway. Thanks to Alderman Salvucci for again securing the Post's excellent dinner and meeting hall for us, as he has in recent years.

## NEW BOARD MEMBER: MARGARET DORIS

The Conservators are pleased to welcome Margaret Doris as a new member of the Board of Directors. Margaret is a doctoral student in bioethics at Boston University. She is also the president of the Playground Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing accessible recreation opportunities in Newton, a Director of Matthew 25, a non-profit organization creating housing for low income families in Massachusetts, and a Cadette Girl Scout leader. She and her husband, Charlie Pierce, have three children.

**The Newton Conservators Newsletter**© has been published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. This year, we will move to a four-issue schedule. Issues will be published in June, September, December, and March. 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 or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to [ericgreen@tiac.net](mailto:ericgreen@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: Bill Hagar, Gil Wooley, Florrie Funk, Beth Schroeder, David Backer, and Ted Kuklinski. Thanks to Peter Kastner for the Spring Walks schedule that is attached. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading.



*Gooch's Caves – photo by Octo Barnett*

**If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2007, now is the time. Please renew today!  
And consider a tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 45 years  
of open space advocacy  
in Newton*

### ***Newton Conservators Membership Form***

PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • [www.newtonconservators.org](http://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**

- ☐ 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.**

February/March/April/May 2007 Newsletter



# *The Newton Conservators* **NEWSLETTER**

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NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.  
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