



# NEWTON CONSERVATORS

SUMMER ISSUE

# NEWSLETTER

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

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## Wilber to Conservators: “Best Tactic is Hope”



Bob Wilber, Director of Land Protection for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, brought a positive message to the Newton Conservators' annual dinner on May 25. Mr. Wilber served as the keynote speaker as the Conservators celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He told the audience of 130 that there is much to be hopeful about, from a conservation perspective, and that open space advocates gain more community support with a message of hope than with warnings of doom.

Mr. Wilber congratulated the Conservators on 50 years of achievement, much of which was on display at exhibits in the room. He noted that Massachusetts was the birthplace of the land trust movement in the 1890s and that the state has more land trusts per square mile than any other state. Contrary to many people's impression, he said, today there is more conserved land than developed land in the state. The economic downturn has created large opportunities for land conservation, with land prices in decline and money for acquisitions able to buy more. In spite of the difficult times, the Commonwealth has responded by making \$50 million per year available for open space acquisitions for five years.

With news of wars, terrorism, and a recession creating a mood of gloom, he said, people need a message of hope, and when they hear one they respond. Only about 5% of the U.S. population are active conservationists, but conservation does have broad popular

support. Conservationists can reach out to the other 95% by stressing broad themes:

- the benefits of clean water
- the benefits of clean air
- the importance of open space for spiritual renewal and as a place to “tune out” the high-stress man-made world.

Mr. Wilber suggested that open space advocates form alliances with various groups:

- schools, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, and youth groups
- farmers and community gardeners
- Community Preservation Committees, which are the source of most funding in participating Massachusetts communities for land acquisitions.

Mr. Wilber suggested a tree-planting initiative as one way to connect with local volunteers. (In fact, the Conservators have implemented some of the same approaches, accessing CPA funds for acquisitions and working with Newton's newest conservation organization, the Newton Tree Conservancy, which plants trees.)

Mr. Wilber noted that, more than anything else, a lack of access for land owners to information is a hindrance to conservation. An important function of a land trust like the Conservators is to serve as an information clearinghouse. He encouraged us to give others in the community the opportunity to work with us.

“Here's to the next 50 years,” he said, “for the Newton Conservators to make an impact for conservation.” ■

## President's Message



Jane Sender and Bob Wilber at the 50th Anniversary Annual Dinner *Henry Finch*

Thank you all very much for your enthusiastic participation as sponsors, silent auction donors and bidders, and guests at our Annual Dinner last month. We made quite a bit of money – more than we expected – but most of all we had fun, we spread our good word a little further out into the Newton community, and we let many new people know who we are and the good and important things we do. Congratulations to all who worked very hard to make this a success!

There are two significant projects to watch over the next few months. The Riverside development is continuing to evolve, and, while the project raises many issues, a couple are uniquely important to us. The Riverside site borders the Charles River, and if it goes forward there should be appropriate pedestrian and visual access for people working, living and shopping at the site. In addition, cyclists and walkers should be able to get to and use the site as much as possible. One of the main selling points of the development is the energy saving which comes from building around existing public transportation. Making it possible to use all other means of getting to and around the site is key to making this project make sense.

Second, the Chestnut Hill Shopping Center owners are seeking special permits to make changes at the site. It would be wonderful to take this opportunity to create better access to Hammond Pond from the parking lot, as well as to create a buffer for parking lot and Route 9 stormwater runoff in the process. The first public hearing before the Board of Aldermen's Land Use Committee is June 21. Check the BOA calendar for further hearings. Let the Aldermen know how you feel.

I wish you all a fun and relaxing summer!

*Henry Finch*

## Environmentalists of the Year:

*Trail Guide Committee*



Lucy Caldwell-Stair, Pat Robinson and Judy Hepburn (Missing: Dan Brody) *Henry Finch*

The Newton Conservators' Environmentalist of the Year Award for 2011 was given to the Trail Guide Committee, made up of **Pat Robinson, Dan Brody, Lucy Caldwell-Stair and Judy Hepburn**. The Trail Guide is the Conservators' "signature item." It was first published in 2003 and was updated in 2010. The Trail Guide maps the locations of trails for walking, hiking, and cross-country skiing at all of Newton's major open spaces. For many Newton residents, it is the introduction to how to access the open spaces that are available to us all.

Pat Robinson provided design work. This year Pat also designed banners, business cards, and our new brochure, created our new 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo and stationery, designed our beautiful invitation and program for the annual dinner, and, with Lucy Caldwell-Stair, designed our historical display.

Lucy Caldwell-Stair served as the keeper of years of corrections to the old guide. Beyond that, she was "on the look out" for hidden areas to be included in the new one. With Pat, Lucy produced the historical display on exhibit at the annual dinner. The Conservators intend that the display will move to the Newton History Museum for people to enjoy.

Judy Hepburn is a long-time member of the Newton Conservators and also serves the City as a member of the Conservation Commission. Judy is a geologist. As President Sender said, Judy "knows how to draw maps, and she made all of them for this guide." The maps provide the important references for anyone using the Trail Guide to reach and navigate the parks.

*Environmentalists of the Year continued from page 2:*

Dan Brody worked on the new maps and background information for the guide. Dan works at keeping the Conservators' website updated. Dan also monitors Cold Spring Park. This year, with the help of Newton's Parks and Recreation Department and Newton Serves, Dan led an effort to get the mounds of trash out the pond at Cold Spring Park. Pictures of what was removed are on the Conservators' website.

President Jane Sender presented the award to the four recipients at the Annual Dinner. She thanked them for their talent, hard work, and dedication to the Conservators. In her words, "It is truly amazing how much talent this group has and that we could create something this good from an all-volunteer effort." ■

## Charles Johnson Maynard Award Goes to Hillis and Barbier



Henry Finch

Suzette Barbier

The Charles Johnson Maynard Award is given each year by the Newton Conservators to recognize efforts "to improve biodiversity, habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection." In 2011, the award went to **Duane Hillis and Suzette Barbier** for their work with the Friends of Nahanton Park.

The Friends of Nahanton Park was re-energized in the past year. The first issue that arose was with unruly dogs and the possibility of an off leash dog park. Then came expansion

plans for Angino Farm into Nahanton Park. In the winter came mounds of filthy snow, excessive City of Newton vehicular presence, discarded Christmas trees, discarded tree limbs, and dumped mattresses.

Duane "led the charge" to pull the Friends of Nahanton Park together, to create a more powerful voice. He sets the bar high for what it means to care about the city we live in and for how, as private citizens coming together with City officials, we can make sure a park as special as Nahanton Park is protected.

Suzette Barbier is frequently found birding in the early morning at Nahanton Park. She is often the first to see problems. She is passionate about that beautiful park. Suzette is also a talented artist and graphic designer. She designed the

Friends of Nahanton Park brochure and its website, and she maintains a wonderful nature blog on the website.

Jane Sender thanked Duane and Suzette for their efforts. (The text here and in other news items from the annual dinner is adapted from President Sender's presentation.) ■

## Directors' Award to Frank and Deborah Howard



Frank and Deborah Howard

Henry Finch

The Conservators gave **Frank and Deborah Howard** a Directors' Award for their lifetime of service to the Conservators, to conservation, and to Newton.

Deborah Howard served effectively on the Conservators' board for many years. In addition, she was Assistant Secretary of Environmental Affairs for Massachusetts and a member of the Newton Conservation Commission, the Urban Tree Commission, and the Board of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Deborah also earned the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Gold Medal "for eminent horticultural accomplishments."

Frank Howard has been the "heart and soul" of the Newton Conservators Board. Since Frank's retirement from the Board, meetings are not the same without him. Always the first to offer praise for other's accomplishments, Frank was tireless on our Board, representing us on the High Performance Building Coalition and on bicycling, transportation and safety committees. He produced environmental programs for New TV and articles and photographs for the newsletter. Frank has also been central to the Board of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation's restoration of the native chestnut. ■

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## Fiftieth Anniversary Sponsors & Silent Auction Donors



### Sponsors

The Conservators appreciate the generous contributions of “Gold” and “Silver” Sponsors on the occasion of our Annual Dinner. We are indebted for their contributions, which will help to defray land acquisition and other costs.

#### Gold Sponsors (\$500)

Charles River Canoe & Kayak  
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Lalor & Patricia Burdick  
Law Offices of Stephen J. Small, Esq. PC  
The Village Bank

### Silent Auction Donors

Local businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals were generous in making gifts for the Newton Conservators' Annual Dinner Silent Auction. Here is our list.

Advance Auto Center  
ALEX Bottles  
Antoine's Pastry Shop  
Suzette Barbier  
Boccabella Café & Bistro  
Boston Red Sox  
Boston/Newton Marriott  
Brooks Mathewson  
Busy Bee Florist  
Cabot's Ice Cream & Restaurant  
Charles River Canoe & Kayak  
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Winston Flowers  
Yoga Power Studio, Inc.

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## Colorful Perennials in the Summer Garden

When our spring blooms fade, we wonder how to keep our gardens colorful through the summer. Planning ahead is ideal, but if you didn't have time, make a trip to a garden center in mid-July to see what perennials are blooming.

Coreopsis in its many iterations is a mainstay of the summer garden, from the diminutive, pale yellow thread-leaf coreopsis (*C. verticillata* 'Moonbeam' 12-18" July-Aug.) to the bright yellow petals with red centers of *Coreopsis grandiflora* ('Sunfire' 18-24" June-Oct.). Soft, lavender-blue Persian catmint (*Nepeta faassenii* 'Walker's Low' 8-10" June-

Oct.) blooms in my dry curbside garden. If the first bloom is cut back, it will bloom again in the fall.

You can't beat rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria* 18-24" June-July) for its vivid magenta display. It self-seeds to fill in open spaces. Deadhead it for continuing blooms, but let a few plants go to seed for next year's flowers. I never planted it, but each year my garden produces a crop of whorled loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia* 12-36" June-August). It has small, five-petaled, yellow flowers with bright red centers above each leaf axil. My garden visitors wonder what it is. You can find its description in *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*.

If you like bright colors, blanket flower (*Gaillardia x grandiflora* 18-36" June-Sept.) with its red, daisy-shaped



flowers tipped in yellow pleases. No summer garden is complete without deep rose (*Echinacea purpurea* ‘Magnus’ 18-36” July-Oct.) and golden-yellow coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida* ‘Goldsturm’ 24-36” July-frost). Its radiating, daisy-shaped petals will take you right into fall.

Creamy-yellow foxglove (*Digitalis grandiflora* ‘Ambigua’ 24-36” June-July) thrives in acid soil and colonizes by seed. Try dead-heading it for a second bloom. Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina* ‘Coronation Gold’ 30-36” June-Sept.) will add umbels of golden yellow.

Whirled, button-shaped, royal purple flowers of beebalm (*Monarda didyma* ‘Prairie Night’ 36-48” June-Aug.) are reliable, returning each year. Hybrids are available in a myriad of colors. Lupine (*Lupinus x* ‘Russell Hybrids’ 36-48” June-Sept.) in a mix of colors may last as long as four years in your garden. Remove spent blossoms to encourage re-blooming.

Culver’s root (*Veronicastrum virginicum* 36-48” Aug.-Sept.) has tall, elegant, white spires. For late summer, fluffy white spires of American bugbane (*Actaea americana* 36-60” July-Sept.) will fit the bill. The purple-leaved variety of *Actaea ramosa* ‘Atropurpurea’ is a special favorite of mine. Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus* 48-60” June-July) had large, feathery plumes of white flowers. Another tall, pluming plant is yellow goldenrod (*Solidago* 24-36” July-Aug.). If a wild variety turns up in your garden let it stay.

Hybrid daylilies or old-fashioned orange daylilies (*Hemerocallis fulva* 48-60” July-Aug.) will add a burst of color in mid-summer. Be sure to plant fulva daylilies where they can run: they spread and are nearly impossible to remove once they’ve made themselves at home. I planted them between the sidewalk and a rock outcropping where they make a wonderful but enclosed display.

→ Beth Schroeder – bsw1@comcast.net

## Canoe Trip at Nahanton Park.



Dottie Hagar and Mike Clarke → Bill Hagar

Over the past year, we have had several canoe/kayak trips from Nahanton. This is a beautiful section of the Charles River, from which you can go with the current to the dam in Newton Upper Falls or go back upstream against the current to the far reaches of Needham, Dedham and Wellesley. The Newton Conservators have sponsored these trips for interested participants who have a canoe or kayak to use, or more likely rented one of them at the new canoe/kayak water stand rental that is now located at this spot. This is the same rental group as the one on the Charles River near the Marriott Hotel.

The upstream stretch is an area of significant beauty, with almost pristine marshes and tree lines. The Cutler Marsh is particularly impressive in depth. We have supervised two trips this past academic year, one in September and another on June 5 of this year. Both trips were exciting in their own right, with a different pattern of wildlife overlapping the background tree line and marsh views as canoes and kayaks leisurely moved through the water towards Millennium Park. The September trip had almost a dozen participants, most with cameras or binoculars for bird watching and photography. It was also a good time to follow the massive numbers of turtles and other wildlife that have successfully been born on this unique stretch of water. We spotted blue herons, as well as a swan couple out for an afternoon stroll. Our favorite picture was the one with an array of turtles lined up on a log near the shoreline.

The June trip had several stopping points. The first was Powell’s Island, a land mass connected by way of wooden bridges with Cutler Park. We parked our boats on a grassy section of this island and walked towards Cutler Park on a trail that actually was an esker, a remnant of our glacier-filled past. The esker is a long, winding ridge of gravel and sand that is a residue of the glacier. In this case, it resembles



⇒ Bill Hagar

a train embankment with sloping sides. During our combination water trip and hike, we ran into several groups of hikers who were heading to Cow Island or taking the circular route back to the Cutler Park starting point. We shared some tidbits with them and discussed various walking or watering options along the banks of the Charles River. Hopefully, these walkers will soon be members of the Newton Conservators.

We returned to the boats and continued our travel past the canoe docking site at Millennium Park, past the large Dedham Ditch to a quiet spot on Cow Island, where we stretched our legs and took in the scenery. The trip back was similar, except that we had the wind at our backs and were moving downstream toward Nahanton Park.

All in all it was an inspiring water tour, and the participants from both trips benefited from nature's beauty.

⇒ William Hagar, Trip Leader

## Eyes on the Trees

*This newsletter has reported on problems with street tree pruning for overhead wires in the past. This letter from Katherine Howard appeared recently in the Newton Tab.*



Starting June 15<sup>th</sup>, NSTAR will resume utility line clearance in parts of Auburndale and Waban. Line clearance is important for public safety and to reduce power outages; it also must be done properly per agreed

standards negotiated with the City. Otherwise, the City could issue another Stop Work order.

The NSTAR contractors (TREETECH in Auburndale; LEWIS TREE in Waban) must follow the conditions outlined below. Workers will have an instruction sheet. Should you see deviations from these conditions – discuss with the worker, ask for a supervisor, and/or contact the Forestry Department or the Urban Tree Commission. A photograph could be helpful.

The negotiated standards apply only to City trees (typically in the berm, or 6–8 feet from the street). For tree trunks completely on private property, NSTAR must seek permission from the owner.

Requirements include:

- (1) qualified workers with pruning experience and supervision by Certified Arborist;
- (2) compliance with industry pruning standards, such as pruning back to a branch (healthy and suitable) at least one third the diameter of the branch being removed, and not removing more than 25% of a tree's live canopy;
- (3) not removing live branches larger than four inch diameter unless they are a clear and present danger to the electrical wires;
- (4) not cutting lateral branches originating from the main trunk of any tree with a strong central leader back to the trunk of the tree without prior approval from the Tree Warden – instead, reducing them in length by pruning back to a suitable branch at least one third its size;
- (5) not cutting or reducing a central leader without prior approval from the Tree Warden.

### To report problems, contact:

Marc Welch, Director of Urban Forestry,  
617-796-1500, newtonforestry@gmail.com, or  
Katherine Howard, Urban Tree Commission,  
617-527-1796, howard\_katherine@hotmail.com.

⇒ Katherine Howard  
President, Newton Tree Conservancy

## Coming Events

### Annual Meeting of Newton Tree Conservancy

June 20, 7:00 p.m.

Brigham House (former branch library) in Newton Highlands at 20 Hartford Street

NTC will elect Directors and Officers and discuss NTC goals and plans. From President Howard: "NTC is now accepting nominations for Directors and Officers. You can nominate yourself! Now is the time to show your zeal for community service and your love of trees. We welcome those who'd like to get involved to become members, attend our meetings, serve on a committee, and/or do a project for the NTC. Please contact us to indicate your interest. And please plan on attending the meeting, whether you are running or not. Refreshments will be served and we can "talk trees." RSVP to howard\_katherine@hotmail.com, but drop-ins are also welcome. Information about Newton Tree Conservancy is available on our website, [www.newtontreeconservancy.org](http://www.newtontreeconservancy.org).

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## Lecture by Dr. Ned Friedman

*“Darwin’s ‘Abominable Mystery’: the Search for the First Flowering Plants”*

June 27, 7:00 p.m.

Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street

Dr. Friedman will speak on Darwin and the origin of flowering plants. From Dr. Friedman: “Charles Darwin spent a lifetime studying the big questions of evolutionary biology, and he was baffled by the origin of flowering plants. Recent advances in the fossil record offer clues to understanding what these plants looked like, where they lived, and how they reproduced. We will explore what Darwin termed ‘the abominable mystery.’” Ned Friedman is Arnold Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and Director of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University. This event is co-sponsored by the Newton Conservators and the Newton Tree Conservancy.

## Lecture by David Gessner, “My Green Manifesto”

July 14, 7:30 p.m.

Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street

David Gessner will discuss his “call for a new environmentalism, inspired by a canoe trip down the Charles River with Dan Driscoll.” David Gessner is a noted nature writer. This will also be a book signing for his new book.



## Letters

### Save Our Trail!

*(This letter was sent to the Newton Conservation Commission. Mr. Reilly made it available to the Conservators as well. As most of our readers know, the Conservation Commission is an arm of the City of Newton’s government. The Newton Conservators are Newton’s land trust and are a private, non-profit organization. Excerpts from Mr. Reilly’s letter are reprinted here.)*

Dear Conservation Commission,

I’m a resident of Upper Falls and quite often (at least a few times a week in good weather) walk the trails in the strip of woods between Quinobequin Rd. and the river. It’s a beautiful walk.

I was out there today and was bewildered to find the trail completely blocked with piles of freshly cut brush. After climbing around and through the blocked trail I came upon a very pleasant work crew who were doing trail work. I asked them what they were doing. They told me that they were moving the trail back from the water per

instructions of the Newton Conservation Commission. They said that they had just finished cutting one portion of the new trail and I could try it out.

I took them up on the offer and walked the new trail. The main difference between the two trails is that the old trail was a pleasant walk along the river. The new trail is a walk with no visibility of the river and never gets out of sight of the busy Quinobequin Rd. At points it veers a bit away from the road but never far enough to give you a sense of being away from roads and never close enough to know that there’s a river nearby.

Much worse is the apparent plan to replace one of the loveliest walks in Quinobequin (the first ½ mile from Rt. 9) with a trail that sounds suspiciously like an unpaved side walk on a busy road.

Every aspect of this initiative had me completely mystified and appalled.

- It’s DCR park land intended for the enjoyment of the public. The essence of its appeal to the public is that it is alongside the river. With the new trail configuration the river might as well not exist.
- The other essential goal of parks is to give the public a respite from the busy world around us. With the new trails you’re never out of sight of speeding traffic.
- “Protecting the river” — The only justification I’ve heard so far for this project is ridiculous on the face of it. The single best way to protect the river and the park is to encourage the citizenry to responsibly use the park. As soon as people begin using the park, they begin valuing and protecting it. This dynamic can be seen over and over again in place after place. I was speaking to someone a few months ago who leads the annual clean up of Cutler Park. In the last 10 years or so, the DCR opened up a lot of that previously inaccessible wetlands on the river flood plain land with a few carefully placed foot bridges and some modest trail work. When they first opened it up they were hauling huge amounts of trash, everything from bottles and cups to refrigerators and abandoned cars. Now, with regular public use there’s no comparison, the situation has infinitely improved.

If they haven’t already, I would strongly urge all of the commissioners to walk the length of both the old and new Quinobequin trails and then re-open and improve the old existing trails. I’d be happy to give you a guided tour if you like.

Sincerely,  
Jerry Reilly



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# NEWSLETTER

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

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SUMMER ISSUE

WWW.NEWTONCONSERVATORS.ORG • JUNE - AUGUST 2011

## **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 50 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](mailto:ericreen@tiac.net). Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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