



Working to preserve open space in Newton for 43 years!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

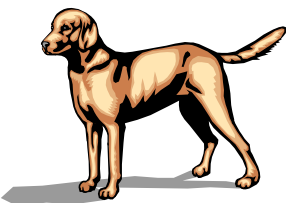
Holiday Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

November / December 2003

CAN PARKS AND DOGS COEXIST? A HEARING ON DECEMBER 3 ASKS FOR COMMENTS

The Newton Conservators has worked for over 40 years to protect open space for the benefit of citizens, who visit our parks and conservation areas for fitness, recreation and inspiration, as well as wildlife, who depend on these areas for their survival. But what about Fido—is there also room in our parks for dogs? Do they have a right to exercise their legs and lungs in our public open spaces? If so, under what conditions?



This will be the topic of a hearing to be held by the Programs and Services Committee of the Board of Aldermen on Tuesday, December 3 at 7:45 PM at

Newton City Hall. Alderman Marcia Johnson, who chairs this committee, has worked for several years with Alderman Christine Samuelson and other aldermen and community activists to craft a reasonable compromise that would enable dogs to use selected parks and conservation areas in a way that respects the rights of other users.

As matters stand currently, dogs are allowed in these places only when leashed. Dogs running free are technically in violation of the city's leash law—and if you visit most any of our parks on mornings, evenings and weekend days, you'll find lots of dog owners who disregard this ordinance.

These folks defend their behavior by describing the enjoyment they get from playing with their dogs in

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President's Message *Nature Guys*

I had a neighbor in Newtonville who knew his backyard like the back of his hand. He knew when the skunk was out feeding on grubs. He would come over to my yard, survey the damage from dug-up patches in the grass and say, "Mr. Skunk paid you a visit last night."

I would tell him how I had been busy helping the city get a conservation restriction on 30,000 square feet of property off the Hammond Pond Parkway. He would tell me how the monarch butterflies had been feeding on the milkweeds he grew next to his privet hedge.

I would tell him about the Order of Conditions the Conservation Commission had issued for the house beside Laundry Brook. He would ask me if I could see the owl. "It's in the tree," he said. I looked up at all the branches. "No, look in the hollow of the trunk." He pointed me in the right direction and there, almost invisible, was the owl.

We were both Nature Guys, but Nature Guys of a different kind. His knowledge may not have been at the level of the Algonquins, who lived here a few hundred years ago and depended on it for their

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(Dogs and Parks, continued from page 1)

a place large enough for their dogs to run, to interact with other dogs and to get the exercise the animals need for good health.

People who oppose dogs off-leash in our parks cite the failure of owners to control their animals, allowing them to jump up on or threaten children, the elderly and other dogs. They also talk about unsanitary conditions created by owners who don't clean up after their animals.

The lines are drawn in a seemingly intractable way. How can the interests of dog owners and those who oppose their use of public spaces be reconciled? One solution is to create dedicated dog parks throughout the city. These would be fenced areas within existing open spaces reserved for dogs and their owners. This idea would separate dogs from other park users, but would remove large amounts of open space from use for other purposes. It would also introduce further fragmentation of these facilities and more of the already abundant chain link fencing.

Are fences needed to create dog parks? San Francisco and other cities across the country have designated areas of parks for use by dogs without fencing, relying on owners to keep their dogs within certain zones during certain hours. These restrictions are posted so other users can plan their activities accordingly. Plastic bags are provided to encourage owners to pick up after their animals.

The Trustees of Reservations has a demonstration project—called the Green Dog program—in place at two of its sites. Dog owners are required to purchase a tag (which comes free of charge to members for up to two dogs) that permits use of the facilities for a day or as long as a year. The dog and the owner must wear the tag to show they are authorized users. Rules require owners to keep their dogs within the bounds of designated areas, control their animals when others are in the vicinity, clean up after defecation, and immediately leash unruly dogs. Volunteers and staff monitor and enforce these policies. Proceeds from the sale of tags cover the costs of the program, which includes supplies of plastic bags, training of volunteer monitors, and paid staff to manage the project.

It's probably not possible and certainly impractical to hold dogs and their owners to the strict leash law now on the books. But finding a solution has not been easy and will continue to challenge those on all sides of the issue. But there are some models we can learn from to craft our own local response to the legitimate

interests of people, pets and wildlife. If, like many others, you hold strong opinions on this matter, take a moment to voice your comments and suggestions, either at the hearing on December 3 or by contacting Marcia Johnson (mjohanson@ci.newton.ma.us).

Doug Dickson

(Nature Guys, continued from page 1)

survival. But his knowledge of nature was ahead of mine. We could all learn to be more like that kind of Nature Guy.

In this issue, Beth Schroeder shares with us what she knows about the layers in the canopy of a healthy woodland. Beth is a Director of the Conservators and a landscape architect. We can use her knowledge to help create naturally healthy yards. Ted Kuklinski shares some of what he knows about wildlife at Dolan Pond. Ted is also a Director and has familiarized us all with Dolan through his email newsletter. Because of him, we are more likely to understand what we see when we go there.

My message is that we don't need to go to the wilds of the Northeast Kingdom to find wildlife. We can find it at Dolan Pond—or in our own back yards.

Eric Reenstierna



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

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

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Lisle Baker, Jim Broderick, Doug Dickson, Frank Howard, Ted Kuklinski, Eric Reenstierna and Beth Schroeder. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading services.

Lessons Learned from Nature

Your yard should mimic the way nature works in a native plant environment. You can make your yard into an ideal ecosystem of plants that are attractive, easy to care for and happy to coexist together.

The first thing to remember is that woodlands and woodland edges here in New England have several different layers. There is a high canopy that may consist of oaks, maples, beeches or white pines. This layer may be as tall as one hundred feet. A second layer of plants grows below this high canopy. These understory trees may consist of flowering dogwoods, redbud, witch hazel or American hornbeam. Under these small trees, you will find the shrub layer. This may include serviceberry, rhododendron, mountain laurel, native azaleas, blueberries and many other lovely native shrubs. Next comes the herbaceous layer, consisting of ferns, perennial flowers and wildflowers such as asters, may apples and blood root. The next layer consists of ground covers. Woodland ground covers include bearberry, bunchberry and partridgeberry, to name a few. The final layer will probably be a beautiful bed of green moss.

Many suburban yards have the high canopy but many of the other important layers are missing. If you are not happy with your landscape, look to see if one or more of these layers is absent from your yard. Do you have a high canopy and a lawn? Are the understory trees and shrubs missing? This will help you to decide what needs to be added to your garden.

Use the existing high canopy trees as your starting point and add the missing layers beneath them or close by them. Group the different layers into one area. You can create a woodland garden in the back corners of your property and then wrap the garden around each side of your yard to create a mixed-shrub hedgerow for privacy and variety.

Close to the house you may want to use small understory trees and shrubs. Be sure to use shrubs that will not grow higher than your windows. This will eliminate the need to prune.

Native woodland plants are ideal garden plants. The soil and the temperatures in New England are exactly what these plants crave. With a little planning you can bring the beauty of the woodland landscape into your own garden.

Beth Schroeder, bsw1@comcast.net

WILD WEST NEWTON

Nature at Dolan Pond

On a recent Fall morning, a committee of Conservators board members, armed with a copy of the 1995 naturalist report by John Richardson, went exploring the back areas of the Dolan Pond Conservation Area. Led by naturalist Jon Regosin, Beth Schroeder, Cris Criscitiello, and Ted Kuklinski were evaluating the area for evidence of some of the plants, trees, ferns and shrubs detailed in earlier reports. Stepping through muddy areas, across logs, and through thickets, the group's watchful eyes scanned for the unusual. "Ah—a Royal Fern—is that on our list yet?"

Due in part to the foresight of the city's environmental planner, Martha Horn, plant and animal inventories have been done for most of our conservation areas. This Conservators committee had in mind the possibility of producing a small nature guide to highlight each of our open space areas. With its recent renovation with trails, boardwalks, and overlooks, Dolan Pond was a good candidate for such a guide.

All of our open spaces are treasure troves of nature, with a variety of mammals, reptiles, insects, flowers, trees, and plants. And most of us walk through often unaware of what is really there! Any area, when watched over time, will surely yield unanticipated surprises. Since discovering Dolan Pond while out jogging, it has become my favorite respite, a place where I can spend peaceful moments watching birds and other wildlife. Despite its small size, it contains tremendous biodiversity.

As in most of our areas, that diversity is threatened in various ways—by the pressure of non-native invasive species (garlic mustard, knotweed, even Norway maple), by abutters who disturb vegetation too near the ponds or streams or who think nothing of tossing their yard waste into a conservation area, by others who toss trash and beer cans into the ponds. The fresh tracks of an all-terrain vehicle were all too evident on the recently chipped path on our visit that morning.

No matter what the season, I have yet to come away without witnessing something that made me glad to have visited Dolan Pond. It might have been the prehistoric beauty of a snapping turtle crawling

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(Wild West Newton, continued from page 3)

through the woods to find an egg laying spot, the delightful trill of the spring chorus of *Bufo americanus* in the ponds, the magic of witnessing a mother Wood Duck swimming with her newly-fledged ducklings, the strangeness of finding a Long-billed Dowitcher working the mudflats at the edge of Dolan Pond in a sewing machine-like rhythm, the fragrant beauty of a stroll down the new boardwalk through a lush canopy, the hopefulness of seeing the early spring marsh marigolds and watching the fiddleheads unfold themselves into ferns, the drama of a garter snake trying to swallow a toad five times bigger than its mouth, watching a Great-blue Heron patiently stalking tadpoles, witnessing a muskrat diving down into the entrance of its lodge, discovering fox and coyote tracks on a frozen pond after a fresh snowfall, the surprise of a Ruffed Grouse bursting forth when unexpectedly flushed, the distinctive sound of the Scarlet Tanager in the tree canopy behind Irene Forte's house, or the artificially vibrant yellow of the Prothonotary Warbler found in early May that delighted so many birders from afar who came to take its picture.

Grab a copy of the new Trail Guide and get out there to make nature memories of your own at your local conservation area! You are welcome to receive the free Dolan Pond News email newsletter put out by Friends of Dolan Pond. Send a request to dolanpond@aol.com or visit www.dolanpond.org.

Ted Kuklinski

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 over 40 years ago in June 1961.

Advocacy

CONSERVATORS TAKE POSITION ON KESSELER

As the Board of Aldermen took up the Community Preservation Committee's recommendation to spend an additional \$1 million to acquire Kessler Woods, the Board of the Newton Conservators met to determine its position and convey it to the two aldermanic committees charged with reviewing the proposal. Below is the text of the letter outlining the Conservators' statement on this issue:

October 27, 2003

Alderman Amy Sangiolo
Chair, Ad hoc Committee on Community Preservation
Alderman Paul Coletti
Chair, Finance Committee
Newton Board of Aldermen

Dear Ms. Sangiolo and Mr. Coletti,

I am writing on behalf of the Newton Conservators for two purposes: to express our appreciation of the work of city officials that has led to the acquisition of Kessler Woods; and to comment on the proposed expenditure of an additional \$1 million for the acquisition.

The mission of the Conservators is to preserve open space. To this purpose we heartily applaud the Mayor, the CPC, and the Board of Aldermen. The acquisition of Kessler Woods has been a high priority of the Conservators for many years. The city's winning effort to acquire the land is a great success. The city undertook a difficult process in partnering with a private developer, in keeping the amount of the bid secret, and in submitting a bid that topped the others yet gained the land at a very favorable price. This acquisition is an example of what can be accomplished by the Community Preservation Act and will be appreciated for generations to come.

The Conservators promote basic principles regarding open space acquisitions. We seek open spaces that are contiguous to other open spaces. We seek whenever possible to create the largest open

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(Kessler letter, continued from page 4)

area. And we believe that these spaces should be easily accessible to the public. The Conservators' Board of Directors met on Wednesday evening, October 22, and was unable to reach a consensus on whether to support either of the two current alternatives for the land on Brookline Street. In particular, our concern is with the proposed configuration of the open space to be protected in the 11-lot plan.

We look forward to endorsing a workable plan for this portion of the site that does create the most contiguous open space with public access. During our discussion, individuals on the Conservators' Board pointed out how the development plan in that area might be altered to provide the developer equal benefits while increasing the public benefits of better access and more open space. These Conservators may wish to convey their advice individually. We appreciate that the city, of necessity, has available to it only limited options in altering the development plan for this portion of the site. We offer as guidance from the open space community that open space in that location not be isolated and that the acreage in publicly accessible open space be maximized.

Sincerely,
Eric Reenstierna, President

The CPC recommendation garnered a tie vote in the Ad hoc Committee and failed in a Finance Committee vote in a joint meeting of the two committees. Some aldermen who opposed the expenditure cited their belief that giving up a few acres (estimates ranged from 3-4 acres based on various plans) of open space was worth the savings of \$1 million. Under the agreement negotiated by the city, the developer guaranteed the \$1 million and would have the right to three additional house lots along Brookline Street if the city failed to appropriate the money.

Other aldermen indicated their concern about a three-quarter acre parcel of open space that would serve as a buffer between existing and new homes to which public access would be limited. A view was expressed by some that ground apparently lost by not spending the \$1 million could be made up in the special permit process when this project comes before the Board of Aldermen as part of the land use

process. Finally, some members of the Board felt that the million dollars could be better spent on other projects in the city.

The proposal went before the full Board of Aldermen on Monday, November 3 and was chartered by Alderman Ciccone. This means that the matter is automatically tabled until the next meeting, to be held on Monday, November 17. That meeting had not been held as of this writing.

Other activity on the Kessler Woods acquisition includes the delineation of wetlands, required to determine areas that are protected under the state Rivers Act and other wetlands legislation. This falls under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. In addition, the developer continues to develop plans for the Brookline Street parcel, which will be the first of the two development parcels to go through the city's land use process.

The first step is the subdivision of the property, which will be considered by the Planning and Development Board. Lots that require grade changes of three or more feet or that constitute rear lots, as defined by city ordinance, will also require a special permit from the Board of Aldermen.

The acquisition is scheduled to close on January 7, 2004, the date the city will take ownership of its share of the property and Cornerstone, the city's development partner, will take ownership of parcels on LaGrange and Brookline Streets.

POSITION ON USE OF ALBEMARLE FIELD FOR FOOTBALL STADIUM

At the suggestion of a former alderman, the Mayor and the School Committee indicated interest last month in exploring the relocation of Dickinson Field, Newton North High School's track and gridiron, to Albemarle Playground, now officially known as the Halloran Sports and Recreation Complex. The theory behind this change is that it would permit greater flexibility in siting the new structure envisioned by the hybrid plan for North.

In its regular meeting on October 23, the Newton Conservators Board of Directors took a strong position in opposition to moving quickly to adopt

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(Albemarle Field, continued from page 5)

this plan, advocating careful study and adherence to the well-documented process for changing the use of city recreation land. The text of the letter follows:

October 27, 2003

Anne Larner, Chair
Newton School Committee

Dear Ms. Larner and School Committee Members:

The Newton Conservators is a citizens group that advocates for Newton's open spaces. Founded in 1961 and with a membership of more than 400 households, we advocate for the proper use and protection of parks, playgrounds, conservation areas, ponds and streams in Newton.

The Newton Conservators is writing to you regarding Albemarle Park. We have recently read in the *Newton Tab* about plans to relocate the football field and grandstands from Newton North into this city park. As you contemplate this issue we ask that you keep the following in mind:

- We understand that the School Committee will adhere to the procedures regarding parks and recreation land as prescribed under Chapter 45 of the Massachusetts General Laws. In discussing any changes of use or alterations to parkland the School Committee intends to go through the proper statutory stewards of Newton's parks and playgrounds—the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission.
- There is an open space plan on file for the City of Newton. In the plan is information about the current uses and future plans for all open space in Newton, including Albemarle. In making decisions regarding the use of open space, this plan should be a guide. Any considerations regarding open space should, as outlined in the plan, take into account the total open space and recreational needs of the city.

Lastly, the Newton Conservators know that open space is a precious commodity in Newton. Once lost, our open spaces are irreplaceable. We hope that everyone will keep this in mind as we plan for the future of Newton.

Sincerely,
The Newton Conservators

Newton Conservators Newsletter

HOUGHTON GARDEN REOPENED

After more than a year of work, Houghton Garden was officially reopened in October. Present to celebrate this milestone were Rep. Ruth Balser, who helped obtain state money for the project, Ald. Lisle Baker, a longtime advocate for rehabilitating the Garden, Ald. Brian Yates and Ald. Amy Sangiolo, Martha Horn, the city's Environmental Planner who supervised the work, Helen Heyn, who helped acquire the property for the city many years ago, and Nancy Avery, who headed the project for the Chestnut Hill Garden Club.

"The Houghton Garden is an important historic and natural resource which has now been restored and made wheelchair accessible for all Newton citizens to enjoy," said Alderman Baker.

Houghton Garden is a ten-acre woodland garden, originally constructed by Mr. and Mrs. Clement S. Houghton, who built their home nearby in 1906. The Garden is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is located on the edge of both a local and National Register Historic District. It is a "wild garden" in the English style, including winding paths, a lagoon like pond, and Mrs. Houghton's 1919 alpine rock garden. The Garden, and the Webster Conservation Area of which it is a part, is under the jurisdiction of the Newton Conservation Commission.

The City of Newton undertook the rehabilitation of the Garden using funds from the Department of Environmental Management and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. These funds were in turn matched by the City of Newton, including funds from a Community Development Block Grant, and donations by the Chestnut Hill Garden Club.

The rehabilitation work not only involved clearing and dredging to restore some of the original landscape design, which had been overgrown, but also restoration of steppingstone pathways and stairs, replacement of the foundation of the dam and a stone bridge, and planting several new birch trees. It also involved new fencing, as well as the creation of a wheelchair accessible entrance and two pathways leading to viewing areas from which the rock garden and water feature may be seen. The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities also

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(Houghton Garden, continued from page 6)

reviewed the project and concurred that it will provide an experience in the city unlike the other areas available to the disabled.

To assure ongoing care of the Garden, a new nonprofit organization, The Friends of Houghton Garden, has been formed. The organization is committed to the restoration and historic preservation of the Houghton Garden's natural resources for the enjoyment of generations to come. Interested citizens can contribute time or donations by writing to The Friends of Houghton Garden at P.O. Box 67155, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467. The Chestnut Hill Garden Club has also pledged its continued support to help with maintenance, plantings and other activity, as has the Newton Conservation Commission.

Adapted from a press release provided by Ald. Lisle Baker



Group gathers for Newton Cemetery Tree Walk on October 26, part of the Conservators' Fall Walks program. Photo courtesy of Frank Howard.

TOP TREE TOUR OF NEWTON CEMETERY

On a Sunday afternoon in late October with rain threatening, a hopeful group of 15 tree viewers gathered outside the Newton Cemetery office to take a look at some of the remarkable specimens in the cemetery. Newton Conservators board member Doug

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Dickson co-led the annual tree walk, along with Larry Burdick, a member of the Cemetery Board of Directors, Frank Howard, who scouted out the trees with his wife Deborah Howard the day before the walk, and Peter Kastner who organized the walk.

The group toured the 100-acre cemetery to view 26 specimen trees and learn about their characteristics. The office graciously agreed to the tour and supplied a map showing the 26 tree locations as well as a list of the common and scientific names.

Peter Kastner described the origin of this cemetery at the time of the Civil War, when residents wanted to provide a grander and less austere burial environment for those who did not survive the war. He contrasted the style of this cemetery with older cemeteries in Newton and elsewhere that are not built in the garden style. He said the Newton garden cemetery was established in 1855 in the naturalistic style pioneered by the Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA. This coincided with the advent of landscape architecture as a discipline and the emergence of Frederick Law Olmsted, among others.

Larry Burdick provided information about the grounds and ongoing plans. Deborah Howard, who serves on the Newton Urban Tree Commission with Doug Dickson, added comments at each of the numbered tree stops. Frank Howard offered references and readings from authoritative tree manuals.

The serenely beautiful cemetery has four ponds fed by water flowing from Cold Springs Park. The water from these ponds proceed past the Newton Free Library into the City Hall lagoons and then to Bulloughs Pond. Selected trees require the water of Cold Spring Brook and, in turn, the roots of these trees hold the banks intact.

Carefully chosen trees provide year-round visual pleasure: fall color of the Marshall Maple, winter snow dusting the cinnamon colored bark of the Paper Bark Maple, spring yellow flowers of the magnificent tulip tree and summer color of the Golden Rain Tree. Blue Atlas Cedar and European White Birch added to the aesthetic treats of the walk.

As the tour ended at 4 PM, the rain came down. Some say the most important product of forests is not wood, but clean water.

Frank Howard



ORDWAY PARK NEIGHBORS MEET

On October 23, a group of some 20 neighbors of Ordway Park and ten members of the Conservators Board of Directors met at the home of Joan and David Rosenberg on Montvale Road to discuss the renewal of Ordway Park. A range of opinions about the future of the Park were voiced and most of those in attendance left their e-mail addresses and asked to be kept informed.

As everyone introduced himself or herself, there were many different expressions of gratitude that this woodland has been preserved as open space. A couple of people had known Priscilla Ordway; one recalled her preference for keeping what is now the area of the park a simple woodland. Others shared more recent impressions of the Park, when they were growing up or bringing their children to it. Their comments were warm and positive. Newcomers in the area said they saw the park as a special resource.

Three members of the Ordway Park committee made preliminary remarks. In answer to a query about Priscilla Ordway's will, Jim Broderick explained that the 1969 will had left "all my Newton Centre real estate," i.e. the house and all the land, to the Conservators, together with \$20,000 for the "said purposes" of the Conservators. A 1970 codicil, however, directed that the house and the hilltop property be sold, apparently because Miss Ordway otherwise would not have had funds for a bequest to Smith College that she had planned. But the remaining "vacant land" had never been laid out as a separate park area; for instance, the entrance to the park was from the hilltop, as indicated by remnants of stairs and winding paths. The more interesting plantings, too, were closer to the hilltop.

Corry Berkooz provided a brief summary of her professional evaluation of existing conditions in the park and of her suggestions about goals and design ideas for a renewal. She noted the absence of any buffer zone along Everett Street and Grant Avenue that could define the park, and advised that a final plan could supply native shrubs toward the perimeter. She suggested aiming in general for a woodland effect, clarifying the entrances along Grant Avenue and improving signage and maintenance. She saw a need for the introduction of native shrubs and groundcover to create seasonal interest.

Frank Howard reported on his month-long series of visits to the park at various times of day last May. He encountered few neighbors, most of them using the park as a cut-through. What struck him forcefully was the continuous traffic along Grant Avenue, and he ruefully concluded that a large part of the impact of the park will be on passing motorists. Nonetheless he emphasized his deep personal appreciation of the springtime beauty and variety in the park.

One close abutter of the park raised an early objection to "renewal." She feared benches and "civilization" that would bring litter. She welcomed thickets and weeds. It seemed she would agree with G.M.Hopkins' cry against human intrusion:

*What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left.
Oh, let them be left, wildness and wet:
Long live the weeds and the wildness yet.*

Most speakers, however, agreed only to the extent of rejecting what several called a "Brookline park," that is, with paving, flower beds, formal patterns of shrubs, etc. The consensus was clearly for what was called a "natural" park, more like the Olmsted parks or the Framingham Garden in the Woods, whose designs are unobtrusive.

How such a "natural" park could be achieved and maintained generated a lot of discussion. Corry Berkooz and Beth Schroeder listed a number of native shrubs and small trees that could add seasonal interest to a woodland garden. Even though Ordway Park has no source of water on site, they said that spot watering would be required only in the first year for native plants, and Frank Howard cited the success of his planting of an American Chestnut now 15 feet tall in its third year. Because of the hardiness of native species, they have the best chance of blocking invasive non-native species, and maintenance efforts should decline as the native plants establish themselves.

One questioner asked whether the Conservators would supplement the maintenance income from the Ordway Park Fund. A number of Directors present made it clear that the Board of Directors intended to continue to provide maintenance money as needed. They emphasized that the Board welcomed the Ordway Park Fund as an additional resource for Ordway Park, not as a substitute for its responsibilities there.

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(Ordway Park, continued from page 8)

Reflecting on the evening's discussion, members of the Conservators Committee on Ordway Park were heartened by the neighbors' lively interest in the park. The next step toward renewal of Ordway Park is to develop a set of preliminary layout and planting plans and to bring them back to neighbors for their comments.

Jim Broderick

HAMMOND POND PROJECT BEGINS

Martha Horn, the city's Environmental Planner, reports that Newton has received approval from the state to proceed with design and construction of improvements to Hammond Pond. A request for bids will go out shortly to select an engineer to design the project and a survey will be completed by the city engineer to support this work. Over the winter and spring, the design process will go forward, with construction occurring from mid-summer into the fall.

While the engineering design is done, Stephanie Bacon, President of the Friends of Hammond Pond, will lead a group to develop a quality assurance plan. This will begin with baseline assessments of water quality that will enable measurements that document improvements resulting from the project.

A broad coalition of community groups have come together to partner with the city and other governmental agencies to make this project happen. The Friends of Hammond Pond raised \$6500 and have played a catalytic role in raising awareness, convening interested parties, preparing funding applications and many other key steps in the process. The Chestnut Hill Village Alliance, Newton Conservators, Charles River Neighborhood Foundation contributed a total of \$2500. The Charles River Watershed Association is providing in-kind donation of time and expertise.

In addition, individuals stepped in at key moments to move this project along. Rep. Ruth Balser presided over a series of meetings with the groups named above and various state agencies to identify funding opportunities, expertise and other resources. This process created momentum leading to development of a successful funding proposal to the state. Similarly, the owners and managers of the Mall, C&R Management and S.R. Weiner & Company, provided key support for the project and

will allow areas of the parking lot to be used for staging during construction. They have also asked the city to permit permanent reduction of three spaces in their parking lot to enable placement of filtration devices. Other individuals have contributed political, engineering, grant writing support to the project.

Site preparation and other work will be done by the city's Department of Public Works and the city will contribute \$15,000 in cash to the project. In addition to this cash contribution, the in-kind services provided by the city will amount to about \$80,000. The MDC has granted permission to cross and use their land adjacent to the Pond during construction.

The grant from the state's lakes and ponds program is \$149,000, making the total value of the project in excess of \$250,000. Even with this amount, two key components of the system required to clean or prevent contaminants from entering the Pond are not funded in this first phase. An additional \$175,000 is estimated as the cost of installing a Vortech filtering system and a sedimentation forebay. Discussions are continuing to identify donors who might underwrite the cost of these phase two improvements.

Ruth Balser, Lisle Baker and Martha Horn have been recognized by the Conservators for their work on this important project.

Doug Dickson, with input from Martha Aherin Horn

Update on 76 Webster Park CPA Acquisition

This month will finally witness the culmination of a long process, the acquisition of the 1.1-acre property at 76 Webster Park in West Newton, directly adjacent to the Dolan Pond Conservation Area. A so-called "21E" environmental survey was completed recently and the final report was delivered on Monday, November 17. The closing on the property will take place by the end of November.

Bill Shaevel of the law firm, Shaevel and Krems, has volunteered his services on behalf of the Conservators and has been working with all the parties involved: the Forte family, the Newton Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, and the

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city's legal department.

A conservation restriction has been drawn up on the property and will wend its way through the approval process. Under the agreement, it is expected that, at the closing, the city will provide the funds to the Conservators and they will be signed over to the estate of Irene Forte. The Forte family's patience with the process is most appreciated.

Habitat for Humanity will most likely be conveyed the approximately 15,000 square foot housing portion of the lot to build an additional duplex unit which will be styled compatibly with the existing historic house. The original house will be conveyed by Habitat to the NHA as part of a condo agreement. Before that, there will be a hearing for a special permit, since there are a total of three units, one more than the two allowed by right.

Habitat has consulted with David Galler, a member of the Historic Commission, on the appearance of the new units and there is agreement on window styles. A new type of clapboard, Hardie Board, which holds up well, is being proposed for the exterior. The *pro bono* Habitat architect, Norberto Leon of the firm Stephan Bradley, has just come up with a design footprint for the new units with driveway and parking, which the Conservators will be reviewing. The boundaries for the housing portion will be put on the plan by the city surveyor and a subdivision into two lots will be pursued.

One of the main arguments in favor of the city's acquisition of the property at 76 Webster Park was that it preserved the biological diversity of the area, providing upland habitat different from the predominant red maple swamp—a different variety of trees, plants, and creatures. Losing this to development would have affected the health of the entire conservation area. In addition, the new conservation land allows observation into areas otherwise difficult to access. The open space portion of the property will eventually be conveyed to the Conservation Commission as an adjunct to Dolan Pond.

Recently, the NCSC's Teen Reach Program (in West Newton) donated the proceeds from a dance they held to Habitat for Humanity for this particular project and teens from the program will be volunteering when the Habitat build takes place next year.

Ted Kuklinski

Annual Christmas Bird Count *Sunday, December 14, 2003*

If you have an interest in our feathered friends, perhaps you'd like to take part in the annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 14. Begun in 1900 and done all over the country by teams of birders, the local counts are done within a specified circular area. Parts of Newton are within the count circle centered in Boston.

Participants usually gather at the home of Chris Criscitiello (Conservators board member and bird walk leader) near Cold Spring Park for coffee and to pick up maps. Beginning around 7 AM, about five teams fan out all over Newton to count as many birds of all types as they can, especially in park, conservation and cemetery areas. Any woody areas near water are usually quite productive. Larger open space areas are the focus in the morning, with smaller pocket areas and residential neighborhoods checked later in the day as time permits.

For the truly intrepid, there is usually an owling party, which heads out at around 3 AM. Typically, they get great looks at as many as a half dozen screech owls and occasionally Great Horned and Barred Owls.

Any birds seen during the count are recorded by species and number of individuals. The number of hours and distance traveled by count participants are also recorded (which helps to normalize results to the effort expended). Changes in numbers of our most common birds over the years help to spot environmental trends. Over the history of the count in Newton, over 90 species have been tabulated.

Representatives of the teams gather at 4 PM to pool the results for Newton. Later, our local results are taken to Mass Audubon's sanctuary in Belmont where other town coordinators gather to pool data for the entire Boston count circle. Consider that this same process is done all over the country in roughly the same time period, and it helps to get a handle on the bigger environmental impact of this project.

Experienced and non-experienced birders are welcome. Even if you would like to participate for only a few hours, please join us. For more info, contact Ted Kuklinski (617-969-6222, dolanpond@aol.com) or Cris Criscitiello (mgcrisci@massmed.org).

Ted Kuklinski

**IN MEMORY OF NICK YANNONI
Former Newton Conservators President**

We note with sadness the passing of Dr. Nicholas Yannoni on November 3rd. Nick was a member of the Newton Conservators board from 1984 to 2000, serving as president in 1986-88 and as treasurer in 1997-98. He was a graduate of Boston Latin, Boston University: BS (1954) and PhD in Chemistry (1961), and Boston College: MBA (1980). His career at the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories (Hanscom Field, Bedford MA) spanned 30 years encompassing research relating to crystallography, energy conversion, optical techniques and precision timing devices.

Nick was an ardent outdoor enthusiast with the Pelagic and Community Sailing Clubs (Boston) and the White Mules Ski Club (NH). He was also a committed volunteer with the Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority in addition to his work with the Newton Conservators. He frequently led walks on our aqueduct trails and wrote about the aqueducts.

Contributions can be made in Nick's name to The Society for PSP, Woodholme Medical Building, Suite 515, 1838 Greene Tree Road, Baltimore, MD 21208.

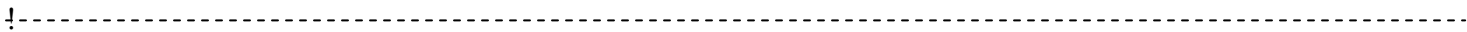
***New Maps Make Great
Holiday Gifts***

Looking for a holiday gift idea for a walker, snow-shoer, birdwatcher, naturalist or outdoor enthusiast, either active or latent? Is there someone you would like to introduce to 27 of Newton's special places?



The long-awaited revised guide to Newton's parks and conservation areas is hot off the press! Published by the Newton Conservators, the guide is given free to all members. But additional copies can be purchased in bookstores for \$7.95.

Why not pick up several copies for your friends and family members? Part of the proceeds go to further our work in protecting Newton's natural treasures.



**If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2003, it's not too late. Please renew today!
And consider an additional tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 42 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

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

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS	
<input type="radio"/> Individual member	\$25
<input type="radio"/> Family member	\$35
<input type="radio"/> Sustaining member	\$50
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<input type="radio"/> Patron	\$100

NAME _____

STREET _____ **VILLAGE** _____ **ZIP** _____

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



the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

IN THE HOLIDAY ISSUE:

- Can Parks and Dogs Coexist? page 1
- Nature Guys page 1
- Kessler Woods Update page 4
- Albemarle Playground page 5
- Houghton Garden Reopening page 6
- Ordway Park Neighbors Meet page 8
- Christmas Bird Count page 10
- And much more!

Give our new Walking Trails Guide for Holiday Gifts! See page 11



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ANY donation you can make to the Ordway Park Fund will be matched by a generous grant of up to \$10,000 to build an endowment for the maintenance and renewal of Ordway Park.



This is a ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION CHANCE to build the Newton Conservators' resources. Join other Conservators and neighbors of Ordway Park who have already contributed and whose dollars have already been matched. Make your tax-deductible check out to:

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