



Working to preserve open space in Newton for 47 years!

The Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

September/October/November 2008

SAVE OUR TREES!



- photo by Julia Malakie

Newton's urban forest is in jeopardy. Our forest is everywhere – along our streets, in our yards, along the Charles and our streams, and in our open spaces and parks. We enjoy both the beauty and the green, cool shade Newton's trees provide. But we also see problems: the dead and dying trees, the bizarre shapes hacked for utility line clearance and road work, the monoculture of Norway maples, the structural problems that have resulted from lack of proper pruning of young trees.

We also see the population of street trees dwindling, as dead and unsafe trees are removed with insufficient numbers being re-planted. The terrible recent news of the Asian Longhorned Beetle's arrival and infestation in the Worcester area (see related article later in this newsletter) only highlights what we have long known but for too long have put aside: Newton's urban forest needs our help.

Do you know the following tree facts?

- Newton has about 33,000 street trees, with a market value of over \$65,000,000.
- Trees provide beauty and shade to our streets, lower temperatures on hot summer days, absorb rainwater, and provide other environmental and economic benefits (oxygen; physical and mental health; real estate values).
- The City spends about 60% of its forestry budget each year just on removing dead and unsafe trees!
- In recent years any new trees planted by the City have been paid by one-time money from developers (Kessler, Andover Newton, etc.) paying in to the Private Tree Ordinance fund – and once the few remaining developable parcels are gone, this tree planting funding source will also be gone.

- the City's forestry department once had some 20 staff doing tree planting and maintenance "in house" but was cut back 20 or so years ago. For the past 10-20 years, the annual budget has been held steady at about \$400,000 (with only two staff and with the rest for contractors, mostly performing tree removal work).
- About 400 dead/unsafe trees are removed each year.
- At the current rate of removal and replacement, in 60 years, there will be virtually no street trees left.

We cannot let this happen!

The legacy of our forefathers, who planted thousands of trees and spent comparatively vast resources to maintain them, is not being carried on, either by current governmental programs or by private efforts. We, ourselves, have benefited from this legacy, but we are derelict in our duty to continue it for the benefit of future generations.

The Newton Tree Conservancy, Inc. is a new 501 (c) (3) organization that will address these issues in support of the City's urban forest. It will raise public awareness through community outreach and tree stewardship programs and will raise donations to fund enhanced tree planting and maintenance programs at a level beyond what the City's limited budget can do. (You may be aware that Newton also has an Urban Tree Commission, which is an arm of city government. Though it has some related goals and activities, it is not a private corporation as is the Newton Tree Conservancy, and it has no funds.)

The Newton Tree Conservancy Directors are Jay Berkson, Doug Dickson, Deb Howard, Katherine Howard, Julia Malakie, and Jack Wittenberg. We received a grant from the Charles River Neighborhood Foundation to help with start-up costs. We take tax-deductible contributions and would welcome your donation. Our website www.newtontreeconservancy.org gives more information on our programs and events, how to donate, and links to Asian Longhorned Beetle articles and sites.

On Sunday, October 26th, the Newton Tree Conservancy will host a kickoff event from 12 noon to 5 p.m. at Newton City Hall. Our event will feature guided Tree Walks (at Newton Cemetery, weather permitting) and lectures by Michael Dosmann, Curator of Living Collections for the Arnold Arboretum, Eric Seaborn, Urban Forestry Coordinator for the State Division of Conservation and Recreation, and Marc Welch, Director of Forestry for the City of Newton. There will be tree plantings and children's activities. See our website for more information. Please be there!

- Katherine Howard

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: COMMUNITY AS HABITAT

The Newton Conservators believe that community is important. Here in suburban Newton, our community consists of a collection of businesses, streetscapes, homes, gardens, people and pets. Sprinkled throughout Newton you will find parks, playgrounds, conservation areas and wetlands. Man-made and wild areas are interwoven communities in one physical space. Families and pets reside in our community. But wildlife – insects, birds and mammals – are also residents of this community. They coexist with us here in Newton even if they don't live in our houses but instead live outside.

The Newton community is a habitat for both the human world and the world of other living creatures. We all share the same ecosystem. We may feel that we are not dependent on the wilder half of our habitat. But just imagine a world without birdsong, wind blowing through leaves, flowers blooming, and dragonflies flitting by. Those other living creatures are indirectly dependent on us because we are either creating or destroying their habitat.

Our home gardens either add to or detract from wildlife habitat. Decreasing the amount of lawn and adding native flowers, shrubs and trees benefits the creatures living with us. A massive lawn that is sprayed regularly with pesticides does the opposite. Pesticides may even increase the chances of our own family members getting sick. Native plants make the seasons more interesting and increase the pleasure of living on your property. Early spring flowers, summer or fall berries, lovely fall leaf colors of yellow, orange, red and maroon, and charming sculptural shapes all winter long add beauty throughout the seasons.

Conservation areas set aside natural open spaces that give wildlife "breathing room." They give us breathing room, too. We have access to hiking paths and a wilderness to explore. If you live near or visit an open space, please remember that it should remain natural. It is not a dumping ground for yard debris. It isn't a place where it is okay to let your dog poop in the woods. Have the city pick up your leaves so that they are composted and reused. Take a bag along on walks and pick up after your dog. It only takes a moment to leave open spaces more pleasant for other visitors to use.

Avoid planting invasive plants in your gardens. These plants spread into the wild and push out native plants that belong there. Some people say, "My bushes haven't

invaded anywhere. They are right here in my yard where they've always been." But many produce seeds that are distributed by birds and small mammals.

My property in Newton is home to me, my husband, and my dog and also to insects, birds, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons and an occasional opossum or skunk. Sometimes a wild turkey visits, and once in a while a red tailed hawk sits in our oak trees. We all co-inhabit this one third acre suburban lot. When we first lived here my garden could have served as an invasive plant laboratory. Other than sickly hemlocks and large oak trees, my house was surrounded with Norway maples, burning bush, barberry, privet hedge and honeysuckle. We had scrubby, sickly grass trying to grow in the remaining space. Our hemlocks were infested by wooly adelgid.

After the removal of the hemlocks and the invasives, at first our yard looked decimated. The cozy woodsy feeling was gone and the street light that we hadn't noticed before lit up our house like a neighborhood gas station.

When replanting the garden, we added native trees such as the American hornbeam, fringe-tree, yellowwood, green hawthorn, aspen, and sassafras. We added shrubs such as serviceberry, bearberry, Carolina allspice, sweet fern, pagoda dogwood, hazelnut, witch hazel, smooth hydrangea, inkberry, Leucothoe, spicebush, partridgeberry, rhododendrons, fragrant sumac, snowberry, coralberry, low-bush blueberry, high-bush blueberry, mapleleaf viburnum, arrow-wood viburnum, highbush cranberry, and yellowroot.

Once the "bones" of the garden were in place, we added grasses, ferns and wildflowers. As the garden's trees and shrubs were planted, the lawn shrunk into a small, manageable area. Now it's a mere twenty-foot grassy circle outside the screened porch door and narrow paths around the flowerbeds. We started shredding our leaves each fall and spreading the leaf mulch under the trees and in the flower beds.

Having grown up in Wisconsin in a three-acre patch of woodlands outside a small town, I was used to seeing wildlife up close. It is something that I always missed here in the suburbs. Being able to walk to J.P. Lick's and Rosenfeld's Bagels is great, but I also want to see chipmunks dash across my yard. Now I have the best of both worlds.

- Beth Schroeder

ANGINO FARM FIXER-UPPER

Ever since Newton Angino Community Farm started growing vegetables three years ago, the landscape has been transformed into a thriving, working farm. Now the view will be transformed as well, as the farm group has begun restoration of the barn. The barn has been covered with vinyl siding for some twenty years. Before winter, the barn will reclaim its traditional look, with red cedar shingles and white trim—a classic New England barn right here in Newton!



The photo shows the building with its traditional shingles after most of the vinyl siding was removed in July.

Perhaps most importantly, this project will restore the integrity of the barn frame and foundation, so that the barn will be here to be enjoyed by future generations of Newton residents. As is the case for many 19th century barns, the Angino barn had deteriorated significantly over the years, and it very much needed to be repaired and stabilized. The accompanying photo shows the timber frame work now underway inside the structure. The farm group is also installing a new roof, energy efficient insulation and new windows.

Due to the generosity of the Lacy Foundation, as well as a number of Newton residents who are supporting this project at a major level (with private funding in excess of \$200,000), Newton Community Farm, Inc, the small non-profit operator of the farm, was able to move forward with this project. However, the group is still somewhat shy of its fundraising goal for the project. NCF needs an additional \$13,000 to complete the work this fall and is

asking members of the Conservators to help with contributions.



The Newton Conservators played a key role in the City's purchase of Angino farm. The Conservators hold a conservation restriction, which protects the site as farm land and open space. We are proud of our role and continue to support our friends and partners at Newton Community Farm.

To give your help, go to the Newton Community Farm's Web site and click on "Support."

In a future, second phase of construction, adding restrooms and other amenities, the barn interior will be converted into an education and community center to support the mission of Newton Community Farm to nurture a community that teaches and models sustainable agricultural, home gardening and environmental practices.

- Jon Regosin

NEWTON STAYCATIONS

Gas prices through the roof? Not a problem. What's more eco-friendly than staying home? The Boston Globe tells us that 2008 is the year of the "staycation." And what better place to take a staycation than Newton?

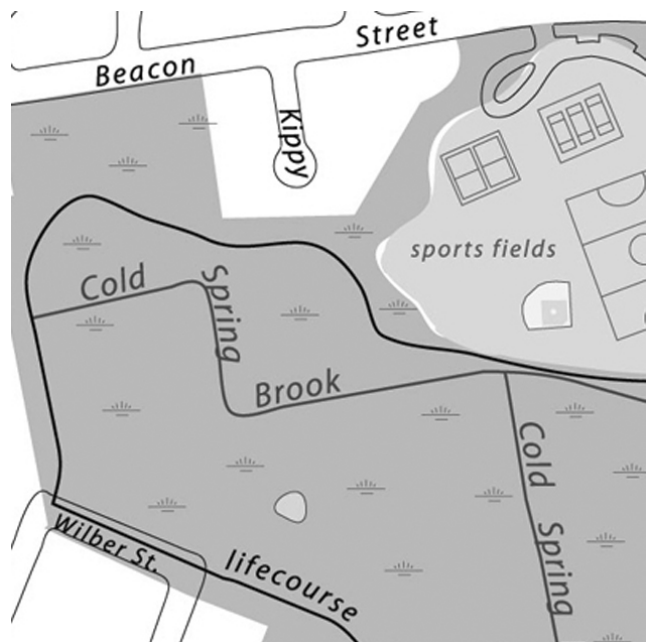
Can staying in Newton really feel like a vacation? Vacation is defined in the dictionary as rest; respite; intermission; and a time of recreation. Whether it's a respite from work, school or just household and garden chores, we all need breaks to refuel and relax. A respite in Newton is right outside our door, fun, and inexpensive. This city is filled with playgrounds, parks and

conservation areas just waiting for you to go out, and explore.

We have three favorite spots in Newton. Scenic views of the Charles River can be enjoyed along the Riverwalk paths and boardwalks. You can begin your walk along the Charles at the intersection of Chapel Street and California Street and continue up to Galen Street in Watertown Square. If you go in the opposite direction and cross Bridge Street you can visit one of the oldest dams along the Charles River, the Bemis Dam, built in 1778. Fish ladders are positioned along the dam for the annual running of the alewife fish.

Nahanton Park is on the south side of Newton with entrances on Winchester Street and Nahanton Street. This 25-acre park also abuts the Charles River far upstream from the Riverwalk. Nahanton Park has meadows, wooded hillsides, a pond, and community gardens. Florries Path runs along the edge of the Charles River and is handicapped accessible.

Dolan Pond Conservation Area is a jewel tucked away in the Auburndale area. Dolan Pond consists of several small ponds: Quinn Pond, Banana Pond, and Dolan Pond among them. There are paths and boardwalks through the wetlands. Birdwatchers especially enjoy visiting this conservation area. Over 130 species of birds have been spotted there.



Newton has over thirty parks and conservation areas in all. Some of these open spaces are probably near you. The Newton Conservators' Web site has information about these open spaces at www.newtonconservators.org. At the

Web site's home page, click on "Newton Park and Conservation Lands". Then click on "Park and Conservation Lands". These choices are organized by areas within the city.

For example if you live in Newton Centre and you want to visit Cold Spring Park on Beacon Street, click on the Cold Spring Park option. Next you can choose from several options such as "Photo Gallery," "Farmer's Market," and "Trail Map." Clicking on "Trail Map" brings up a map of the park and connecting spots such as the Cochituate Aqueduct.

When you return to the home page, be sure to check out "Conservation Videos on the Web." There you will find two Cold Spring Park productions: a 30 minute program called "A Naturalist's View of Cold Spring Park" and "Recreational Opportunities in Cold Spring Park". On the Newton Conservators' home page you can find Newton's "staycation" vacation spots at a click. Make an easy, restful, healthful visit to a Newton open space all throughout the year. Take a break. We do. We recommend it.

- Frank & Deb Howard

THE ASIAN LONG HORNED BEETLE IS IN MASSACHUSETTS

We learned last month that the dreaded Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) is now present in Massachusetts, having been found infesting wooded areas of Worcester and Shrewsbury. (Links to the Aug. 26 and Sept. 4 *Boston Globe* articles and to the U.S. Forest Service's ALB Web site can be found at the Newton Tree Conservancy's Web site, www.newtontreeconservancy.org.)

This beetle, which came to the U.S. from China aboard packing crates, has wreaked havoc in Chicago, New York, and New Jersey, where thousands of trees have had to be destroyed in order to contain the infestation. There are no known predators, and the U.S. Forest Service has no choice but to remove and completely grind up affected trees and to inoculate at-risk trees with a systemic pesticide. There is now a 33-square-mile quarantine area covering parts of Worcester, Holden, Boylston, West Boylston, and Shrewsbury.

Another distressing aspect of the news is that apparently the beetle has been in Worcester for five to seven years,

but until now, when one "alert citizen" saw it and came forward, it had not been reported. Clearly we must educate our citizens and tree companies and be on the lookout for the beetle. Newton's Forestry Department will be working closely with state and federal staff on how best to coordinate efforts.



The beetle's preferred host tree species are maple (all types), horsechestnut, willow, and American elm. The beetle also attacks ash, birch, and poplar. Fortunately, oak and conifers do not seem to be on its list, and linden, honeylocust, and other trees we have been planting in Newton in an effort to diversify species and move away from the Norway maple monoculture appear not to be threatened by the ALB.

The beetle kills trees by burrowing into the tree trunk to lay eggs. The larvae then tunnel into the trunk as they feed, then later exit by more tunneling. The tunnels disrupt the structure and the flow of nutrients through the tree, weakening it and killing it. The entry and 3/8" exit holes are distinctive, and the presence of sawdust and oozing sap are also signs of infestation. Adult beetles emerge and are active in June to October. They can be seen on branches, eating twigs.

The U.S. Forest Service's ALB website (<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/>) has disturbing photos of affected trees, the chronology of the infestation since the ALB was discovered in the US in 1996, before and after pictures of neighborhoods affected, and many instructional materials and videos of how to identify the beetle (it is quite distinctive). I learned other useful things through the

above-mentioned Web sites, including this: never transport firewood, as that is a prime way of spreading invasive pests.

If you would like to be part of the tree steward effort to watch out for this beetle, please contact the Newton Tree Conservancy through its Web site.

- Katherine Howard



*swans on the Charles River
- photo by Jane Sender*

CHARLES RIVER PATH

The Newton Conservators' Board has undertaken a program to individually "adopt" the city's various open spaces, to provide them with better stewardship. Alison Leary has adopted the Charles River Path. This piece deals with what she finds there.

I live an easy walk from the Charles River Path, between Bridge Street and Watertown Square, and that is my green space in an otherwise urban setting. On a hot day, as soon as you step from California Street to the shaded path, heavy with mature pine and aspen, the temperature drops ten degrees and street sounds become muffled and distant.

In spring the Charles River Path is a stopover for many species of migrating birds. This year I spotted several species of warblers, including northern parula, black throated blue, black throated green, black and white warblers, and northern waterthrush. A blue-headed vireo

made an appearance, and warbling vireos were singing exuberantly in the canopy. It's one of the few places within walking distance where I can listen to the ethereal song of the wood thrush, which requires a larger tract of woods than most backyard birds. On an early morning, I spotted red foxes exploring a thicket and a cooper's hawk diving after a desperate mourning dove.

Many birds stay here to raise their young, including yellow warblers, northern orioles, and kingbirds. From late spring through summer you can try to spot nests and later watch young birds hounding their parents for food, jumping and fluttering with their mouths wide open. Young catbirds are curious and comical, their downy fuzz giving them that "I just got out of bed" look. Juvenile robins are obvious with their spotted breasts and are as big as their parents, who take them out to feed on the fruit of trees and bushes.

On a snowy winter day, Charles River Path is a car free zone to cross county ski. Familiar year-round birds are still there: cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches and downy woodpeckers, as well as a few winter visitors. Ducks are attracted to the open waters of the river in winter, including hooded merganser, ruddy duck, and ring-necked ducks. Other visitors may include common redpoll. If you look up, you may be lucky enough to spot a bald eagle flying overhead.

- Alison Leary

MISSION

Newton Conservators, Inc.

The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 47 years ago in June 1961.



*fisher in tree at Cold Spring Park
- photo by Sue Avery*

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and March. Deadlines for these issues are the 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. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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**If you haven't done so already, now is the time to join the Conservators.
And consider a tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 47 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form

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

- ☐ YES, I'd like to start/renew my one-year membership with the Newton Conservators to help preserve open space in Newton. I'll receive informative newsletters and emails and be invited to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities.
- ☐ I'd like to make an additional tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Newton Conservators: \$_____
- ☐ Please do not share my name and address with other groups.

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- | | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual member | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family member | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining member | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor | \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100 |

All amounts are tax deductible

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____ ZIP _____

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



The Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

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