

Annual Meeting Awards Recap



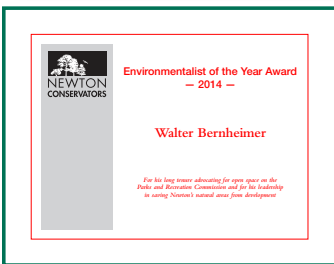
From left to right: Peter Kastner, Beth Schroeder, Michelle Waldman, Pete Gilmore, Beth Wilkinson, Mike Clarke, Henry Finch and Speaker Julie McIntosh Shapiro. Thanks to Ted Kuklinski for making these stills out of his video!

When it comes to the Newton Conservators' annual awards, there is no question about it. It is far better to give than it is to receive. "It is lovely to receive one of the Newton Conservators' awards," admits Jane Sender, a past recipient of the Environmentalist of the Year award, "but it is even lovelier to bestow them on people who have worked so generously to protect our precious environment here in Newton." Sender, who served four years as the Conservator's president, was an active participant in selecting this year's award winners. After much consideration, during which various nominees were proposed and considered, the Conservators Board selected six special individuals for recognition at this year's annual meeting. "When we give an award we are honoring the connection people feel between themselves and the natural world – and their generosity in spending their time to preserve and protect it," Sender explains. "We are very proud of our Newton Conservators' awardees over the last fifty years, and of the difference they have made in Newton."

Environmentalist of the Year: Peter Kastner and Walter Bernheimer



The Environmentalist of the Year award was initiated by the Newton Conservators in 1981 and has been presented every year but one to a local citizen or group who has contributed to improvements in the city's environment. This year the Conservators named two deserving individuals "Environmentalist of the Year."

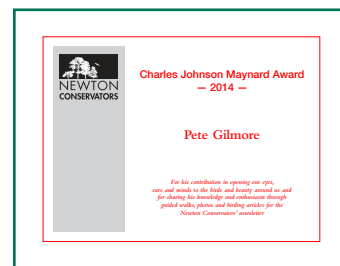


Peter Kastner was singled out for his more than thirty years of "vigilance, tireless service, and advocacy protecting Newton's

environment, leading the Conservators, and representing us on the Parks and Recreation Commission." The irrepressible

Kastner's "tireless service" also includes – but surely is not limited to! – serving as president of Friends of Nahanton Park, as a member of Mayor's Advisory Committee for Comprehensive Planning, as a member of Angino Farm Commission and as a district representative to the Auburndale Community Association. After a 30-year career in health care management, Kastner started restoring and selling historic maps in 2002, when he founded Community Heritage Maps. Kastner is generous in his support of other Newton non-profits, donating copies of his meticulously restored maps for various fundraisers.

The Conservators recognized Walter Bernheimer for "being one of the strongest advocates of open space on the Parks and Recreation Commission and saving natural areas in Newton from development." Bernheimer, who was appointed to the commission over 34 years ago by Mayor Theodore Mann, stepped down last year. Bernheimer was noted for adding a bit of levity to the sometimes contentious Commission meetings. During heated discussions over the fate of the pilot Cold Springs Dog Park in 2009, one participant insisted there should be an electronic fence and shock collars to keep the dogs in line. Commissioner Bernheimer diffused things when he responded drily, "Maybe we should put the collars on the dog walkers instead of the dogs."



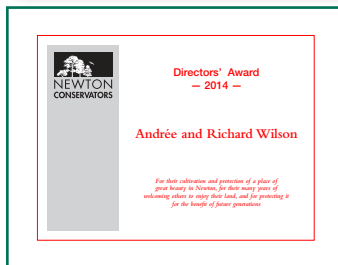
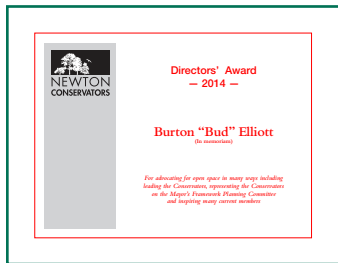
Charles Johnson Maynard Award: Pete Gilmore

Newton native Charles Johnson Maynard (1845–1929) was an American naturalist, ornithologist, and writer of nature manuals. Each year the award that bears his name is given to recognize efforts "to improve biodiversity, habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection." This year the award went to long-time Conservators trip leader Pete Gilmore for "opening our eyes, ears and minds to the birds and beauty around us through his guided walks, photos, and writings."

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It's a cool October morning and birder extraordinaire Pete Gilmore is guiding a bird walk through Nahanton Park. About twelve enthusiasts have assembled, when Gilmore suddenly spots a group of new arrivals across the parking lot. The ever-observant Gilmore points out the gathering of little old ladies with pocketbooks under their wings, decked out as for a group shopping expedition! Wait a minute – pocketbooks under their wings?!? It's Gilmore's special way of sharing what he sees – whether it's a troupe of wild turkeys setting out to forage in Nahanton Park or photographs of cedar waxwings eating crabapples in Newton Cemetery – that engages and inspires local residents to interact with and protect our natural resources. Joining Gilmore for a walk in Cold Springs Park to hear the call of the Great Horned Owl or a canoe trip down the Charles River to identify spring migrants or even just reading his Conservators webpage column "Birds at My Feeder" can be a truly transformative experience.

Directors' Award: Bud Elliott and Andree and Richard Wilson



The Directors' Award is given to recognize community leaders and volunteers who have made a specific contribution. This year the Conservators honored the late Burton "Bud" Elliott for "advocating for open space in many ways including leading the Conservators, representing the Conservators on the Mayor's Framework Planning Committee, and inspiring many current members" and to Andree and Richard Wilson for their "cultivation and protection of a place of

great beauty in Newton, for their many years of welcoming others to enjoy their land, and for protecting it for the benefit of future generations."

When former Newton Conservators president Bud Elliott passed away on December 12, 2013, at the age of 87, his fellow Conservators remembered him as a life-long learner

who not only made supporting educational programs a Conservators priority, but created opportunities for Newton residents to become a more educated and involved citizenry.

Elliott organized the landmark Open Space Symposium in the fall of 1996. As Elliott envisioned it, the forum had four objectives: to provide a public understanding of the decision making process, a chance to raise questions, an opportunity to raise and hear issues, and to create an on-going dialogue to help resolve issues. Elliott would continue his vision into the next decade, representing the Conservators on the Mayor's Framework Planning Committee leading to a new Comprehensive Master Plan for Newton.

Both Andree and Richard Wilson have had a life-long concern for human rights and the world's disadvantaged persons. Richard, a professor emeritus of physics at Harvard and a specialist in risk-benefit analysis, served for years on the Board of Directors of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation to promote peace, progress, and human rights. Over the years Richard and Andree welcomed Soviet refuseniks and scientists to America, helping them to find jobs and assisting in their adjustment to a new country and culture.

But the Wilsons recognize it is not only humans who need their help, advocacy and protection. The natural environment can use an assist as well. The couple own a two-acre parcel of property in Newton Centre, "Jolly's Hollow," graced not only with Andree's beautiful gardens but woodlands which provide a wonderful habitat to a wide diversity of wildlife. The public has always been welcome on the Wilson property – a welcome the couple wanted to make sure was maintained for generations to come. Despite their increasing health challenges, the Wilsons went to considerable effort to secure a conservation restriction on their property. In the future the property can be sold, but the Conservators, as grantee, must make sure, in perpetuity, that anyone who buys the property adheres to the terms of the restriction: no building outside of the footprint of the house, preservation of the conserved area to maintain conservation values, and preserved public access along the path. The sign welcoming visitors to Jolly's Hollow warns "Beware of the Gardener - She Talks!" The Conservators trust that will be the case for many years to come. ■

Margaret Doris



PHOTO: JANE SENDER