

Newton Conservators Nature Notes

Friday, December 3, 2004

This email newsletter provides information on upcoming nature and environmental related events, exhibits, and information in and around the Newton, Massachusetts area. The newsletter is sponsored by the Newton Conservators, the local open space organization in Newton and it also serves as the organization's means of sending out time sensitive information. Please visit our website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org>. Welcome to the many new readers of this free email newsletter. If you wish to be removed from this email list, simply reply with "remove" in the message or subject. (Note: email addresses mentioned in this newsletter substitute (AT) for @ to foil spammers).

*** In This Issue**

Let me warn you – this is a lengthy email but full of interesting topics such as the following:

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*** Angino Farm Update – Last Chance to Save the Farm on Monday Evening, December 6**

Angino Farm is the last remaining farm in Newton and the Newton Conservators are behind the effort to save via a CPA proposal. Details on the background can be found in the Newton Conservators Newsletter found online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/spe04.pdf>. Even more details about this project are at the Conservators website, <http://www.newtonconservators.org/linksfarming.htm> or on the site of the new Farm Group that has formed: <http://www.communityfarm.info/>. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model like the Stearns Farm in Framingham, MA, is one possibility for the farm. This would provide a real working farm where community members can work together in to grow a self sustaining source of delicious produce in an eco-friendly farm where school groups and the community could participate in educational programs.

The Newton Board of Aldermen met in special session on Monday, November 15, to consider this project and setting the city tax rate. On the Angino Farm matter, Alderman Ken Parker (who had originally chartered the item at the previous meeting), moved to push the matter to the meeting on December 6. This was discussed by the board extensively and passed by voice vote.

At the meeting, concerns were expressed about various issues including the price differential between the highest assessed value and asking price, an exit strategy – what if the farm model fails – could it be converted to other CPA uses or even sold off, if the business model works, and others. Many aldermen spoke in favor of the proposal.

The aldermen will take up Angino Farm again on Monday evening (Dec, 6) in the aldermanic chamber, 2nd floor City Hall. Due to the agreement with the sellers, this Monday is the last opportunity. Without a

decision or a NO vote, the farm will go back on the open market and likely we would see more extensive development on the site. At this time, we do not know where in the business order this item will be. Special thanks to the many people who came to the previous two meetings. It is not a bad idea to bring a book or something to read (and even a snack might be helpful for sustenance out in the lobby.) The voting is expected to be close on this item. Due to the bonding proposal of paying \$1M up front and \$1.5M over 5 years, 16 out of 24 votes are needed. 16 votes are still required even if aldermen are absent.

The Newton Conservators organization urges its members to support this proposal and to attend the board of aldermen meeting this evening. As always, you can make your opinion known to your aldermen. Contact information is available at http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/pix/bios_index.htm. If you do speak with your aldermen, any feedback on how they stand on this project would be appreciated. You can simply reply to this email if you wish or email to [dolanpond\(AT\)aol.com](mailto:dolanpond(AT)aol.com).

The meetings have been well covered by the Newton Tab. A good account of the November 15th meeting ("Parker delays vote on Angino Farm", Newton Tab, Wednesday, November 17, 2004) can be found online at <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=126593>. Another article by Sarah Andrews ("Farm deal will wither on vine if no vote Monday", Newton Tab, Wednesday, December 1, 2004), details the results of the aldermanic meeting held on Monday, November 22. It can be found online at <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=135679>. A wonderful commentary by Newton Conservators president Eric Reenstierna was printed previously in the Newton Tab and is online at <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/opinion/view.bg?articleid=126582>.

In this week's edition, the Newton Tab officially endorsed the Angino Farm project in an editorial reproduced below which can be found at <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/opinion/view.bg?articleid=135958>.

Editorial: Alderman should vote for the farm
Wednesday, December 1, 2004

"Let's hope that the third time's the charm.

This Monday, after postponing two votes last month, aldermen will once again take up an item to purchase the Angino family farm in Ward 8. It's a last-ditch effort to save the only remaining farm in Newton. And aldermen need to vote now or the city could lose this opportunity forever, as an agreement with the farm's owners will expire this month.

We're glad the aldermen want to be well-informed before voting to spend \$2.5 million of Community Preservation Act funds, but now is the time to act.

In a city besieged by development, the farm is a win for the city whatever happens. If it succeeds, the city gets a new source of produce at the Farmer's Market, educational opportunities for children and a working community farm. Even if it fails, the city gets open space. On Monday, aldermen should take a chance on preserving this unique part of the city's history."

We reprint the following two letters which were also in the Newton Tab this week

Support for Angino Farm – December 1, 2004
<http://www2.townonline.com/newton/opinion/view.bg?articleid=135623>

I'm writing to express my support for the purchase of the Angino Farm using Community Preservation Act funds, currently under debate by the Board of Aldermen.

If the Board approves this project, all Newton community members will benefit from saving the property, whether they are children learning about pumpkins in the fall, or families wishing to purchase fresh vegetables, seniors enjoying a bit of "working the earth", or passersby enjoying the sight of a working

farm here in what we call the Garden City. People with a vision for Newton could be credited with seeing the purchase of this property as an investment in the city and the people who reside here.

If the Board votes "no", the property will likely be sold and turned into multiple single-family houses. Adding 3 more "McMansions" to the city of Newton may add to the tax rolls in the short-term and may benefit a small handful of people, but devalues the the Garden City in a more profound way. The town would lose a bit of its character. It would lose an educational opportunity — currently, elementary schools across the city bus their students to visit a farm 40 minutes away in the fall — wouldn't it be great if they just had to go down Winchester St?

And in so doing, Newton would lose just a little bit more of its appeal.

There are important details to be worked out. But none so important as the act of saving this farm for ALL the people who live in our community.

I urge the Board of Aldermen to vote to approve this project, for our community and for the greater good of Newton.

- Daphne Potter , Parkview Avenue

A community farm could strengthen our sense of community – December 1, 2004

<http://www2.townonline.com/newton/opinion/view.bg?articleid=135619>

As we debate the future of Angino Farm, it is easy to assume that farming simply does not belong in a place like Newton. Yet urban farming is actually a thriving, worldwide movement. A community farm in Newton could draw political and financial support from an ever-widening network of nonprofit organizations (such as City Farmer, www.cityfarmer.org, and MetroFarm, www.metrofarm.com), private foundations, and even the U.S. Department of Agriculture (www.uvm.edu/~nesare).

A community farm could also strengthen our sense of local and regional community:

Our farmers' market does produce traffic jams, but they are the most good-natured, smile-filled traffic jams in Newton! We should spread this wealth beyond the limited number of people who can go food shopping on summer Tuesday afternoons.

Farms and nurseries were a critical part of Newton's history well into the 1950s, especially (but not only) south of Route 9. Yet our collective memory of these businesses has been thoroughly erased. Many of us now see this part of Newton as simply "not historical." A community farm could highlight all that this part of Newton has contributed to the city; make the history of the land itself visible again; and create an exciting new site for both community and school-based education.

By helping us talk directly to the broader farm community, a community farm could also help Newton become a more constructive regional citizen. Our decisions, not just about food but also about planning, affordable housing, recreation, and second homes, affect land prices and therefore the future of farming in even in the most rural parts of New England.

Finally, active citizen participation in managing a shared asset, such as a community farm, is far more effective than pie charts or PowerPoint presentations for helping us understand the tough choices required to sustain Newton as a community, both economically and ecologically, over the long term.

- Alice E. Ingerson, Beacon Street, Waban

* Letter and Memorandum to Aldermen concerning Angino Farm

In order to keep everyone informed, the following is the text of a letter and memorandum which is being distributed to the aldermen today.

December 3, 2004

Board of Aldermen
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Aldermen,

The Newton Conservators wish to present the attached discussion by Kerisa Fitzgerald and others of the Farm Advisory Group that proposes to operate a CSA at Angino Farm and by members of the Conservators, as a response to questions raised by Aldermen. We appreciate the suggestions and criticisms of the Aldermen. Like those made by the Community Preservation Committee and by the Aldermanic Committees that preceded the review by the full Board, the issues raised and suggestions made have done much to produce a better proposal.

Concerning farm viability, we trust that we have documented that small-scale farming under the CSA model is not only financially feasible but in fact is thriving in Greater Boston, in Waltham, Framingham, Weston, and elsewhere. In our experience, the people least concerned about the viability of the farm are those (including some Aldermen) most familiar with CSAs. We want to make you as familiar as we can with small-scale farming and CSAs, so that you can be comfortable with your decision.

From the first days of the farm proposal, we have seen community participation as one of its strong suits. School groups that come to the farm the way they do for field trips to the Jackson Homestead will see this as part of their community. Kids from summer camps who spend a day will come away knowing "hands on" about farming. Visitors will be welcome to stop by the farm. Produce will be on sale, and surplus can go to the Senior Center and programs for schools or the needy. Winchester and Nahanton Streets are heavily traveled. Anyone who drives by will "participate" as the public does, by seeing the farm go through the seasons. The families that have pledged to buy shares at Angino have expressed to us that they understand that they may receive very little in produce during the farm's start-up years. Their motive is not to exclude anyone or to make a profit from vegetables. They simply want to help make this happen.

The City will have control over the farm through an oversight committee similar to the committee that oversees the Commonwealth Golf Course. The City will enter into agreements that will license the operation to a farm group for a period of years. If the City is unhappy with the operation, it will have the ability to seek a new operator.

The Conservators have expended considerable effort (as have the City's committees and the Aldermen) to bring this agreement to this point of decision. Our original intent in bringing the proposal and the intent that is expressed in the City's own Open Space Plan is that the undeveloped part of this particular parcel, a priority parcel in the Plan, be protected as open space. We ask in good faith that, where alternate uses are considered, this primary use, as open space, not be abandoned.

Members of the Conservators and of the farm group, with phone numbers listed below, are again available to answer questions from any of the aldermen.

Sincerely,

Eric Reenstierna
President

Memorandum

To: Board of Aldermen

From: Newton Community Farm Advisory Group and Newton Conservators

Date: December 2, 2004

Re: Proposal for Angino Farm

This memorandum is drafted in response to the Board of Aldermen's request for further information concerning the Angino Farm proposal. The Advisory Group appreciates the Board's diligence in seeking a comprehensive proposal, and hopes the points below promote a well-informed vote on December 6. Before the meeting of the aldermen on November 22, we sought and received approval from the broker and the executor of the Angino Estate to extend the deadline for the purchase and sale agreement to a date that would allow the Board's decision to be extended to the meeting on December 6, but not beyond.

This memorandum deals primarily with two areas of concern:

- The farm model and accessibility to the community
- Financial viability and sustainability

We understand that the Law and Planning departments are providing information regarding the city's options should the farm fail.

Why a CSA?

Various models of farm operation are available. The proponents settled on the CSA model because it has a proven track record and provides strong financial support.

CSA stands for "community supported agriculture." As defined by UMass Extension, "CSA is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters which provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food." CSA vary considerably based on location, land, and community goals and needs, but they are all borne out of a movement to give people access to local food, create local, dependable markets for farmers, promote stewardship of the land, help strengthen local and regional food systems, and increase understanding of "how, where, and by whom our food is grown."

CSA often refers to "subscription farming," where families or individuals subscribe for a certain price to receive a portion of produce weekly throughout the season. This is but one form of community supported agriculture, which encompasses a broad array of relationships between farms and communities. The choice of a subscription CSA model was a response to the concern about the viability of the business plan and an effort to balance the need for a reliable income stream in the first couple of years against the desire to meet the interest level of the community in participating in the farm. First and foremost, the purpose of the farm is to serve the community - preserving a link to our heritage and the promise of a bright future. The farm must also sustain itself. The model we have chosen to launch the farm is a hybrid CSA that will include access to produce for all Newton Residents at the farmer's market, and perhaps also at other venues including the farm site itself. It is the modification of a tried and true model that will give us the highest probability of success, offer a tremendous amount of community participation, and that will evolve and expand in response to the needs of the community.

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Will Produce Be Available at the Farm?

The proponents intend for the farm to be accessible to the whole community. A farm stand would be a useful part of public access. Whether a farm stand is feasible depends in part on its legality under zoning and on whether traffic at a farm stand can be handled successfully without overflowing onto congested streets. The Conservators and the Farm Advisory Group support the concept of a farm stand at the site if one can be safely and legally installed.

What will operations at Newton Community Farm look like?

Here are some possibilities:

- A broad-based membership program, with different levels of membership. Perks could include a newsletter, invitation to events and workshops, and "coupons" for veggies at the farm.

- A subscription service which could be operated on a lottery basis, with preference given to families who did not get a share the previous year. Also, shares could be split, thereby halving the price and doubling the number of participants (i.e. 200 shares at \$250 each).
 - Weekly presence at the Cold Spring Park Farmers Market. The farm group has always proposed to sell produce at Cold Spring Park farmers market in order to make the farms produce available to all Newton residents. To be clear, we are committed to maintaining a fully stocked produce stand at every Cold Spring Park farmers market. If sales at the farmers market exceed expectations, we can further limit sales of shares or obtain additional produce from our partner farm to cover our commitment to shareholders. The farmers market is an excellent outreach vehicle for the farm. Also, kids involved at the farm could help staff the stand, allowing them to see the full farm cycle.
 - An on-site farm stand may be possible. With or without a farm stand, other options will be explored for making produce available to all - beyond Cold Spring Park. Possibilities include: moveable farmers markets in different Newton neighborhoods, sales in front of City hall or in Newton center (if permitted), special farm festivals when produce would be sold on-site, etc. Again, these types of distribution will take precedence over share sales.
 - Pilot projects with the Newton schools. A growing number of grants are available for farm-to-cafeteria programs that aim to get local produce into school lunches.
 - Grassroots fundraising activities, such as seedling sales, speaker series, farm workshops or workshops on other crafts and topics, festivals, auctions, etc. The farm's board and staff will also organize large-scale fundraising and grant-writing campaigns.
- * Once the farm is up and running the revenue from the share purchases provides a cushion, enabling the farm to gradually reduce its dependence on selling shares and increase dependence on revenue from educational programs, fundraising, sales at the farmers market, and sales at other venues that reach a broad array of Newton customers - e.g. "moveable farm stands," harvest festivals, etc. After a few years it may be possible to reduce or move away from the sale of shares in favor of these other sources of revenue.

In what other ways will the farm benefit the community?

Workshops and community events - The farm will host planting days, harvest festivals, potlucks, volunteer work days, and workshops. The farm or barn space could be used for workshops run by other Newton organizations/talents.

Education - The most important contribution of the farm will be its educational opportunities. Some of the ways the farm could work with school children include kindergarten sensory awareness tours, hands-on components of science curricula, pilot projects, community service, summer camps or internships. We are committed to working with local schools. Preliminary discussions about programming have been held with representatives of the Newton School Department, and the Solomon Schechter and Brimmer and May schools have written letters expressing an interest in farm programming. A project is underway to have Newton North students, in conjunction with the Newton Historical Society, complete their thesis on the history of Angino Farm, including the recording of an oral history.

Donations - Some Aldermen have expressed an interest in a share of the produce going to the City, presumably to provide produce to Newton residents who are in need such as seniors with fixed incomes. We believe that the most efficient approach to achieving this goal is for the farm to establish relationships with other non-profits such as food pantries or senior centers, rather than to have the City act as an intermediary. Such a program has been an important part of the farm proposal from the very beginning. The farm advisory group believes that it can commit to donate a minimum of \$5,000 worth of produce (equivalent to 10 shares) per growing season to such programs by its second year of operation (with a smaller contribution during the first season), and will mount a special fundraising campaign to achieve this goal. The City (perhaps through the proposed farm commission) will be asked to work with the farm operators to identify specific "feed the hungry" programs to support. Tens of thousands of pounds of produce are donated each year by community farms in our area that also practice this tradition.

Open Space - This project beautifies the "Garden City," and emphasizes Newton's commitment to preserving and enhancing the natural landscape. Protection of the Angino parcel has long been a top priority in the City's Open Space Plan.

How will we evaluate the farm's public contributions and make changes if needed?

Both the farm's Board of Directors and a Farm Commission established by the City will evaluate and make necessary changes to the farm operation. The Board of Aldermen have the power and responsibility to determine how the farm's performance will be measured and set other parameters of the farm's operating model in their construction of the ordinance that will enable the aforementioned oversight team.

If the Alderman are not happy with how the farm is run during the initial contract, they do not have to renew the contract or can alter its terms to insure that it provides enough community benefit (e.g. food to people in need, educational programming). However, it's important to remember that these interests must be balanced against the requirement that the farm pay its own way and not depend upon continuing City funding support.

Is there evidence of the success of small farms? What are some relevant examples in our area?

Eastern Massachusetts is chock full of thriving small community farms, many operating as CSAs, and many performing a range of operations. Massachusetts has the largest number of CSAs of any state (about 60), and their failure rate is 0%. There are highly successful CSAs in the surrounding communities of Framingham, Waltham, Dover, Concord and Lincoln. Most of these have waiting lists, and members who are Newton residents! Angino Farm is similar in size to Stearns Farm (2.75 acres) in Framingham, a CSA that has operated successfully (now with 160 members) for 14 years.

Over 15 farms in Greater Boston are part of a coalition called CRAFT that serves as an information and support network for the farmers, and trains a young army of future farmers.

In keeping with the nature of our proposal, which calls for a variety of programs, area farms derive their financial base from a variety of incomes. Vanguarden CSA in Dover has increased its wholesale (25%) to supplement its subscription income. Land's Sake in Weston is supported by a general membership, a Green Power summer camp program, and the sale of "Picking Passes" in addition to farm stand sales.

What is the business plan for Newton Community Farm? Will the farm cover its own costs?

The operating and capital budget(s) that we have developed and provided to the Board and the CPC, provide a model of financial viability for the farm's first few critical years. They allow the farm to cover its expenses and also provide a modest allocation to a contingency fund for building maintenance and farm equipment. Once the farm is off the ground, operations can be reevaluated and modified to allow the greatest amount of community participation. For example, large fundraising and membership campaigns may shift the farm model, reducing or eliminating the sale of shares.

In partnering with other local farms, Newton Community Farm will have ample produce to supply for shares, farmers market, food donations (or other potential markets, as discussed above). Several area growers have already expressed willingness to grow more space-extensive crops wholesale for Newton. The property is in an ideal location to serve a community that does not yet have a farm within its borders, creating a wonderful new outlet for Newton residents to get local, healthy produce. It is a prime site for educational programming.

The business plan was developed with extensive input from farming experts in eastern Massachusetts, including Chris Yoder, a successful farmer in Dover who worked with Jerry Angino, and Brian Donahue, a Brandeis professor, nationally recognized author, and founding member of Land's Sake in Weston.

Can Newton Community Farm expand beyond the Angino property?

The farm could potentially make use of other fields off-site, largely nearby but outside Newton, that historically were farmed but are not now in use. The farm could also partner with a more rural farm to receive more produce and expand to serve a larger Newton membership base.

How does the project provide for the upkeep of the buildings?

The below-market rent for the living space in the farmhouse and rental of ground floor space to non-profits (the Conservators and others) produces income that covers expenses for insurance, utilities, maintenance and repairs. Funds for major upgrades to the buildings would be raised through foundation and government grants, individual and corporate donations.

What does support for the farm's start-up year look like?

The farm has received close to 80 pledges for shares totaling \$40,000 in income (as noted above, if demand for shares exceeds supply, the shares will be made available by lottery rather than automatically going to those who have pledged to date). Ledgebrook Estates, the only abutter to the Newton Community Farm, has pledged to donate \$25,000 toward start-up costs including building rehabilitation, as well as an additional \$10,000 per year for the first five years of operation. Other donors, including the Newton Conservators, have pledged an additional \$20,000. A full range of first-year contingencies has been accounted for in the proposal, and 118% of the budget has been pledged for the first year, creating a healthy reserve. The budget for subsequent years will be adjusted (in terms of share prices, rents and fees, fundraising, etc.) to account for first-year experience and keep the farm financially sound.

If the farm should fail

In keeping with the spirit of the Community Preservation Act, it is the position of the Newton Conservators that a significant portion of the existing open space on the site should be restricted to open space and recreational uses, while a portion of the site including the buildings and some of the surrounding land should be restricted to historic preservation and community housing uses. Prior to the closing date, the language of the proposed Conservation Restrictions will have to be approved by both the Board of Aldermen (the Grantor) and the Newton Conservators, Inc. (the Grantee).

As discussed in Doug Dickson's recent memo to the Board, alternative CPC uses could include: a greenhouse and nursery beds for Newton Pride's beautification program; community housing in the house and barn, with possible additional units in the same area; open space; programming and storage for the Newton History Museum; outdoor classrooms and/or summer camp programs focusing on horticulture, the environment and/or agricultural crafts.

*** Annual Christmas Bird Count – Sunday, December 19, 2004**

It's getting to be that time of year again. Sleigh bells, wreaths, shopping malls, and ... birds! While spotting a partridge in a pear tree is unlikely, if you have an interest in our feathered friends, perhaps you'd like to take part in the annual Greater Boston Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, Dec. 19th, sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Begun in 1900 and done all over the country by teams of birders, the local counts are done within a specified circular area. According to the Audubon Society, "More than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action."

Any birds seen during the count are recorded as to the species and the number of individuals. The amount 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.

Parts of Newton are within the count circle centered on Boston. The Newton Conservators are helping to organize this year's count in Newton. Newton participants will gather at 6:45 am at the home of Conservators board member Chris Criscitiello (2 Raeburn Terrace) near Cold Spring Park for coffee and to pick up maps. Beginning at 7 am, about five teams fan out all over Newton to count as many birds of all types as they can especially in conservation, park, 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 early risers, there is usually an owling party which heads out much earlier. Typically, the group could get great looks at screech owls and occasionally Great Horned and Barred Owls.

Representative members from the teams gather back at the meeting place around 4 pm to pool the results from Newton. It's always exciting to hear what the other groups have found, especially any rare or unusual sightings. Later, our local results are taken over to Mass Audubon's Habitat in Belmont where other town coordinators gather to pool the 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 picture.

Experienced and non-experienced birders are welcome. Newcomers will be paired with an experienced group. Even if you would like to participate for only a few hours, you are welcome. It should be noted that the count occurs rain, shine, or snow. There is a participation fee of \$5 which goes to National Audubon to help tabulate the data. Participants receive a report from them on the national count results. For more information, please contact Cris Criscitiello by phone at 617-244-6397 or email at [mgcrisci\(AT\)massmed.org](mailto:mgcrisci(AT)massmed.org). Further information on the 105th count may be found at <http://massbird.org/bbc/ChristmasBirdCount'04.htm>.

* Winter Moths!

By Cris Criscitiello

During the past few days have you noticed groups of small, brownish moths gathered on your kitchen window after dark? They have a wingspread of about an inch and are attracted there by the light. They are called "Winter Moths" from the family *Geometridae* – a group that produce larvae (caterpillars) in the form of inchworms. This moth, not deterred by the cold air, can be seen anytime from late November through January. It is officially named *Operophtera brumata* and came originally from Europe. It entered the USA in the 1950's and has expanded its range extensively. It has become a worrisome pest, since its larvae feed on the buds and flowers of many types of trees, attacking apple and other fruit trees, oaks, Norway maples, and many other broadleaved trees and shrubs. It has been particularly tough on blueberry growers and has threatened that industry in the Northwest.

The Winter Moth resembles a native species, the fall cankerworm moth which also appears at this time of the year, and the two are difficult to tell apart, although the former is slightly darker in color. The moths you see are all males, recently struggled out of the soil from their pupal cocoons. The females emerge at the same time, but having no wings, they are flightless and crawl from the ground onto trunks of nearby trees where they hide in crevices in the bark. If you exam the trees in your yard with a flashlight after dark, you may be surprised to find hundreds of the male moths on the lower part of the trunk, awaiting the arrival of the females. After mating, the female lays a cluster of eggs in cracks in the bark. These hatch in March and April, and the yellow-green larvae move in inchworm fashion out onto the twigs and help themselves to buds and leaves, feeding until mid-June. A sign of their infestation is early petal drop from flowering trees and shrubs as well as leaf loss. After they have denuded one tree, they can extrude a very fine thread by which they "parachute" themselves in the breeze to another. Eventually, after feeding fully, they drop to the ground and pupate in the soil, waiting until late fall when they emerge as moths.

This moth, of European origin, has not encountered any native predators in the USA, and its spread has so far been unopposed. In Washington State, where blueberry fields have been heavily infested with Winter Moth larvae, growers have utilized a parasitic fly *Cyzenis albicans*, (also introduced from Europe) to combat the pest. This fly is apparently able to detect the odor of damaged blueberry plant leaves and lays eggs near the sites where the larvae are feeding. Along with the leaf, these eggs are ingested by the larvae, and when the fly eggs hatch and produce maggots, the latter wait in the salivary glands of the larva until it turns into a pupa, whereupon they consume all the moth tissue!

Perhaps our nuthatches, brown creepers, and downy woodpeckers will spot the moths' egg clusters hidden in the bark crevices and find them to their taste. This might help to reduce the spring hatch!!

A fact sheet on the Winter Moth from the UMass Extension Service can be found at http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/fact_sheets/defoliators/winter_moth.pdf.

* Coyote Talk

Coyotes have certainly been in the news in Newton lately! Articles in the Newton Tab (Experts question coyote killing, Bernie Smith, Newton Tab, Dec. 1, 2004, <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=135667>)

and the position of mayoral candidate, Mike Striar, to eliminate coyotes, (Striar: Kill all the Coyotes, Bernie Smith, Newton Tab, Nov. 20, 2004, <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=131338>) has spurred a lot of controversy, even spawning articles in the Boston Globe by Alex Beam (http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2004/11/30/suburban_dances_with_coyotes/).

One needs to maintain a healthy perspective on this subject. Coyotes in Newton are not new. They have been common here for quite a few years now. One may recall articles in the Boston Herald and Newton Tab some years ago when they were often spotted around the Dolan Pond area. Despite your editors frequent visits to Dolan Pond, I have only seen them around there twice and both times they ran away as I tried to view them. This was even in the case where I had an arrangement with one of the abutters there to call me up any hour when she spotted one. It took several tries before I actually was able to spot one which eluded my video camera.

Martha Horn, Senior Environmental Planner in Newton, some years ago advised as follows regarding the few coyotes that might seem to have a lack of fear of humans: "Best to keep cats, small dogs and children out of harm's way by keeping them inside or watching the children very carefully when they're out. These animals are protected unless they are actually so aggressive that a person is in danger -- Animal Control (617-796-2109) is the place to call. Their regular number has an answering machine, so emergency calls when an animal is attacking or menacing should be to 911 and the dispatcher will radio the Animal Control Officer."

Below is some other background information on coyotes provided by the state: <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/dfwcoy.htm>, <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/dfwpdf/dfwcoy.pdf> (poster). Mass Audubon's information sheet on coyotes can be found at <http://www.massaudubon.org/printwildlife.php?id=23>.

It is true that outdoor cats can fall prey to coyotes. But cats are one of predators of our native songbirds. Check out the "Cats Indoors" website for more perspective on keeping cats inside for their well being at <http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/>.

Here are some tips from the state:

Preventing Conflicts With Coyotes

Coyotes are currently well established throughout the state from the Berkshires to Cape Cod. They thrive in suburban and urban areas close to people. Coyotes eat many different foods, including small animals, fruits, vegetables, garbage, and pet food. Remember everything a coyote does is related to a potential meal. Here are a few suggestions to make your property less attractive to coyotes.

- **Secure your garbage!** Coyotes will raid open trash materials and compost piles. Secure your garbage in tough plastic containers with tight fitting lids and keep in secure buildings when possible. Take out trash the morning pick up is scheduled, not the previous night. Keep compost piles in containers designed to contain but vent the material.
- **Don't feed or try to pet coyotes!** Keep wild things wild! Feeding, whether direct or indirect, can cause coyotes to act tame and over time may lead to bold behavior. Coyotes that rely on natural food items remain wild and wary of humans.
- **Keep your pets safe!** Although free roaming pets are more likely to be killed by automobiles than by wild animals, coyotes do view cats and small dogs as potential food and larger dogs as competition. For the safety of your pets, keep them restrained at all times.
- **Keep bird feeder areas clean!** Use feeders designed to keep seed off the ground as the seed attracts many small mammals coyotes prey upon. Remove feeders if coyotes are regularly seen around your yard.
- **Feed pets indoors!** Outdoor feeding attracts many wild animals to your door!
- **Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds!** Coyotes use such areas for resting and raising young.

- **Don't let coyotes intimidate you!** Don't hesitate to scare or threaten coyotes with loud noises, bright lights, or water.
- **Cut back brushy edges in your yard!** These areas provide cover for coyotes and their prey.
- **Protect livestock and produce!** Coyotes will prey upon livestock. Techniques, such as fencing, will protect livestock from predation. Clear fallen fruit from around fruit trees.
- **Educate your neighbors!** Pass this information along since your efforts will be futile if neighbors are providing food or shelter for coyotes.

* **Albemarle Park Survey**

We pass along this note from Margaret Albright of Friends of Albemarle soliciting input on a survey of users of Albemarle Park. You could copy out the survey and email it back with your response which would help with planning the future of Albemarle Park.

To: Albemarle Community
 From: Friends of Albemarle
 Re: Initial community input discussion for Master planning on 11/10

Many thanks to everyone who attended the Friends of Albemarle's initial community input discussion for master planning on Wednesday, November 10. It was a very profitable meeting and our landscape designer came away with a very good inventory of how the park is used and some of the ideas park users have about the park.

For those of you who were not able to attend, we are certainly interested in receiving your input. Attached you will find a survey form. If you could fill it out and return it to info (AT)friendsofalbemarle.org by **December 17**, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks so much and we look forward to your input

Margaret Albright, Friends of Albemarle, 617-969-0497

ALBEMARLE PARK COMMUNITY SURVEY

_____ ORGANIZATION you represent:

What areas of the park does your organization use? Please be specific.

When does your organization use the park?:

Daily _____ (times) Weekly _____ (days and times)

Season (s): ___ summer ___ fall ___ winter ___ spring

What do you like about the park?

What challenges do you see (what would you change)?

What additional amenities would you like at the park?

Other Comments:

_____ Your name:

_____ Address:

_____ Phone:

Email:

Return by mail to: Judy Kokesh, 177 Pemberton St., #1, Cambridge, MA 02140 or by email to: jkokesh(AT)comcast.net.

*** Wanted - Rare and Endangered Species in Newton**

This note came in recently from Newton's Senior Environmental Planner, Martha Aherin Horn, looking to enlist our readers' assistance in documenting possible rare or endangered species in Newton.

"I went through the list of rare and endangered species for the City of Newton and want you to be on the lookout for some of these species while you are out and about. Some of the sightings are from as far back as 1833 and it would be nice to update them.

Blue-spotted salamanders -- we have tons of them near the Charles River at the radio towers, but I'm wondering about elsewhere.

Also, Wood Turtle, Henslow's Sparrow, Golden-Winged Warbler, Eastern Pondmussel, Purple Tiger Beetle, Elderberry Long-Horned Beetle, Barrens Daggermoth, Straight Lined Mallow Moth, Pale Green Pinion Moth, Linear-Leaved Milkweed, Andrews' Bottle Gentian, Long-leaved Bluet, New England Blazing Star, Adder's-Tongue Fern, Pale Green Orchis, Toothcup, Long's Bulrush, Wild Senna.

That completes the list and I would appreciate notice of any of these with date and time of observation plus a good solid location -- pictures would be a welcome bonus (obviously this may have to wait until next year when the plants are available for viewing).

Many thanks for this update -- I can pass it on to the state if we have new information."

Please forward any information to Martha J. Aherin Horn, Sr. Environmental Planner, Planning Department - City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459, 617-796-1134.

*** What's on NewTV this Month? Cold Spring Park!**

By M.G. (Cris) Criscitiello

Note: This article was also in the Environmental Pages of the Tab (On NewTV, the show does go on, M.G. Criscitiello, Dec. 1, 2004)

<http://www2.townonline.com/newton/artsLifestyle/view.bg?articleid=135677>

The NewTV series on environmental issues enters its third month in December with a show entitled "Recreational Opportunities in Cold Spring Park." This show, sponsored by the Newton Conservators, explores one of Newton's most attractive open areas with its combination of playing fields, exercise trail, walking paths, wetlands, woody spots, and scenic views. It is also home, in the summer, for the weekly Farmers' Market which draws hundreds of Newton shoppers in search of fresh, locally grown, produce.

The show features interviews and action shots of people enjoying all that the park has to offer, from the "Three Explorers," a group youngsters who take their nature study seriously, to joggers and exercise buffs who count on the park facilities for physical fitness. You will also be treated to an intimate view of Cold Spring Park, given a bit of its history, and offered a chance to join in a walk around its trails.

This Environmental Series, produced by the Newton Conservators in conjunction with the Green Decade Coalition, is scheduled to run on NewTV through June 2005. Titles of future Conservators' shows will include "A Naturalist Looks at Cold Spring Park" (February), "A Walk through Dolan Pond Conservation Area" (April), and "The Charles River: Newton's Great Waterway" (June). Forthcoming shows in the alternate months will be presented by the Green Decade Coalition.

NewTV's schedule will provide repeated opportunities for viewing these programs. They will each run five times a week for a month at a time. Watch them on Tuesdays - 10:30 a.m., Wednesdays - 10 p.m., Thursdays - 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays - 10 a.m.

Through the years, the Newton Conservators have helped to preserve over 200 acres of open space and to create several major parks for public enjoyment. For further information see the Web site www.Newtonconservators.org. There you can find a link describing one of its current efforts: preservation of the Angino Farm. Plans are offered for the rejuvenation this last remaining Newton farm as a self-sustaining community-supported agricultural area similar to those already existing in other nearby cities.

www.greendecade.org is the Web site for the Green Decade Coalition dedicated to creating "a city in better balance with the natural world by making significant, measurable improvements in the way we in Newton use resources." The Green Decade Coalition and the Newton Conservators both welcome new members, volunteers and supporters.

* Events

Here are two events listed by the Brookline Green Space Alliance (<http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org>) that might be of interest to our readers.

Public Tour of the High Service Building at the Chestnut Hill Waterworks

Saturday, December 4th, 11:00 AM

The High Service Pumping Station is the large castle-like brown building facing the Chestnut Hill Reservoir on Beacon Street. Al Goldberg, a CHRC Board member from Newton and an authority on the waterworks historic machinery will conduct the tour. The building is not only a marvelous bit of Boston's architectural past, but it also contains a truly unique collection of historic water pumps. Access has been limited to the building in the past, so this is an opportunity to see what's inside and why its worth preserving. For more information contact Al Goldberg 617-566-9869 or al.goldberg@alum.mit.edu

"Protecting Open Space in Brookline: A Discussion with the Trust for Public Land"

Monday, December 6th at 7:30 PM in the Community Room of the Public Safety Building, 350 Washington St. Brookline.

On Monday evening, December 6th, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance will be hosting a presentation and discussion with Val Talmage, Director of Projects, for the Trust for Public Land in Boston. Come learn about what other Towns in Massachusetts are doing to protect land in their community and what Brookline residents could do to preserve and protect land for future generations. For more information call BGSa at 617-277-4777. To learn about the Trust for Public Land, go to www.tpl.org.

* Open Space Groups in Neighboring Communities

There are groups in other neighboring towns that also sponsor walks and open space related events. Among these are the Brookline Green Space Alliance, <http://www.bgsa.net/>, Weston Trails and Forest Association, <http://www.westonforesttrail.org/calendar/>, the Wellesley Trails Committee, <http://www.ci.wellesley.ma.us/nrc/trails/walk.htm> and the Waltham Land Trust, <http://www.walthamlandtrust.org/calendar.html>. Please check out their websites for more info to help you get into the local outdoors.

* Some Holiday Ideas

Here is some inspiration for gift ideas from Mass Wildlife: Looking for a wildlife-related gift for the outdoors/wildlife enthusiast on your holiday list? The following experiences and items are available for both youth and adults. A two year subscription to Massachusetts Wildlife magazine (\$10) delivers eight full color issues of the Commonwealth's best wildlife publication. For the budding conservationist try a copy of the recently revised "Critters of Massachusetts" book (\$5). "Critters" is a perfect gift for the

curious youngster or the beginning adult naturalist with an interest in backyard wildlife and beyond. For the more advanced naturalist, "Field Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies" (\$20) or "A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools" (\$10) might be just the ticket. In-depth descriptions and detailed photographs help the reader identify and learn more about these creatures. The Massachusetts Wildlife Viewing Guide (\$8.95) listing 67 sites across the state where a variety of wildlife can be seen is a perfect gift for the outdoor explorer or a visitor to the state. Click the Publications button at <http://www.mass.gov/masswildlife> for more details. And don't forget the great Newton trail guide described below.

Natural New England magazine focuses on and celebrates life, science, and outdoor exploration in the northeast. Curious people really like *Natural New England*; there is something to learn in each issue. Check it out at <http://www.naturalne.com/trial.htm>. They will even send you a free issue and gift subscriptions are available. This is a very good magazine for the nature enthusiast.

For those with an interest in maps, check out Peter Kastner's map website. Peter is the organizer for the popular Newton Conservators walk series in the spring and fall. His venture, Community Heritage Maps (<http://www.communityheritagemaps.com>), is dedicated to providing high quality replicas of detailed neighborhood maps based upon pre-1922 insurance and real estate maps. They are fine art quality replicas of detailed neighborhood maps, show individual ownership of buildings and real estate, and are wonderful treasures of information. Peter is making these maps available to individuals that value their historical and fine art character. Contact Peter Kastner at 617-943-8795 or by email at [pkastner\(AT\)communityheritagemaps.com](mailto:pkastner(AT)communityheritagemaps.com).

What is the one nature field guide you can carry that covers birds, bugs, butterflies, trees, mushrooms, animals, flowers, frogs, turtles, and anything else? Why it's Peter Alden's Field Guide to New England (or the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain States, California, Southwestern States, Southeastern States, or Florida.) Amazingly, this fine book has never been advertised by the publisher. It lists 1000 species of plants and animals in a locale and has become an essential resource on any of my nature walks. According to the reviews, "The guide series will appeal to all ages. Concise writing, liberal use of sharp, colorful photographs, drawings, and maps, and logical inclusions of representative species, weather, and habitats found in the region make the guides real horizon expanders ... For some this might be the patch of woods behind their house. For others it might be their first visit to the Everglades. These guides could very well expand the base of people who are interested in and knowledgeable about the natural world." Peter was the first speaker in our Newton Conservators Lecture Series (<http://www.newtonconservators.org/lectures/lectspring01.htm>). Order them directly from the author by contacting Peter Alden, 11 Riverside Avenue, Concord, MA 01742. Please specify how many of which edition you want and note any personal inscriptions that you would like. This book makes a fine present for your nature loving friends (both here and in other parts of the country)!

Do you have visitors from out of town this holiday season who have asked you for a place to stay that is not too expensive? Here's a secret - check out the Walker Center in Auburndale (144 Hancock Street) just off Grove Street near the Williams School. They have relatively inexpensive B&B (\$40-\$65 including breakfast) room and conference facilities (from rooms to an entire house!). They are convenient to the Riverside Green Line station and close to Lasell College. Visit their website at <http://www.walkerctr.org> or call them at 617-969-3919. You may have passed it many times and wondered about it. Nature groups have used some of the Walker Center houses for conferences as I found out talking to a loon counter in Maine. This is a terrific place with a wonderful and caring staff.

The map guide put out by the Newton Conservators is a great resource for those who would like to explore Newton's open space. It would make a great stocking stuffer – it fits nicely in a stocking or in a back pocket. Many folks have been observed out in our conservation areas, trail guide in hand. It is available by web, mail and also at Newtonville Books and New England Mobile Book Fair. Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands may be purchased for \$7.95 online at www.NewtonConservators.org or by mailing a check payable to The Newton Conservators, Inc. to The Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 590011, Newton Center, MA 02459. Sales benefit The Newton Conservators, a nonprofit citizen advocacy organization which actively promotes the acquisition, creation, and preservation of natural open spaces for the people of Newton. Since its formation in the late 1950's, The Newton Conservators has been instrumental in safeguarding more than 200 acres of open space in Newton, creating several major public parks, and enacting ground-breaking environmental ordinances

with respect to the protection and preservation of trees, wetlands and clean air, and the conservation of energy.

Check out Doug Dickson's fine Newton Tab article on the holiday tree tradition in the wonderful monthly Environment Pages at <http://www2.townonline.com/newton/artsLifestyle/view.bg?articleid=135678>

*** About the Newton Conservators**

This email newsletter is sponsored by the Newton Conservators, a local organization that promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, park lands, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open spaces for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of the City of Newton, Massachusetts for scientific study, education, and recreation. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters. A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, recreational, educational, literary, and the other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare in the City of Newton. Please visit our website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org> or contact us at 617-969-6222 or the address below.

If you would like to join the Newton Conservators, please send your name, address, phone and email address (if you wish email alerts) to The Newton Conservators, Inc., P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459. Membership Options are the following: Individual \$25, Family Member \$35, Sustaining Member \$50, Donor \$75, Patron \$100. Membership is tax deductible. Your membership includes the Newton Conservators Newsletter and emails and invitations to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities. You will also receive by mail a copy of the new Newton Conservators open space map book, "Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands".

The Board of Directors of the Newton Conservators meets monthly usually on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm (usually at City Hall). Members are welcome to attend. If you wish to attend you can contact the us to confirm the date, time, location, and agenda.

*** About Newton Conservators Nature Notes**

If you would like to be more directly kept apprised of future nature related events, walks, lectures, and exhibits, you are invited to join the Newton Conservators sponsored "Newton Conservators Nature Notes" email list by sending an email request to dolanpond@aol.com or contacting Ted Kuklinski (617-969-6222). Newton Conservators Nature Notes is automatically sent to members of the Newton Conservators who provide their email addresses as one of their membership benefits. Newton Conservators Nature Notes may be found online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/naturenotes.htm>. You are welcome to submit any items for this sporadical newsletter via email to the same address. Please feel free to forward our newsletter to others you feel might be interested in the information contained herein.