

Subject:

E-Bulletin December 18, 2010



Newton Conservators **E-Bulletin**

Saturday, December 18, 2010

*... working to preserve open space in Newton
since 1961*



Happy Holidays . . .

Our Newton green spaces will soon be blanketed in white. This edition of the e-Bulletin coincides with the Winter edition of our Newton Conservators newsletter which is now in the mail. We bring you some selected articles from the newsletter as well as a few upcoming calendar events. Renew your membership in the Newton Conservators before the end of the year and get a copy of our newly revised Newton Trail Guide! The Trail Guide or Newton Almanac both make terrific holiday presents.

Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 19

Wanted: Bird Counters! For the birders out there who would like to find a partridge in a pear tree, Sunday is the day for the Newton Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and you are welcome to participate. Come join us for the 111th annual Christmas Bird Count. Newton's count is scheduled for Sunday, December 19th. The data we collect is important information used by researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years. For a list of frequently asked questions and details about the national CBC results, visit www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/FAQ.html.



For more information about Newton's bird count and how you can participate, contact Alison Leary at alisonlearymooradian@gmail.com. Those interested should meet at 7 am at 2 Raeburn Terrace (Newton Highlands). Teams then head out to various open spaces in the city and newcomers are welcome! For the true early birds, an owling party makes a foray at 5 am.

Membership and New Publications



If you haven't renewed your membership already, now is the time. Renew before December 31 and get a copy of the new and updated Trail Guide. And consider a gift membership for a conservation-minded friend (new members get a trail guide as well)! Visit

<http://www.newtonconservators.org/membership.htm> for details on membership options.

You can shop online at www.newtonconservators.org/books.htm to purchase Newton Conservators publications. Discounts for members: Almanac is \$15.95 + shipping and the updated and revised "Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Recreation Lands" is \$7.95 + shipping. Buy today in time for holiday giving!



President's Message 2011: Protect Land and Water

On behalf of the Newton Conservators Board of Directors, I wish all of you a very happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year. As we end 2010 and enter our 50th anniversary year in 2011, two local issues press most intensely on our minds. The first is water. The second is protecting more open space.

Water is at the very heart of our most enjoyed parks and conservation areas here in Newton. The Charles River circles our city, wrapping around [Norumbega Park](#), [Auburndale Park](#), [Nahant on Park](#), the [Helen Heyn Riverway](#) and the Charles River pathways. [Crystal Lake](#), [Hammond Pond](#) and [Bullough's Pond](#) are centerpieces of their properties. Sadly, contamination from stormwater, the rainwater washing over our driveways and roofs, parking lots and roadways, flows into rivers and streams, severely stressing these waterbodies. Stormwater carries phosphates and other chemicals and has picked up where the old manufacturing plants left off, polluting the water and fertilizing its vegetation, causing an explosion of excessive vegetation as



well as other problems.

We all love to look out, see the sun reflecting off water and enjoy the wildlife which is part of a healthy system. But as we look out, the problem glares back at us. From the Charles River Lakes District to the basin in Boston, excess vegetation clogged the Charles River this past summer, as it has for many years. Significant volunteer effort succeeds in battling back water chestnuts, but other vegetation takes its place as the root of the problem is untackled. And the problem isn't just cosmetic and disruptive to human enjoyment. Excessive vegetation chokes the river and blocks sunlight, ultimately suffocating fish and other aquatic animals, disrupting birds. . . . It goes on and on. What can we do?



Wherever we live in Newton, we can all do more. The problem is largely caused by too much phosphorus, a naturally occurring element and part of photosynthesis which plants need to extract their food. Enough is good. Too much creates excessive vegetative growth. Excess phosphorus comes from fertilizer running off lawns; auto exhaust; fuel and lubricants running off driveways and parking

lots; contaminants washing off roofs and through gutters, leaves and other decomposing vegetation; septic systems and sanitary sewer overflows; and waste from geese, ducks, and pets. It isn't only those lawns and parking lots that abut the waterways. It's also those that drain into street drains and run into any waterway or stream that ultimately flows into the river. And that is most of us here in Newton.

Both the [Charles River Watershed Association](#) and the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) have in-depth information on all of this. Some of the most important advice that experts offer homeowners is simple:

- avoid fertilizing lawns; test to see if your lawn needs nutrients; if so, use compost
- avoid herbicides or pesticides; they also contain phosphorus
- collect stormwater runoff and store it in rain barrels or dry wells
- reduce impermeable surface on your property to reduce runoff
- fix all illegal sewer connections.

Some may read this and think to themselves that the small role their property plays in the larger scheme of things means very little, and some may even be worried that their lawn would lose the texture and color so many have come to admire. To that I say what one does with one's property, multiplied by hundreds, becomes a dangerous trend and a major problem. We need to trend in the other direction, learning to appreciate the look of a house in which the lawn, garden and hard surfaces can be admired for the extent to which it supports a healthy environment. Everyone plays a role.



Protecting more open space is the other thing on our minds as we say goodbye to 2010. We are dedicating our 50th anniversary dinner in May to a reinvigorated focus on this issue and you will be hearing much more about this in the months to come. Again, happy holidays and a wonderful New Year to all.

Jane Sender, President

<http://www.newtonconservators.org/protectland.htm>

Newton Conservators Newsletter

The latest issue of the Newton Conservators Newsletter (in color!) is now online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/dec10.pdf>. Here is the Table of Contents from the issue (which is in the mail). We have also included some of the content or direct links here as well (in green).

- [President's Message: Protect Water and Land](#)
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The Birds at My Feeder

by Pete Gilmore

It's the time of year to get your bird feeders active again. The birds are coming under survival pressure as food gets harder to find. It helps to have both thistle or Niger seed and a generic mix including millet, safflower and sunflower seeds to attract a variety of birds. If you allow seed to be spilled from your feeders, you will get ground feeders, the Dark-eyed Juncos and sparrows. Some of the different sparrows that we get at feeders in Newton are Song Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, House Sparrows and an occasional White-crowned Sparrow. The House, or English, Sparrows were introduced here by us and can throw a lot of your seed around, as well as eating you out of house and home. If you are lucky you will avoid having them at your feeders.



Another common ground feeder is the Mourning Dove, which frequents feeders. You may also get Wild Turkeys, a real size jump. The mom below has been visiting our feeders for about a month now with three adolescent poults, as the young turkeys are called. Keep a pair of binoculars at a window in your house so that anyone who passes by the view of your feeders can take a look. Small eight-power binoculars are not expensive and will get you good looks at birds in your yard.

In addition to the resident Cardinals, Blue Jays, Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches, the New England winter often brings unusual irruptions of boreal finches from the far north. This winter is shaping up to be such a season. Already we are seeing Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks at feeders around our area. The Pine Siskins are cousins of the Goldfinches. If you put out the thistle, or Niger, seed you will certainly get Goldfinches in their duller winter plumages.

..... to read more please visit <http://www.newtonconservators.org/birdfeeder.htm>

History in the Stones

Octo Barnett

One of the largest and most attractive open spaces in Newton is the Webster Conservation Area, located next to Hammond Pond Parkway. The main entrance is at the end of Warren Street (off Glen Ave. in Newton Centre) . This area has over 50 acres of woodland criss-crossed by miles of walking trails. Visitors to Webster are almost always residents of Newton Centre. Few residents of other parts of the city take advantage of this jewel of a conservation area.

Fascinating remnants of the history of this area range from the marks of the sheets of ice (glaciers) that spread down from the northern polar ice cap, picking up huge boulders, gravel and sand, and scraping and gouging the hills. The last of the glaciers in this area was 14,000 years ago, but we can still see the marks on the stone and the layers of deposit of gravel. One of the favorite sites to see these stones is Gouaches Caves and Cake Rock. Another remnant is Bare Pond –which has water only in the spring, when the pond is filled



with tadpoles and salamanders, but is dry in the summer.

Some time after the last ice age, people from Asia ventured southward through Canada into this area, and took advantage of the fishing, the herd animals, and waterfowl. In other parts of Newton, residents have found spear points and stone tools. It would be exciting if we could find any of these in the Webster conservation area, which would have been a good site for early camps since it was near a water supply and opportunities for fishing, with open space that would be attractive for grazing animals.

... to read more, please visit <http://www.newtonconservators.org/stones.htm>

The Green Team

Alison Leary

As a staff person with Green Decade, the co-chair of the League of Women Voters' Environmental Committee, and a Member of the Board of Directors of The Newton Conservators, I find myself in a good environmental efforts here in our city organizations work together on local



position to evaluate the and to see how these three issues.

Each group has its own focus. The Conservators are Newton's land trust. For 50 years we have worked to protect and maintain Newton's open spaces and conservation lands. Surprisingly, there remain opportunities to preserve open space here in Newton, and protecting these undeveloped parcels is a big priority. We also organize neighborhood efforts to remove invasive plant species, to improve the quality of open spaces for both people and wildlife.

Recently, the Conservators were critical in the establishment of a Parks & Recreation working group which seeks to better manage Nahanton Park for myriad uses, which include birding, dog walking, running, hiking, boating, and community gardening. The Conservators realize how important it is to develop a management plan, which is essentially a road map for conservation goals. This past year, we retained the Massachusetts Audubon Extension Service to inventory some of our conservation and open space areas and make recommendations about best management practices. Some suggestions included better control of invasive plants, improved delineation of conservation areas, and conducting water quality testing where appropriate.

... to read more, please visit <http://www.newtonconservators.org/greenteam.htm>

Newton Becoming More Dog Friendly

by Ted Kuklinski

Newton has approximately 3,500 licensed dogs (and perhaps at least twice as many currently unlicensed), making dog owners one of the largest user groups of Newton's green spaces.



The year 2003 marked the beginning of an effort to provide "off leash" opportunities in Newton, with a public hearing in the Aldermanic Programs and Services Committee. The process finally resulted in a trial off-leash ordinance, which, after a number of extensions, expired this past summer. In that period, only one off leash area was brought online, at old Cold Spring Park, a site which received much notoriety and usage and was subject to controversy from neighbors. There really needed to be more sites throughout the city if off leash was to be ultimately successful in Newton.

The Off Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) was formed in late 2009 under the auspices of the Newton Parks and Recreation (P&R) Department to formulate an alternate way of dealing with off-leash. The group meets weekly (currently on Thursdays, 4 pm in Room 202, City Hall) and is open to the public. Visit <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Parks/DogInformation/> for meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, public presentations, and other off-leash information.

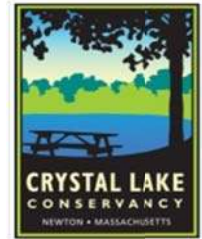
.... to read more, please visit <http://www.newtonconservators.org/dogparks.htm>

Crystal Lake News

by Robert Fizek

The Crystal Lake Conservancy has been in the process of conducting the first ever comprehensive environmental analysis of Crystal Lake and its watershed. Read about this and other activities in their first Newsletter:

<http://www.crystalakeconservancy.org/clnewsletter.html>.



What's New on www.NewtonConservators.org?

by Dan Brody

The Newton Conservators' Web site undergoes constant changes. We build it all the time. Some of our members may not be aware that we maintain a comprehensive web page that displays what is found in our newsletter, our e-newsletter, and more. Here's some of the information that can be found on our website. To find one of these pages, you can either use the menus at the left side of the home page, or else choose "Search this Site" from the menu and then type the keywords (**shown in parentheses in this list**) into the search box.



- A list of 150 parks and conservation areas in Eastern Massachusetts. Each one has a link to more information. (**nearby parks**)
- Long walks in Newton. Did you know that you can walk from the Charles River near Wells Avenue all the way to Newton Centre, staying in parkland almost all of the way? (**long walks**)
- A Google Map of canoe launching sites in Newton (**canoe sites**)
- Images of Newton's natural areas by local artists and photographers, including a memorable 1993 art "installation" in Cold Spring Park (**images**)
- Printable maps of Newton park and conservation areas, created for our new Walking Trails guide (**maps**)
- Videos about Newton open spaces from the Environmental Show on NewTV (**environmental show**)
- An inventory of plants and animals found in Newton, compiled by the Conservators Land Management Committee (**master list**)
- A comprehensive list of links to federal, state, local, and nonprofit environmental groups in Newton and surrounding communities (**links**)
- A photo gallery of each major park and conservation area in Newton (**photographs**)
- A list of trail guides and other books about open space and environmental issues in Massachusetts (**books**)
- Information about health and the outdoors (**health**)
- Links to local Community Supported Agriculture (**CSA**) farms, and other information about farming and gardening (**farming**)

The Conservators' web site is open to members and the public. Come browse our links!

Newton Conservators e-Bulletin

If you wish to subscribe, just send a note with your request to subscribe to the Newton Conservators e-Bulletin to dolanpond@aol.com or emallist@newtonconservators.org. The current edition of our paper newsletter (for those who don't receive it in the mail) can be easily downloaded in PDF form at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/>. Event listings for our e-Bulletin can be sent to dolanpond@aol.com.

This e-Bulletin is a service of the Newton Conservators, Newton's open space advocates since 1961. Membership information can be found online at our website - <http://www.newtonconservators.org/membership.htm>. You can join the organization or even renew your membership online now! Did you know that you can register and pay for membership, events (like the annual Dinner Meeting), buy a copy of our Almanac, or make a donation to the Newton Conservators online? Just visit the following link to get to our registration page: <https://s08.123signup.com/servlet/SignUp?PG=1532278182400&P=1532278133476107150857400&Info=>

- E-Bulletin Editor Ted Kuklinski, Newton Conservators (dolanpond@aol.com)



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