



Newton Conservators E-Bulletin

Friday, January 19, 2018

... Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961



Winter

The New Year is well under way and January has already had its ups and downs in temperature and precipitation. By the way, with some light snow cover, it's a good time to check for animal and bird tracks in the snow. But spring is coming and we are already preparing our Spring events schedule of walks and, of course, invasive removal. For now, we have put together a brief calendar of events, mostly indoor, that might be of interest. Our latest Newton Conservators newsletter is out now and you can find links to its fine articles below including our President's Message highlighting the importance of birds in the environment and Pete Gilmore's article on winter ducks. What better way to see winter ducks than on the wonderful annual Duck Walk on the Charles sponsored by Waltham Land Trust tomorrow! We also highlight some of the great free talks in Cambridge sponsored by Grow Native Massachusetts. Please renew your membership or join the Newton Conservators to help us continue our important open space work! Current members should have received a renewal letter last month. Otherwise you can join or renew at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/membership.htm>. Hope to see you out and about in Newton this winter!

Calendar

Saturday, January 20, 10-11:30 am
Waltham Land Trust's Annual Duck Walk
130 River St, Waltham (Shaw's back parking lot)

Be amazed at the beauty of visiting waterfowl along the Charles River sponsored by our neighboring Waltham Land Trust (www.walthamlandtrust.org). From November to March, a variety of northern-dwelling ducks come south from Canada to winter on our unfrozen waterways. The walk will be along the Charles River trail upstream to several viewing platforms and the DCR boardwalk along the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation before turning back at Moody Street. Expert birders of the WLT, some equipped with scopes, will (hopefully) help us identify hooded and common mergansers, ring-necks, golden eyes, ruddy ducks and other waterfowl described on this sheet. If lucky, you might even see an eagle or two soaring above! Bring cameras and binoculars. All participants should dress for the weather with footwear appropriate for icy conditions. Postponed if heavy snow is falling. Free. For details please visit <https://walthamlandtrust.zsystems.com/np/clients/walthamlandtrust/event.jsp?event=387>. Also check out the great article on Winter Ducks by Pete Gilmore in the latest Newton Conservators newsletter: http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_winter_ducks.pdf



Male Bufflehead (top),
Female Bufflehead (bottom)

Thursday, January 25, 7 pm
Volante Farms: 100 Years of History
Lecture by Peter Volante
Newton Free Library, 330 Homer St., Newton, MA, 02459

Through much of Newton's history, Oak Hill was an agricultural area. Peter Volante's grandparents, Peter and Caterina Volante, operated a farm on Dedham Street from 1917 until 1962, when it moved to the present location in Needham. Using historic photos and family artifacts, Peter Volante will discuss the organization of the farm, his grandfather's famous celery, the first retail stand, and farm workers from around the world. Join Historic Newton for an inside look at a business that has lasted 100 years. <http://www.historicnewton.org/> Check out the accompanying exhibit as well



at the Newton Free Library through January 31.

**Monday, January 29 - Sunday, February 25 (new applications)
Enrollment for 2018 Summer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program**

Sign up for a share and enjoy fresh vegetables from Newton Community Farm and other local partner farms from June to October. 2017 sharers (summer and late fall) can enroll from January 15th to January 28th. Newton residents can apply to be in the lottery for remaining shares; applications due between January 29th and February 25th. Go to Summer CSA Program page on NCF's website for more information at <http://newtoncommunityfarm.org/produce/csa/>

**Wednesday, February 7, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
The Beautiful Adaptations of Native Plants: Inviting the Wild into our Gardens
Dan Segal, Owner of the Plantsmen Nursery
Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138
Grow Native Massachusetts - Evenings with Experts**

Native plants have evolved a broad array of adaptations in the wild, yielding not only the ornamental features embraced in horticulture but many fascinating mechanisms for survival. Dan will take us beyond 'pretty' plant features to explore the origins of these adaptive traits, and the critical importance of regional variation. This insight helps us to select plants that are genuinely suited to our landscapes. He will also compare and contrast large-scale nursery production that favors the cloning of cultivars, with small-scale nursery propagation that favors seed-grown straight species. To know and source native plants effectively, understanding their propagation can be just as important as species selection.



Dan Segal is the owner of The Plantsmen Nursery near Ithaca, NY, which specializes in native plants, local seed collection, and natural landscaping. He has collected and propagated over 1,000 species of native plants in his three decades of work as a nurseryman, giving him great insight into the fascinating variety of adaptations that plants have evolved to survive. He founded the Ithaca Native Plant Symposium in 2009. Co-sponsored by Grow Native Massachusetts and the Friends of Fresh Pond Reservation.

**Friday, February 9 (application deadline)
Webster Woods Advisory Panel**

Mayor Fuller has announced the formation of a Webster Woods Advisory Panel to offer guidance on how best to preserve this important community resource. The Mayor has appointed Beth Wilkinson of the Newton Conservators to serve as Chair of the Advisory Panel. Ms. Wilkinson will chair both the Panel's Executive Committee and the larger Advisory Panel's membership.



All Newton residents interested in serving on the Advisory Panel are invited to complete an online application (a Survey Monkey form) by using the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YR5WGXY>. Applications must be completed on or before February 9, 2018, to be considered. Applicants should be willing to commit to monthly meetings throughout 2018.

**Friday, February 16 - Monday, February 19
Great Backyard Bird Count
National Audubon Society**

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds. You are invited to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 16-19, 2018**, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish! Details can be found at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/about/>.



Great Horned Owl

**Wednesday, February 28
Newton Conservators Grant Application Deadline**

The Newton Conservators provides grants to Newton's schools, educational institutions, groups, and institutions for the purpose of fostering its mission. The grants are generally modest in size; requests of between \$250 and \$750 may receive priority, although smaller and larger grants will be

given full consideration. They can be made for a single event, a longer-term project, or for multiple year funding. Projects for multiple year funding must be reported upon and resubmitted annually. Find full details at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/grants.htm>

Wednesday, March 7, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

Lessons Learned when Field Botany Meets Design

Uli Lorimer, Curator of the Native Flora Garden at Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Grow Native Massachusetts - Evenings with Experts

Ecologically attuned designers are increasingly looking to nature for inspiration in the design of managed landscapes. But connecting field botany to horticulture is complex, and insights gained from observations in the wild don't always translate directly into a cultivated garden. Uli will use the recently expanded native flora garden at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, a cultivated pine barrens and coastal plain grassland, as a case study—sharing lessons learned along the way as the project evolved from a concept into a dynamic, living landscape. Good design allows for change and succession to occur, and flexibility in design intent is a valuable strategy because things do not always work out as planned. Uli Lorimer has been the Curator of the Native Flora Garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for over a decade. He was instrumental in the expansion of the Garden's native plant collection, using only material sourced from the wild and grown from seed. As Field Chair at BBG, he coordinates fieldwork with regional botanists and leads botanical expeditions for naturalists and horticulturists. Co-sponsored by Grow Native Massachusetts and Mount Auburn Cemetery



Wednesday, April 4, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

Revealing a Sense of Place

Matthew Cunningham, Principal, Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design

Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Grow Native Massachusetts - Evenings with Experts

Seasonal New England is rich in its unique and dynamic ecological patterns. Join us, as Matthew explores how his observations of these natural systems have influenced his firm's creation of contextual and native plant-centric projects that grasp the rhythms of everyday life. He will show us a variety of residential landscapes, large and small, that embrace our regional flora, utilize ecologically sustainable principles, and that build connections between interior and exterior spaces to strengthen our relationship with nature. Come be inspired by these beautiful, vibrant landscapes that enhance life for both their human and their wild residents. Matthew Cunningham is the founder of Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design, and a rising star in the world of landscape architecture. He is passionate about the landscapes of New England and is committed to excellent design with ecologically sustainable principles. A graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, he worked at the renowned firm Reed Hilderbrand Associates before starting his own practice. Matthew was named "International Designer of the Year" by the APLD in 2017. Co-sponsored by Grow Native Massachusetts and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects.



Wednesday, May 2, 6 pm (social), 7 pm (dinner)

Newton Conservators Annual Dinner Meeting

Environmentalist of the Year, Maynard, and Director's Awards

Featured Speaker - Peter Alden, Naturalist

American Legion Post 440, 295 California Street, Nonantum

Mark your calendars for this important annual dinner meeting event with a great speaker and awards. Watch for further details soon. Our featured speaker this year is Peter Alden, a world renowned naturalist, entertaining lecturer, ecotourism guide and author of 15 books on North American and African wildlife, including the National Audubon Society's Regional Field Guide Series. Peter's interests have widened from his original field of ornithology to include all visible biodiversity, conservation issues, historical changes in the landscape, climate change, and the invasive alien plant and animal crisis affecting us today.



President's Message

It's a hard time to be a small creature in today's world.

Researchers at Radboud University in the Netherlands who



studied records from German nature preserves discovered a seasonal decline of 76% and mid-summer decline of 82% in flying insect biomass over 27 years. Another study by the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union showed that there are 15% fewer birds than just 12 years ago.

A year-old study by the organization Partners in Flight indicated that North America has 1.5 billion fewer birds now than it did 40 years ago. Observations in more than 25 other countries indicate that this is a global phenomenon.

What are the most likely causes of the loss of these populations and others around the world? Loss of habitat. Climate change. The overuse of pesticides and fertilizers. The increase in agricultural monocultures.

In a Conservation Biology article, EO Wilson tells us to, "Pay attention to the little things that run the world." He continues:

The truth is that we need invertebrates but they don't need us. If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change... But if invertebrates were to disappear, it is unlikely that the human species could last more than a few months. Most of the fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time. Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and with them the physical structure of the majority of the forests and other terrestrial habitats of the world.

How can those of us living in Newton help to preserve those little things? By thinking globally and acting locally. We need to work to preserve the bugs and the birds in our local environment by conserving their habitat in Newton – both by protecting critical open spaces and by taking care of those that already are protected, by protecting or increasing the biodiversity within them.

That is the mission of the Newton Conservators. We fulfill that mission in many ways.

Here are a few examples:

- We have been working for two years to protect the land now owned by Boston College in Webster Woods. (Mayor Ruthanne Fuller has pledged to make that happen.)
- We are removing invasive plants from many of the city's open spaces. Invasive plants outcompete and push out the native plants that provide food for our native insects and birds. (For more information, see <http://bit.ly/2elu069>)
- We are restoring Woodcock Meadow at Nahanton Park by removing invasive plants and planting native plants.
- We have started two experimental plots to try to restore the understory of the red maple wetland in the rear of Cold Spring Park (see the lead article by Eric Olson earlier in this newsletter).
- We are working with the City to put conservation restrictions on city-owned conservation areas and parks – and then to monitor them.

All of those projects are funded by membership dollars. It is our membership renewal time, and we hope that you will renew your membership – or join for the first time. If you're already a member, you have received a renewal notice in the mail. If not, you can join online: <http://bit.ly/2jDeU2P>.

Thanks for your support!

- Beth Wilkinson, President

Newton Conservators Newsletter

The Newton Conservators publishes its newsletter approximately four times a year. It is distributed by mail to the membership and is available online. Extra copies are also available at the Newton Free Library. Here is the link to our Fall Newsletter—chock-full of interesting information: http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12.pdf

Here are links to the articles in this issue:

- Cold Spring Park Red Maple Swamp - Can it Endure? - Eric Olson
http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_red_maple.pdf
- Winter Ducks in Newton - Pete Gilmore
http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_winter_ducks.pdf
- The Two Bridges Trail - Ted Chapman
http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_two_bridges.pdf
- Woodcock Meadow Restoration - Update - Katherine Howard
http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_woodcock_update.pdf
- President's Message - Beth Wilkinson
http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/17_12_president.pdf



NEWSLETTER

Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961

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Cold Spring Park Red Maple Swamp — Can It Endure?

By Eric Olson, *Senior Lecturer in Ecology at Brandeis University*

Eighty years ago this spring, a lucky red maple seed-on-a-wing took its spiraling flight downward from its mother tree and settled into the damp peaty soil of Newton's Cold Spring Park. A mature red maple is a prolific seed producer, and that single seed would have had hundreds, if not thousands, of siblings also winging downward that year. A seed, as a biology professor of mine liked to say, is a baby tree with a packed lunch, and wild nature can be hard on babies of any creature, but especially those of plants. Of the many thousands of seeds produced by a tree during its lifetime, few ever become seedlings, much less mature forest trees.

A few do make it of course, and that is how this past summer fellow naturalist Bruce Wenning and I found ourselves standing before a particular red maple, one of the many in Newton's largest red maple swamp. We were able to trace this tree back to a lucky seed 80 years ago because we counted its rings. No, we didn't cut it down — using a forester's corer we extracted a slim cylinder of wood, thinner than a pencil, which we later sanded, moistened, and examined under a dissecting microscope. Our drill hit close to the center of the tree, allowing us to confidently count back in time to the year

1937, when this tree was starting its long, slow ascent into the canopy.

We were taking part in Newton's Red Maple Swamp Study Project, organized this year by the Newton Conservators in collaboration with City of Newton Parks and Recreation Dept. officials. Of the hundreds of large and healthy red maples that dominate the swamp forest of Cold Spring Park, Bruce and I had stopped at one, chosen pretty much by chance: "How about this one, Bruce?" "Looks good to me, Eric, lets see what she's got!"



Red Maple Foliage note three main lobes. Also shown is a close up of a male flower (note pollen-producing stamens), a close up of a female flower (note the pair of long stigmas), and seeds on wings. This fruit type is known as a samara. Red maple is wind-pollinated and wind-dispersed.

In 1937 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was beginning his second term, Amelia Earhart disappeared over a distant sea, and war was brewing in Europe. Counting a tree's growth lines can connect us to the past, but though our chosen study tree proved to be old in human years, the thick peat soils at this site suggest that a swamp forest has dominated here for centuries, well before Newton became a named town. An 1895 map of Newton shows a wetland here at least four times its current size before most was ditched and filled, along with hundreds of other wetland acres in town, to make the land suitable for suburbia. Reflecting on this history should increase our appreciation

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Membership & Publications!



Did you know that you can Join the Newton Conservators online. 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. Did you know that you can register and pay for membership, events, buy a copy of our Almanac or newly revised Trail Guide, or make a donation to the Newton Conservators online? The Trail Guides and Almanac are also available at your local Newton Bookstores. Shop Local! Our Trail Guide and Almanac make great holiday gifts!



Mission: *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 organization was formed as a not-for-profit in June 1961.

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



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