



**NEWTON
CONSERVATORS**

WINTER ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

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

WWW.NEWTONCONSERVATORS.ORG • DECEMBER-MARCH 2010/11

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For 2011: Protect Water and Land

This is the text of President Jane Sender's Message as the Newton Conservators enter their 50th year.



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, Nahanton Park, the Helen Heyn Riverway and the Charles River pathways. Crystal Lake, Hammond Pond and Bulloughs 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,



— Dan Brody

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

For 2011 continued from page 1:

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 (www.crwa.org) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources) 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.

— President Jane Sender

The Birds at My Feeder

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 (pictured 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.



— Pete Gilmore

In addition to the resident Chickadees, Blue Jays, Cardinals (pictured below), 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.



— Pete Gilmore

Birds at My Feeder continued from page 2:



— Pete Gilmore

Looking ahead to the spring, it is always fun to watch the olive Goldfinches change into brilliant yellow birds. The Siskins are the same size and associate with Goldfinches but are streaked below and have very pointed beaks (pictured above). The larger Evening Grosbeaks are like Robin-sized Goldfinches, yellow with a big white patch on their wings. They prefer larger seeds like sunflower seeds and have enormous beaks for breaking open large seeds. These beautiful finches are around. To see some great pictures of the Evening Grosbeaks at a feeder on Martha's Vineyard go to the URL:

<http://ottgallerymv.com/lannymcdowellavianart/index.php/2010/11/evening-grosbeak-update/>.

The Red-breasted Nuthatches are smaller cousins of the White-breasted Nuthatches. They are here this year and usually are discovered by hearing their continual, nasal and smaller “yank-yank-yank” calls. They are pretty, having a dark cap, white eye-stripe and red-rusty flanks.



— Pete Gilmore

Another winter visitor from the far north that has been here in recent years are the Redpolls (picture above). These are finches, which look like sparrows until you look closely and notice the rosy red colors on their heads and, sometimes, on their breasts. They are nomadic and tend not to stay long in one place. They travel in social, chattering flocks and like

to eat the seeds from the catkins, or tassels, of birch trees. They also eat seeds we leave out, usually on the ground.

Along with these seed-eating birds we have three woodpeckers that visit our feeders. These woodpeckers are often attracted to suet rather than seed, although they also will eat seed. The smallest is the Downy Woodpecker, with a black and white plumage. The males have a red splotch on their heads. Larger than the Downies are the Hairy Woodpeckers, which are very similar but are larger, with a big beak like a chisel. The third woodpecker visiting feeders in our area during the winter is the striking and larger Red-bellied Woodpecker. This bird has a lot of red on its head and a black and white “ladder-back” plumage. During the fall, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers migrate through this area. One was around my feeders on November 22.

Once you have a regular group of ordinary birds coming to your feeder, you will ultimately get on the visiting rounds of a hawk. The common large hawk in our area is the Red-tailed Hawk. We have a local Red-tail who is more interested in the squirrels that are always around our feeders. These hawks are very big birds and the adults have a striking rusty red tail. All of the Red-tailed Hawks, adults and immatures alike, have a light breast and stomach, with a band of brown feathers across the upper breast, like a diffuse sash.

A smaller hawk in our area is the Sharp-shinned Hawk, being the size of a Blue Jay. These hawks live by eating songbirds and are very mobile and fast. If all of your feeder birds vanish in a flurry, check the vicinity for a hawk. A larger, bird-eating hawk is the Cooper's Hawk, about the size of a Crow. The Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks are in the same family of round-winged, fast flying hawks, the accipiters.

You may also be treated to a visit by loud and devilish crows. They will shoo the other birds away but will not really cause any trouble. But they are interesting to watch because they are very social and intelligent birds. They may just eat, but they may also interact in ways that are humorous for us to watch. One crow chased a bunny under my feeders last spring, and then was chased in turn by the bunny. The crow did all of the chasing and being chased on his feet, never flying up or away from the bunny. That crow also deviled a turkey and gray squirrels around my feeders. It was a young bird full of mischievous explorations of its fellow creatures.

As I finish writing this piece, a family of five crows has gorged on my suet, and a sharp shinned hawk has taken a hapless Dark-eyed Junco from under my feeders. Life goes on, not always according to our druthers. Put up some feeders and watch the winter action from a warm vantage point.

— Pete Gilmore



Newton Tree Conservancy Update

2010 was a good year for the Newton Tree Conservancy. However, with 50 new street trees planted compared to the 400-500 that required removal by the city, the NSTAR pruning disaster, and Asian Longhorned Beetle now in our backyard, we cannot call it a winning year for our urban forest. More trees planted, more members, more city budget, more protection for trees, and more community involvement are all needed.

NTC's tree planting activities extended right up to the end of November, when we replaced three oaks on Barbara Rd. in West Newton. Trees planted in six neighborhoods across the city did well, and overall the program (our second annual) was a great success. The planting was funded by a generous grant from Newton Community Pride's Leo L. Levi Tree Endowment Fund. Labor was provided by volunteers and neighbors, who learned about tree care and agreed to water the trees weekly.

We have applied for another grant from Newton Community Pride for a third round of planting in the spring of 2011. If it is approved, we will publicize neighborhood group applications in the Newton Tab and on our website.

Programs sponsored or co-sponsored during 2010 included Marc Welch's historical review of Newton's tree program and UMass entomology professor Joe Elkinton's presentation of the state's efforts to control Winter Moth. The Tree Steward group pruned regularly and also mulched Marc's personal nursery/arboretum of 80 trees on Sawmill Parkway in Oak Hill Park. In October we participated in the Global Work Party and planted trees on Commonwealth Ave. In November we did a tree walk at the Durant-Kenrick property and the surrounding neighborhood. Look for further Tree Steward classes, which will be offered again in the spring.

The Tree Commission, the formal advisory group to the City's Forestry Department, will continue to be involved in the ongoing utility pruning discussions, with the goal of achieving a thoughtful pruning program that promotes rather than harms our trees. Meanwhile, the stop work order to NSTAR is still in effect. Another positive step in process is that a Public Tree Ordinance, which will protect street trees and give greater powers of oversight to the Forestry Department, is making its way through aldermanic committees.

Winter is planning time for the NTC, and we welcome your involvement in our planning efforts as well as your continued membership support.

✂ *Newton Tree Conservancy President Katherine Howard*

Planning Native Plant Layers for Your Garden

In winter, we can see the bones of our gardens: High sculptural tree branches, low twiggy shrubs, fluffy dried ornamental grasses, and barren frosty lawns. It's a time when you can easily see the composition of your garden, from low groundcovers up through high canopy trees.

Are layers missing in your garden? Here in New England we can use winter as a time for leisurely thoughts and planning, mentally fitting new plants in our gardens before the spring planting season begins. Here are some ideas.

High Canopy Trees

Scarlet, pin and red oaks are available in garden centers and nurseries. Red oaks grow in partial shade. Kentucky yellowwood, sweetgum, tuliptree and sassafras are excellent large trees. River birch is often planted as though it is an ornamental tree but it grows to be 50-80' high, so it is actually a high canopy tree. White pine is a relatively inexpensive conifer. It is low and bushy when young but a tall heritage tree as it gets older. High canopy trees are appropriate for property edges and for shade trees.

Understory/Ornamental Trees

Trees are called understory when they can survive under the dappled shade of a high canopy tree. Many native trees used as ornamentals fit into this category such as striped maple, hornbeam, redbud, fringetree, Florida dogwood, silverbell and sourwood. Hawthorns prefer bright sun and survive on slopes and in poor quality soil.

Tall Shrubs

These are called "tall shrubs" rather than "trees" because they are often a little shorter and multi-stemmed. Bottlebrush buckeye, downy shadblow, pagoda dogwood, witchhazel, rosebay rhododendron, and spicebush grow under high canopies. Bayberry, flame azalea, American elderberry and American cranberry prefer more sun.

Foundation Plantings

Foundation beds can be deeper than three feet to accommodate plants as they grow to their mature size. Curved foundation beds can contain an ornamental tree and larger shrubs. Remember: Read the plant tags and leave enough room for plants to grow. Don't plant in a straight line. For aesthetics, plant in groupings and use the 1, 3, 5 planting rule: One large plant, three medium plants and five smaller plants.

Medium Height Shrubs

Oakleaf hydrangea, mountain laurel, Catawba rhododendron and mapleleaf viburnum are the medium height shrubs that

Native Plant Layers continued from page 4:

tolerate the most shade. Other shrubs may only tolerate partial shade. Plant tags tell how tall they become over time. They may be too tall to plant in front of windows. Again, plant these shrubs using the 1, 3, 5 rule. Use one as an accent or use 3 for a grouping. They are appropriate for property borders or behind shorter shrubs and perennial borders.

Small Conifers

Dwarf Alberta spruce is one of the few conifers that you can count on to remain small. They grow very slowly and need plenty of sun. They are good for foundation plantings or for a punctuation mark in a border.

Shorter Deciduous Shrubs

These shrubs are all good for foundation plantings and borders, because you can let them grow to their full size without pruning. They are low enough that they won't block windows. Dwarf fothergilla, St. John's wort, and Olga Mezitt and PJM rhododendrons are fine examples. In a narrow garden bed such as between a house and a driveway, modify the 1, 3, 5 rule. Break up border plantings into little groupings with accent plants in between. Put in three of one plant, then one other plant and then three of a third type. Put the groupings of three plants in as much of a triangle as your space will allow.

Lower Spreading Shrubs

These small shrubs typically spread out slowly in all directions but they won't get very tall and are good for filling up a blank area in a border or on a slope. Sweet pepperbush, dwarf fragrant sumac, and lowbush blueberry would like at least partial sun. Drooping leucothoe prefers shade.

Lower Spreading Conifers

Ground-hugging junipers are good for the front of the foundation bed or shrub border. Plumosa Compacta juniper is one of my favorites, growing to be about 18" high. It is a fluffy, bright green in the summer and plum colored through the winter months.

Groundcovers

This is a very important group of plants that may be missing from your garden. Bearberry grows happily on dry, sunny slopes. Allegheny spurge looks similar to Japanese pachysandra but is less aggressive, spreading very slowly. Wild ginger, Canada mayflower, partridgeberry and Allegheny spurge grow in partial to full shade. Bearberry and barren strawberry prefer sun to part-shade.

Wildflowers

Use the 1, 3 or 5 rule for this large group of plants too numerous to list. Plant in groupings. Be sure to put sun-loving plants in the sun and shade plants in the shade. Read the tags! Bugbane grows in deep shade. Woodland plants

grow in part-shade to shade. Prairie plants require more sun. Goldenrod may plant itself in your garden. If it does, let it grow or move it carefully to a better location.

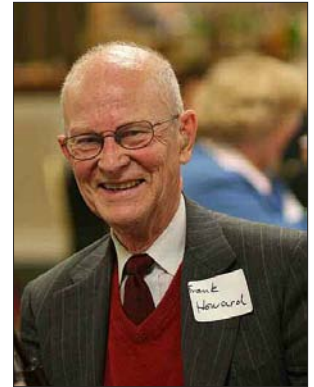
Ferns

Mix ferns in with your perennials in shady areas. Christmas fern looks best through the winter. Lady ferns and hayscented ferns may show up in your garden uninvited. If they look good where they turn up, leave them or move them to a better spot in your garden.

✂ Beth Schroeder - bsw1@comcast.net

Time Well Spent

Frank Howard has served for many years as a Member of the Board of Directors of the Newton Conservators. His wife Deborah has served the Conservators as well. Frank announced his retirement from the Board this year. He wrote this.



✂ Henry Finch

Frank Howard

Robert Browning wrote, "Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be."

Our experience is that the best – or the opposite – comes along, throughout life. Our first best time was when my wife Deb and I met on a blind date and were married. Three more were at the births of our daughters and seven more with each grandchild. Travel has provided us with a number of best times. First to Waltham for an overnight camp out with the Girl Scout troop led by Deb and a colleague. Our "jungle breakfast" was doughnuts, bananas and cereal boxes tied in the trees. Other best times were camping out on the Cape at Nickerson State Park, as well as New Hampshire and Vermont stays, when friends hosted us at their vacation homes.

In 1985, we purchased Upton Farm in Whitingham, Vermont, where sheep had been raised since 1885. The 39 acres have become more or less reforested over the years. Bounded by the Green Mountain National Forest and the Deerfield River and close to Mount Snow, it has become the extended family home.

Another best time was when we bought our first and only home in West Newton from the Lennihans. Dick Lennihan had witnessed the neglect of Edmonds Park; it had been used as a trash dumping ground. He and others were part of the neighborhood groups that banded together to form the Newton Conservators Incorporated (N.C.I.) in 1961.

Time Well Spent continued from page 5:

Our new next door neighbor, Barbara Hayes, introduced us to the Massachusetts Audubon Society. There, Deb became involved in ornithology research. Our neighborhood became the study area for her paper, entitled "Urban Robins: A Population Study." She became concerned for the lack of undisturbed wildlife habitats in Newton. One of her professors at B.U. informed the class that, if they wanted to save the birds, they must influence "the birds on Beacon Hill." She became active as a Mass. Audubon Volunteer, then as a staff member, where she initiated their advocacy work. While a member of the Newton Conservators Board for 19 years, she also served on the Newton Conservation Commission.

My own civic service began as an advisor to the City Physician. In retirement I enjoyed the activities of the Newton Conservators, serving on the Board for 13 years. With a new photography hobby, I learned about videography as a part of the team producing The Environmental Show for Newton TV and DVDs for the Newton Library.

Our family has been enriched by the energy, efforts, creative thinking and problem solving by our Newton Conservator presidents, vice presidents and task force leaders. The Newton Conservators was one of our best family experiences. With many members, as well as their friends and families, we witnessed and enjoyed the strength of collaborative efforts. We learned from these times. Our daughters and their families have found real satisfaction with such activities.

The future of the Newton Conservators depends on new young families. When they join, they are likely to experience family time well spent, as has been our pleasure.

✍ Frank Howard

An Historic Summer on the Charles

Record high water, record low water, an aqueduct break and a new boat rental at Nahanton Park created much excitement on the Charles River in 2010. An early start to the growing season encouraged the spread of invasives, with water chestnut gaining new territory in spite of the efforts of over 1,000 volunteers.



✍ Dan Brody

The spring started with the river cresting three feet above normal in mid March. To control the flooding, DCR

released flashboards at the Moody Street Dam in Waltham. This action had not been taken since the early 1970s, and repairs were required before the boards could be replaced. After the annual Run of the Charles canoe and kayak race through the partially drained Lakes District, DCR further decreased water flow by diverting much of the waters of the Charles River to the Neponset River through the Mother Brook diversion. The waters of the Lakes District of the Charles receded, exposing wide expanses of mud flats and much debris. DCR quickly fabricated and replaced the metal slots that retain the flashboards, and the lake filled almost overnight. If the water is lowered again to repair the walkway over the dam, a cleanup effort can remove the many tires and other debris resting underwater.

On May 1, the MWRA aqueduct broke in Weston across from the LaSalle Boathouse. The flow of the Charles doubled, increasing the river's height by about eight inches. A silt cloud moved all the way to Boston. A quick fix returned things to normal until a storm threatened near the end of August. In anticipation of possible flooding, DCR again diverted some of the flow of the Charles River to the Neponset. The low flow exposed several old autos by the dock at Nahanton Park. An Audi and a GMC pickup truck with roofs rusted away were removed by the State Police dive team.

The removal of the ditched autos and their jagged rusted metal made for safer boating at the newly opened Nahanton Park Canoe and Kayak Rental. In cooperation with Newton Parks and Recreation, Charles River Canoe and Kayak (www.paddleboston.com) opened a public boat rental on July 10. A mixture of canoes, stand-up paddleboards, and single and double kayaks catered to the interests of young and old. This section of the river offers 15 miles of paddling from Hemlock Gorge in Newton Upper Falls upstream through Cutler Park's marshes and around the Dedham loop to Cochrane Dam in Dover/Needham. An upstream drop-off service enabled one to paddle 10-13 miles downstream through wooded marshes and the Dedham meanders.

Downstream in the Lakes District of Newton, Weston and Waltham, the invasive water chestnut plants were flourishing after emerging three weeks early. Despite the efforts of over 1,000 volunteers who filled approximately 35 dumpsters, the plants have spread to new areas. Charles River Watershed Association's summer interns performed admirably in leading over 23 groups, including an international high school program, summer camps, corporate groups, and individuals to pull acres of weeds. For 2011, efforts are underway to solicit donations toward a matching grant so that both hand pulling and mechanical harvesting can be employed. Volunteers and potential donors are encouraged to contact CRWA.

✍ Larry Smith

The Green Team

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 position to evaluate the environmental efforts here in our city and to see how these three organizations work together on local 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.

Green Decade has been working for over 20 years on climate change and encouraging Newton residents to live more sustainably. Their main points of focus include safe alternatives to toxic chemicals, toxic chemical use reduction, encouraging more pedestrian and bike friendly development, improving energy efficiency, and alternative energy use. Green Decade projects include "Eco-Teams," which help households and other organizations work together to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing energy use. Other projects are Students for a Greener World and the School Outreach Committee, which actively involves students in environmental projects.

The League of Women Voters' Environmental Committee recently organized a two-part forum on storm water management at the Newton Free Library. The Conservators and Green Decade were co-sponsors, and our President, Jane Sender, moderated the second forum. These forums brought attention to the seriously deteriorating condition of Newton's water and sewer infrastructure. Currently Newton residents are paying about 40% to 55% more for sewer because of the infiltration of clean groundwater leaking into old sewer pipes.

All three organizations have been working on promoting development that mitigates potential environmental impacts. This includes the principles behind "Smart Growth" and low impact development.

All three have communicated with the Board of Alderman regarding the Chestnut Hill Square Project on Route 9, to ensure that the project maximizes green space and invites pedestrian and bike access.

We are fortunate to have a number of other groups which also have an impact in conservation and city planning and open space issues. They include the Newton Tree Conservancy, Bike Newton, Newton Pride, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force. All are important in advocating for the environment, preserving our quality of life, and maintaining Newton's reputation as "The Garden City."

✦ Alison Leary

What's New on www.NewtonConservators.org?



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!

✍ Dan Brody

Wanted: Bird Counters

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 more information about Newton's bird count and how you can participate, contact Alison Leary at alisonlearymooradian@gmail.com.

History in the Stones



✍ Dan Brody

Gouaches Caves

residents of Newton Centre. Few residents of other parts of the city take advantage of this jewel of a conservation area.

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

Fascinating remnants of the history of this area include the marks of the glaciers that picked up huge boulders and moved along, scraping and gouging the hills. A favorite site to see glacial stones is Gouaches Caves and Cake Rock.

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.

Many years later, there were active farming and probably sheep and cow herding in this area, as evidenced by stone walls. Possible evidence for an old house foundation and a dump with a few old articles can be found at Webster.

Henry David Thoreau wrote much about the opportunities and pleasures of walking in such an area. "To regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society. — Each new year is a surprise to us... We find we had virtually forgotten the note of each bird. — The landscape looked singularly clean and pure and dry, the trees so tidy, and stripped of their leaves — ice on the water and winter in the air, but yet not a particle of snow on the ground."

✍ Octo Barnett

New Board Member: Robert Fizek

Robert Fizek is an architect and has been a resident of Newton Highlands since 1991. Robert joined the Conservators as a Member of the Board of Directors in 2010. Robert's special interest is Crystal Lake. He was instrumental in assisting the City in the acquisition of properties that have expanded the site of the bathhouse. He has served as a member of the Crystal Lake Task Force and is a founding board member of the Crystal Lake Conservancy. With the Conservators, he hopes to help continue the collaboration with Crystal Lake advocates and to assist in identifying other conservation opportunities and land acquisition efforts. He is interested in supporting the Conservators' public advocacy in regard to new development projects in Newton.



✍ Henry Finch

Robert Fizek

Newton Becoming More Dog Friendly



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. Meetings are open to the public.

From January to April of 2010, the members met, surveyed dog owners, and developed a process for selecting locations. Finally, 24 locations were selected as potential off-leash areas. Locations that have been approved are Claflin, McGrath Park, Old Cold Spring Park, Hunnewell Park, a playground at Newton Centre, and Cabot Park. The actual opening of these areas for off-leash dog use will likely take place in the spring of 2011, pending fencing, signage, and other necessary amenities. Additional areas will be brought forth in coming months before the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Rules are needed for off-leash areas. In early summer, a new off-leash ordinance was formulated. It established rules for dogs (among others, that they be leashed, licensed, vaccinated, healthy, and not in heat) and for owners (that they remove waste and that they bring no more than three dogs at a time).

Shortly, a proposal will be heard by the Conservation Commission for an off-leash area at Norumbega Park. The Norumbega Off Leash Ambassadors (NOLA) Club has formed to help educate current users about "petiquette" and responsible behavior expected of dog owners, to help maintain the walking path ground cover, and to clean up stray trash and waste.

With the advent of off-leash areas in Newton comes the question of how to pay for additional fences, maintenance, and dog bags. A fund has been established by the dog

community for the purpose of paying for the fences needed to open some of the parks mentioned here. If you would like to contribute please send a check made out to "City of Newton" with the notation "Dog Parks" in the memo line, and mail it to OLAWG member Lee McIntyre, 607 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459.

There are recommendations on the table for a new fee structure for off-leash users in Newton, with varying rates for residents, non-residents, and professional dog walkers.

By this time next year, dog owners in Newton may have ample opportunity to legally play with their dogs in off-leash areas throughout the entire City of Newton.

— Ted Kuklinski

The Zero Waste Initiative

*"For all at last returns to the sea — to Oceanus,
the ocean river, like the everflowing stream of time,
the beginning and the end." — Rachel Carson*

When Rachel Carson wrote these words two generations ago, could she have imagined just how dramatically our species would impact the earth and even alter the course of the world's oceans? As prescient as her writings were, could she have foreseen our oceans so filled with plastic trash as they are?

The oceans are the key to life on earth. Yet for hundreds of years people have used the oceans both as a resource to be exploited and as a dumping ground. Since the 1950s, hundreds of millions of tons of sea life have been removed from the ocean, while hundreds of millions of tons of toxic waste have been poured in. As much as 95% of some species, including bluefin tuna, Atlantic cod, American Eel, and certain sharks have been wiped out. Bluefin tuna teeter on the brink of extinction, and yet taking them is still allowed.

Bans - Not More Regulation

Writing about pesticides, Carson warned of the deadly price we were paying. DDT, a toxic chlorinated hydrocarbon, almost cost us the extinction of the Bald Eagle. Fortunately, since the EPA banned DDT in 1972, the birds have made a remarkable comeback. We have discovered that when we stop putting poisons into the environment, the environment has a wonderful ability to cleanse itself.

The Next Deadliest Catch

What is the next deadliest catch? It is the tide of plastic trash contaminating our beaches and oceans and even infiltrating into the food chain. The scope of the problem is enormous. One researcher, Captain Charles Moore, in "A Comparison of Plastic and Plankton in the North Pacific Central Gyre" wrote that "the mass of plastic was approximately six times

that of plankton.” Other researchers found that some areas of the oceans may contain up to 500,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometer.

We are leaving our children a legacy of plastic litter. Plastic debris can be found everywhere, even in remote atolls like Midway, where researchers studying dead albatross chicks found their stomachs stuffed with Lego blocks, bottle caps, broken combs, and golf tees. The debris lives on in gigantic gyres, some rivaling the state of Texas in size. The U.N. Environment Program estimates that 46,000 pieces of plastic litter are floating on every square mile of the oceans. About 70% will eventually sink.

The National Research Council has announced that marine debris has reached crisis proportions and recommends “zero waste discharge into the sea.” The real environmental solution is bans, not more regulation. We need to stop producing and using products that are toxic and non-biodegradable. For what we do to the environment, we ultimately do to ourselves.

✍ Alison Leary



Crystal Lake News

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.crystallakeconservancy.org/clnewsletter.html>.

✍ Robert Fizek

Newton Conservators Financial Update

With just one month left in 2010, we have a long way to go to meet our budget for membership support and revenues. Please get your renewal in. (And enjoy the wonderful new Trail Guide that will come with it!) Your membership support and extra gifts are very much appreciated.

So far in the first three quarters of the year, we have received only \$5,000 of membership and gift revenues, with \$15,000 to go in order to make our 2010 budget of \$20,000. December must be a good month!

In contrast, our expenses, which include costs of newsletters, grants, insurance, publications, etc., have been on budget at \$16,000. We have dipped into our reserves to cover the \$11,000 shortfall. Fortunately Newton Conservators is financially strong, with the resources to withstand blips in timing of membership support and sales of almanacs. However, we will need to meet our budget and expand our membership to meet our goals of protecting and preserving open space in Newton.

✍ Treasurer Katherine Howard

MISSION Newton Conservators, Inc.

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

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

The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 49 years ago in June 1961.

The Newton Conservators Newsletter® is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and April. Deadlines for these issues are the first Friday of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to ericgreen@tiac.net. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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If you haven't renewed your membership already, now is the time.
And consider a gift for a conservation-minded friend.



NEWTON CONSERVATORS
PO Box 590011
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MA 02459

2011 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

YES! Please renew my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Donor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sustaining Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional contribution ____ |

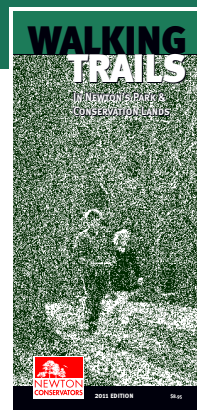
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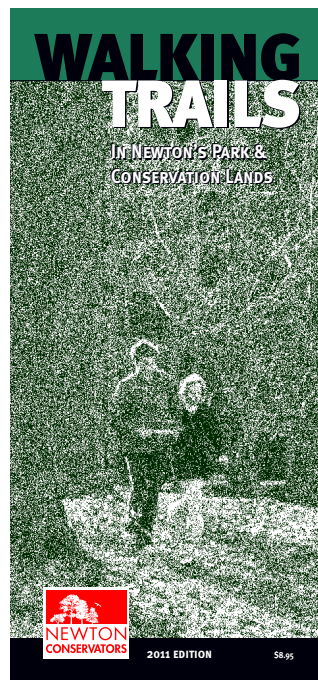
Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Visit our website at www.newtonconservators.org if you wish to renew your membership online.



We have just published an updated and revised guide, *Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands*. It's yours with a renewal by December 31!

Wonderful holiday gift ideas!



Shop online at www.newtonconservators.org/books.htm to purchase Newton Conservators publications.
Discounts for members: Almanac is \$15.95 + shipping and the Trail Guide is \$7.95 + shipping.
Buy today in time for holiday giving!



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CONSERVATORS**

WINTER ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

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

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*Walking Trails in Newton's Park
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**It's yours with a renewal
by December 31!**



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