



Newton's Land Trust



Nature Notes

Newton Conservators Nature Notes - November 14, 2003

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* Welcome

This email newsletter provides information on upcoming nature and environmental related events, exhibits, and information in and around the Newton, Massachusetts area and is sponsored by the Newton Conservators, the local open space organization in Newton. Please visit our website at

<http://www.newtonconservators.org>. If you wish to be removed from this email list, simply reply with "remove" in the message or subject.

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* Newton Conservators Fall Lecture 2003 - November 17, 2003, 7 pm

Land Protection: Now or Never....Forever
Mass Audubon's New Land Protection Strategy
Lecture by Bob Wilber, Mass Audubon Director of Land Protection

Across the Commonwealth, unprecedented rates of development are resulting in accelerated habitat loss and fragmentation. In much of the state, the "window of opportunity" to make a meaningful difference in the conserved landscape is only 10-15 years. In order to meet this challenge and effectively advance its mission of Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts and how you can help. Bob began his career in 1983 with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management's Land Acquisition & Protection Program, where he worked until 1996, serving as director for the last seven years with that state agency. He served for three years in a similar capacity with the Massachusetts Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, prior to joining the Audubon staff in July of 2000. Bob is a lifelong Massachusetts resident, and resides in Stow with his family, where he is a current member of the town's Conservation Trust and Open Space and Community Preservation Committees. During his 20 year career in land conservation, Bob has been directly involved in the permanent protection of more than 25,000 acres in Massachusetts.

Bob Wilber, the Director of Land Protection for Mass Audubon (will present a lecture at 7 pm on Monday evening, November 17 at the Druker Auditorium of the Newton Free Library (330 Homer Street). Come learn more about how Mass Audubon, the largest conservation organization in New England, is working to Protect the Nature of Massachusetts and how you can help. Bob began his career in 1983 with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management's Land Acquisition & Protection Program, where he worked until 1996, serving as director for the last seven years with that state agency. He served for three years in a similar capacity with the Massachusetts Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, prior to joining the Audubon staff in July of 2000. Bob is a lifelong Massachusetts resident, and resides in Stow with his family, where he is a current member of the town's Conservation Trust and Open Space and Community Preservation Committees. During his 20 year career in land conservation, Bob has been directly involved in the permanent protection of more than 25,000 acres in Massachusetts.

This free lecture is co-sponsored by the Newton Free Library, <http://www.newtonfreelibrary.net/>, (617-796-1360) and the Newton Conservators, Newton's own organization that promotes the protection and preservation of open space. Bob Wilber's lecture is the sixth in our twice yearly, Newton Conservators Lecture Series, which features renowned experts in areas related to the open space mission of the Conservators. As part of their educational outreach, the programs are free and open to the public. Many thanks are due to Beth Purcell, Publicity Director of the Newton Free Library, for her assistance in cosponsoring and promoting the lecture series over the past three years. Membership information for Mass Audubon and the Newton Conservators will be available at the lecture. Copies of our new

Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands will be available for purchase as well, a great holiday gift for your conservation minded friends!

* Losing Ground: At What Cost?

Source: Massachusetts Audubon Society

Low density, large lot residential development continues to consume forest and agricultural land in ecologically sensitive areas, according to a new Mass Audubon report, *Losing Ground: At What Cost?*, the latest edition in its *Losing Ground* series. The report is based on research into changes in land use and their impact on habitat, biodiversity, and ecosystem services in Massachusetts.

While the state has seen little or no growth in single-family housing starts, residential development represents a growing proportion of land consumption. The average living area for new homes increased 44 percent between 1970 and 2002, while average lot sizes increased 47 percent in the same period. Average lot sizes more than doubled in Plymouth, Bristol, Essex, Franklin, and Hampshire counties. Particularly inefficient land consumption involving a large number of acres per new housing unit or new permanent resident could be seen in a "sprawl frontier" running through Worcester County and north of the Cape Cod Canal.

"The type of development we are seeing is bad for wildlife habitat and bad for people who want affordable housing," says Laura Johnson, president of Mass Audubon. "Much of this development is concentrated in areas with rare species habitat or globally significant natural communities. It is proof that we can't simply put land protection on the back burner while we wait for an economic recovery."

Visible development as reflected in land use data tells only part of the story, however. When parcel boundaries are considered, the true impact of development—including road building and fragmentation—is closer to 78 acres per day.

The report also measures the economic impact of habitat loss, and includes the first statewide attempt to measure the economic value of "ecosystem services" provided by undeveloped land—such as climate control, water filtration, and flood control. It also calls upon citizens in the Commonwealth to work with their state and local representatives to address the problems of sprawl and habitat loss.

Specific findings of the report, which drew upon thirty years of land use and open space data and tax assessor records, include the following.

* Over 202,000 acres, or 40 acres per day, were visibly converted to new development statewide between 1985 and 1999, equal to the entire land area bounded by Routes 128 and 95, north to Lynn and south to Quincy. Thirty-one acres of forest, 7 acres of agricultural land, and 2 acres of open space were developed each day during the period.

* Nearly nine of every ten acres lost went to residential development, with 65 percent used for low-density, large-lot construction

* When the total acreage of lots with new construction in the period was considered, the true impact of development was closer to 78 acres per day. This "hidden" development impact, including road building, fragmentation, and effect of runoff, pests and invasive species, is not reflected in land use data based on aerial photography.

* Barnstable, Falmouth, and Sandwich experienced the largest number of forested acres lost to residential development in the 1985 to 1999 period, with 20 communities, mostly on Cape Cod and in southeastern Massachusetts and the I-495 corridor, accounting for 23 percent of forest lost statewide.

* Dartmouth, Westford, and Franklin lost the greatest amount of agricultural land to residential development, with 20 cities and towns representing 24 percent of all agricultural land lost.

* While progress has been made in land protection in the recent past, 71 percent of the state's wildlife habitat – defined as forest, wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and open land with habitat value – lacks permanent protection and is at risk of development.

* Of the land area of the state delineated as the minimum area needed to protect viable populations of rare terrestrial species, 61 percent lacks permanent protection and is at risk of development.

Because delineation of rare species habitat carries no regulatory protection, many of these "core habitats" are subject to ongoing destruction, fragmentation, and encroachment by development. Only 23 percent of the riparian land area near aquatic rare species habitat is permanently protected.

* Permanent protection of undeveloped land makes economic, as well as ecological sense. In collaboration with the Gund Institute of the University of Vermont, the report finds that undeveloped land in Massachusetts provides over \$6 billion in nonmarket ecosystem services annually, with 85 percent of this value provided by land left largely in its natural state. Conversely, the loss of forest and agricultural land in the 1985 to 1999 period resulted in a \$200 million annual loss in ecosystem value.

"This edition of *Losing Ground* confirms that there is a closing window of opportunity to protect our most vulnerable wildlife habitat from the effects of poorly planned development," says Jack Clarke, director of advocacy at Mass Audubon. "This is the time for the governor, legislature, and environmental community to work together on smart growth and land protection for this and future generations."

* Newton Conservators Website Has a New Look!

You are invited to check out the newly redesigned Newton Conservators website . Thanks to the hard work of member Dan Brody, the website has a whole new look and organization. The content had been previously spread across two separate servers. Now it contains many new features including much easier access to current and archived news and newsletters, photos, maps, walk and lecture schedules, grants program, membership and publication information.

* New Trail Guide: Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands

Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands, a handy trail guide to the conservation and open space recreation opportunities in Newton is now available. This book is a 56-page guide containing detailed trail maps of 27 conservation areas in Newton, featuring parks, ponds, gardens, trails, canoe launches, nature guides, rock climbing, scenic views, handicapped access, geological features, and bird watching areas. The guide also contains photos, driving directions, interesting historical details, and an overall map of showing the locations of the 27 natural areas. This outstanding new publication replaces our previous paper map guides and was put together with the tremendous effort of Judy Hepburn, Pat Robinson, and Lucy Caldwell-Stair. It is priced at \$7.95 (free with membership) and is available directly from the Newton Conservators and at New England Mobile Book Fair. It fits nicely in your back pocket and will be a terrific companion to introducing you to places in Newton you never knew existed. It would make a great holiday gift for your Newton friends and neighbors. Copies will be available at the Fall Lecture at the Newton Free Library on Monday, Nov. 17.

* Events

Below are some additional events that may be of interest to our readers.

* Annual Fall Cleanup of Hemlock Gorge Reservation – November 15, 2003

The annual Fall Cleanup of Hemlock Gorge Reservation will take place on Saturday, November 15. Volunteers should meet at Hamilton Place at 10 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Please visit the [Friends of Hemlock Gorge website](#) for further information.

* Grassroots Climate Action Conference - Sunday, November 16, 9-5

There is still time to register for this annual conference at the Tufts University Cabot Center. The conference will feature keynote speakers and 18 workshops on ways that local communities can counteract the impacts of global climate change. Fee is \$40 and includes breakfast and lunch. Full Program & Registration, <<http://www.massclimateaction.org/>>
<http://www.massclimateaction.org>

Map & Directions: <<http://www.tufts.edu/source/maps/medford>>
<http://www.tufts.edu/source/maps/medford> Sponsored by: Mass. Climate Action Network & Tufts Climate Initiative; with Clean Water Action, MassPIRG, Clean Air - Cool Planet, Conservation Law Foundation, HealthLink, and MassEnergy

* Annual Meeting of the Charles River Watershed Association – November 19, 2003

Doug Foy, former president of the Conservation Law Foundation and current Chief of Commonwealth Development, will be the featured speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Charles River Watershed Association on Nov. 19. The meeting, held at the Marriott Hotel in Newton, will celebrate the organization's achievements this year. Foy's talk will draw on the experiences he has had as the liaison between the Governor and the departments of housing, transportation and environmental affairs. In addition to Foy's lecture, CRWA's Annual Meeting will include cocktails, a buffet, awards, and a brief business meeting. The dinner is \$40 per person and reservations must be made by Nov. 14. Call 781-788-007 ext. 231 for reservations and invitations.

* Pooch Newton - NewtonDogs Organization Formed - Meeting Wednesday, November 19

NewtonDogs, a new local organization for Newton dog owners has been formed. An organizational meeting will take place on Wednesday November 19, 7:30 pm at the War Memorial Auditorium at Newton City Hall. A new email newsgroup and a website at <http://www.newtondogs.org> will strive to keep the Newton canine community up to date on canine related events, rules and legal issues, responsible pet and owner behavior, vaccination opportunities, services, and even deskunking remedies. If you are a Newton dog owner (among perhaps 25% of Newton households) you may be interested in joining the group in exploring alternatives to the existing leash laws - offleash locations, special hours, or such innovative programs such as the Trustees of Reservations "Green Dog" program. This topic will be the subject of upcoming public hearing before the aldermanic Programs and Service Committee chaired by Marcia Johnson on December 3 at 7:45 pm at City Hall. Officials and animal control people from neighboring towns (e.g. Brookline, Wellesely) are expected to describe their experiences with less restrictive leash laws.

* Hall's Pond Community Work Party - Sunday, November 23rd, 11 am - 2 pm

Come join other volunteers for the 27th annual fall work day to help spruce up Hall's Pond and Amory Woods Sanctuary. Volunteers should bring gloves, a rake, or hand clippers, if they have them. Refreshments provided by the Friends of Hall's Pond. Meet at the Hall's Pond Nature Sanctuary, near the Amory Park tennis courts, off of Amory Street, Brookline. Sponsored by the Friends of Hall's Pond and the Brookline Conservation Commission. For further information call Brookline Conservation Commission, 617-730-2088 or check out the website of the Brookline Green Space Alliance <http://www.bgsa.net/>

* Annual Christmas Bird Count – Sunday, December 14, 2003

If you have an interest in our feathered friends, perhaps you'd like to take part in the annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 14. Begun in 1900 and done all over the country by teams of birders, the local counts are done within a specified circular area. Parts of Newton are within the count circle centered on Boston.

Participants usually gather at the home of Conservators member Chris Criscitiello (Conservators board member and bird walk leader) near Cold Spring Park for coffee and to pick up maps. Beginning around 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 truly intrepid, there is usually an owling party which heads out at around 3 am. Typically, they get great looks at as many as a half a dozen screech owls and occasionally Great Horned and Barred Owls. Aply named Michael Partridge has coordinated the Newton Count for several years but has moved to Concord and hopefully will be back to help with the owling.

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.

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.

* Wild West Newton

Lucille Riddle, the Animal Control Officer for Newton, has asked residents to be on the lookout for a sick coyote which has recently been sighted around the Waltham Street and Cherry Street areas in West Newton. The animal does not appear to be aggressive toward humans and is not believed to be rabid. It appears a bit mangy and will tend to run away. Coyotes look a little like a small skinny German Shepherd with a bottle brush tail. The last sighting was on Wednesday at Cherry Place off Cherry Street. Residents are advised to keep small dogs and cats in especially at night. If you spot this particular animal, please contact Animal Control at 617-796-2109.

* Hummers

Bonnie Carter, Conservators board member passed this interesting link on a California hummingbird nest. Adults and children may find this very interesting. A woman found a hummingbird nest and got pictures all the way from the egg to leaving the nest. Took 24 days from birth to flight. Check out this humming link: <<http://community-2.webtv.net/hotmail.com/verle33/HummingBirdNest/>>
<http://community-2.webtv.net/hotmail.com/verle33/HummingBirdNest/>

* Eco Alert (12/5/03) - When Their Peril Becomes Ours

Species of animals and plants have come and gone since life began. Extinctions have occurred at a fairly steady rate throughout geological time, and they inform us that extinction is a continuous phenomenon and as natural as speciation itself. Over recent years, however, the impact of human activities - destruction of habitat, industrialization, use of chemicals in the environment - has speeded the process of extinction for both plants and animals, contributing to a sharp and rapid loss of biological diversity. The number of species in peril and disappearing from Earth is continuing unchecked.

The U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973 defines extinction to mean that no members of a species survive in an area in question, or anywhere in the world. Latest statistics (11/3/2003) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list as threatened and endangered in the United States alone a total of 516 species of animals and 744 species of plants, with an additional 31 species (27 animals, 4 plants) proposed for listing. Federal law, under the Endangered Species Act, establishes broad protection for all endangered species, most of which are not native to America, and effectively prohibits trade in them.

The Bush Administration, building on its record of enshrining policies favorable to friends in high corporate places, has recently proposed a most far-reaching change to conservation policies. The proposal, perhaps the most egregious in the Administration's environmental strategy to date, would allow hunters, circuses and the pet industry to kill, capture and import animals on the brink of extinction in other countries. The rationale is as follows: If Americans are given access to endangered animals in foreign lands - feeding the U.S. demand for live animals, trophies, skins, and animal parts - the profits provided to poor nations would enable the conservation of remaining species in their native habitats. Wildlife exploitation would become a tenet for conservation policy; killing or capturing endangered animals would provide for their future in the wild, or so the logic goes.

Why does it matter? What, some would ask, is the importance of species survival? We recognize the aesthetic value of maintaining the natural beauty of wildlife on Earth. On some level, we may also observe as a matter of ethics the right of all species to exist. We may believe, too, that future generations are entitled to a legacy of biodiversity. Share these views with your elected representatives and stress the observation that loss of species may lead to what insect ecologist Michael Pyle refers to as "extinction of experience," loss of contact with wildlife, with Earth, causing a cycle of disaffection, apathy, irresponsibility toward natural habitats and, ultimately, to the peril of the human species itself. Act today on this EcoAlert, and thank you for your environmental responsibility.

The Eco-Alert comes from American P.I.E., Public Information on the Environment, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, P.O. Box 676, Northfield, MN 55057-0676, Telephone: 1-800-320-APIE(2743); fax 507-645-5724, E-mail: . EcoAlert subscribe/unsubscribe at our website:

* Attack of the Giant Towns: Solving the Very Real Problem of Sprawl with REAL Planning

Here is something from the recent email news provided by the Charles River Watershed Association. (<http://www.crwa.org> <<https://www.crwa.org/>>)

Towns around the Charles River watershed and New England are struggling with runaway growth. This growth threatens the health of our environment and our communities in a myriad of ways, from water resources to rare natural communities to recreational open space. Much has been written recently about low impact development (LID), or the landscaping design for developments that effectively eliminates stormwater runoff as a problem mitigating some of the impacts associated with sprawl. LID can and often does introduce effective techniques that reduce potable water use. However, in CRWA's work, it has become clear that there is a significant step missing if town planners take existing zoning and simply apply LID techniques expecting to end water problems.

Land and water work together. It is in our interest to identify how and where land and water interactions are critical to environmental sustainability, wildlife habitat, and surface water flow. We ignore these links at our peril. Recognizing this, CRWA, over a period of six years, has developed a land analysis methodology, we call Resource, Environmental, and Land (REAL) Planning, which has been referred to in its first iterations locally as "environmental zoning." REAL Planning identifies those land areas where development of any kind should simply be avoided. An in-depth explanation of the REAL Planning method is now on the CRWA website, as well as maps and results from a case study conducted in the town of Littleton, MA. Sprawl is a real threat to our communities, our watershed and our environment. Take a moment to educate yourself about this important project: <https://www.crwa.org/projects/EZ/ez.html>

* In Recognition of Nick Yannoni, Former Newton Conservators President

We note with sadness the passing of Dr. Nicholas Yannoni on November 3rd. Nick was a member of the Newton Conservators board from 1984 to 2000, serving as president in 1986-88 and as treasurer in 1997-98. He was a graduate of Boston Latin, Boston University: BS (1954), PhD. in Chemistry (1961), and Boston College: MBA (1980). His career at the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories (Hanscom Field, Bedford MA) spanned 30 years encompassing research relating to crystallography, energy conversion, optical techniques and precision timing devices. An ardent outdoor enthusiast with the Pelagic and Community Sailing Clubs (Boston, MA) and the White Mules Ski Club (NH), and committed volunteer with the Newton-Wellesley Hospital, and the MA Water Resource Authority in addition to his work with the Newton Conservators. In particular he used to lead walks on our aqueduct trails and wrote about the aqueducts. Contributions can be made in Nicks' name to The Society for PSP, Woodholme Medical Building, Suite 515, 1838 Greene Tree Road, Baltimore, MD 21208

* 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/>> <http://www.newtonconservators.org> or contact us at 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, 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 fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm (usually at City Hall). Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, the next meeting will be on Wednesday, Dec. 3, at City Hall. Members are welcome to attend

* 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. 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> or <http://www.newtonconservators.org/naturenotes.htm>. You are welcome to submit any items for this sporadic 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.

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