



Newton Conservators E-Bulletin

Saturday, January 22, 2011

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



Winter . . .

Winter has set in and lots of snow is upon us now. It's still a great time to get out and about in our open spaces - cross country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, nature photography or just walking. Check for animal tracks in the snow. Keep your bird feeders full and you will be surprised at what might show up. In this issue, check out what birds were found in December's Christmas Bird Count in Newton and even consider going on a Duck walk along the Charles on Sunday, taking a birding course at NNHS, or participating in some upcoming feeder count events. Dreaming of Spring and new growth already? Then find out how your neighborhood can get some new street trees? Or maybe this is the year to take up farming - applications for CSA shares in the Newton Community Farm are due soon. The latest issue of the Newton Conservators Newsletter is now online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/dec10.pdf>. And please shovel your walk to make it safe for those getting out and about!

Waltham Land Trust's 6th Annual Duck Walk

Sunday, January 23, 10 am
Charles River



Join our neighboring organization in Waltham (the Waltham Land Trust) for their 6th annual Duck Walk along the Charles River. For a preview of some possible sightings and a hand-out, visit <http://www.brewsterslinnet.com/charles-river-nature>. Meet in the back right corner of the Shaw's Supermarket, 130 River Street, Waltham, next to the Mary Early Foot Bridge that goes over the Charles River. The group will be led by local birder, Jason Forbes, who will take the group along a stretch of the Charles River frequented by ducks and other winter avian friends. Spring isn't the only time to see birds: from November to March, a variety of northern-dwelling ducks come south from Canada to winter on our waterways. From diving ducks to dabbling ducks, from the diminutive Ruddy Duck, to the elaborate Hooded Merganser (the parrot of the ponds), come see what's living along the Charles. The group may hope to see Common and Hooded

Mergansers, Ringnecks, Mallards, and Wood Ducks. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress warmly. Please note that participants must be able to be quiet and observant. For more info, call 781-893-3355 or email swadman@walthamlandtrust.org. The Newton Conservators hope to cosponsor some walks with the Waltham Land Trust later this year.

Results from the Christmas Bird Count (December 19)

A hearty Newton group participated in 111th annual Christmas Bird Count. Newton's count took place as scheduled on Sunday, December 19th with cold but at least snowless conditions. Chris Criscitiello and Alison Leary organized the Newton count. Five teams spread out to the open spaces around Newton and counted every bird seen. The data

collected 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. The count tallied 34 individual species and over 2200 birds in total. These included only 2 swans-a-swimming, 93 geese (but none a-laying), lots of calling birds (but mainly crows), zero French hens (now that would be a rarity in the wild!), 34 mourning doves (not turtle doves), and nary a partridge (but 12 wild turkeys instead!)



Here are the actual results: Canada Goose (93), Mute Swan (2), Black Duck (12), Mallard (201), Ring-necked Duck (5), Bufflehead (1), Common Goldeneye (1), Hooded Merganser (26), Common Merganser (10), Wild Turkey (12), Great Blue Heron (2), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (8), Ring-billed Gull (30), Herring Gull (6), Rock Pigeon (34). Mourning Dove (34), Eastern Screech-owl (3), Great Horned Owl (1), Belted Kingfisher (1), Red-bellied Woodpecker (3), Downy Woodpecker (20), Hairy Woodpecker (1), Northern Flicker (4), Blue Jay (53), American Crow (27), Black-capped Chickadee (85), Tufted Titmouse (48), White-breasted Nuthatch (29), Carolina Wren (12), American Robin (155), Northern Mockingbird (5), European Starling (347), Song Sparrow (25), White-throated Sparrow (30), House Sparrow (577), Dark-eyed Junco (182), Northern Cardinal (26), Red-winged Blackbird (20), Rusty Blackbird (4), House Finch (25), Purple Finch (1), American Goldfinch (43).

A Birding Year - Newton Community Education Course

Taught by expert birder Brooks Mathewson
Tuesdays January 25 - February 15, 7:30-9:30 pm
Newton North HS, Room 266



If reading all about the bird counts has got you excited about birding then consider taking a short course at Newton Community Education with Brooks Mathewson. Brooks is one of the most knowledgeable birders around as evidenced by his wonderful presentation on warblers last spring at the Newton Public Library. Check out his website at <http://www.avianartimages.com> for examples of his stunning bird photography. The course takes place on four successive Tuesday evenings from 7:30-9:30 pm from Jan 25 through Feb 15 at NNHS. Register online at "https://newtoncommunityed.org/viewDesc.php?CourseNumber=Z1993". The cost is \$76 (or \$139 / couple). Here is the course description:

Observing and photographing birds is a fantastic way to enjoy the outdoors while exercising your body and mind and nurturing your spirit. Each season brings new avian visitors and opportunities to revel in the beauty of the natural world. This course will cover the best methods of observation and the top local places to see and photograph birds throughout the year. In addition, we'll discuss the biology of these birds to gain a fuller appreciation of their lives. The goal will be to enhance our appreciation and understanding of our local avifauna beyond merely identifying species. We'll also discuss the technical aspects of bird photography such as choice of lenses, camera settings, composition, lighting, and ecological storytelling.



Focus on Feeders February 5-6, 2011

Bird feeding has become an extremely popular winter activity in our region. Harnessing that interest, Mass Audubon and its partners have enlisted enthusiastic feeder watchers of all ages to track trends in abundance of winter feeder bird species for more than 40 years. Observations from the bird watching public contribute to a growing database that can provide early warning signs on changes in abundance of bird species that visit feeders. For example, feeder watching in Massachusetts has helped document the decline of the House Finch as a result of conjunctivitis, and the northward expansion of the Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Wren in response to warmer winters. And, it's fun! We especially appreciate reading the many comments submitted by participants as they can help us interpret results (e.g., "Feeder birds down this year" or "where are all my redpolls?"). The wildlife photos often sent in with Focus on Feeders observations are great, too! Find out how to participate, learn about the history of feeder watching in Massachusetts, or see past results. To learn more please email focuseonfeeders@massaudubon.org or visit http://www.massaudubon.org/Birds_and_Birding/FoF/



Great Backyard Bird Count Friday, February 18 through Monday February 21

If you missed MA Audubon's Focus on Feeders, consider participating in the national 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count. The

GBBC will take place Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21. It's an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent.



Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy-and it helps the birds. Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count website. As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery. The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. Find more information at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html>

Boston Globe Article: No hidden signs in the 'Aflockalypse' January 22, 2011, Renee Loth

Check out this column by Renee Loth of the Boston Globe on the recent phenomenon of birds falling out of the sky: http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2011/01/22/no_hidden_signs_in_the_aflockalypse/

"The first media fad of 2011 – thousands of birds falling dead from the sky with no apparent explanation – is starting to yield to more sober analysis. But "the Aflockalypse," as it's been called, obscures real threats to birdlife that are, sadly, no mystery at all. At the top of the list of threats to birds is the destruction and fragmentation of habitat through development. There's a cascading effect: wild areas are cleared for development, and suburban sprawl follows. From that comes all the ills of civilization: increased use of pesticides, more cell phone towers, garbage that draws raccoons and other predators, cars, tall buildings, plate glass windows, even pet cats. "

Community Street Tree Plantings Applications due February 4

For a second year, the Newton Tree Conservancy (www.newtontreeconservancy.org) has obtained funding for community street tree plantings, thanks to a generous grant from Newton Community Pride's Stella & Leo Levi Tree Endowment Fund. Approximately 50 trees will be planted in Spring 2011. In spring 2010, with a similar grant from the Leo L. Levi Tree Endowment Fund, and supplemented by funds from NTC membership dues, a first large-scale tree planting, with over 50 bare-root trees planted in six clusters around the city was completed. These included Parmenter/Elsworth Roads, Madison Avenue, Lincoln/Bowdoin Streets, Webster Street, Barbara Road/Cherry Street, and lower Chestnut Street. In order to plant where the need for trees is greatest, and for logistical reasons, the preference is to plant in clusters of eight or more trees, where five or more homeowners in relatively close proximity have empty spots. Also, because we would like to fully plant whichever blocks we do, we will plant more than one tree per requesting property if there is more than one appropriate space on the berm. Whether you are a formal neighborhood organization or a group of neighbors on a street or block who would like more trees, you are invited to apply for a Community Tree Planting. Application information is now available at:

<http://newtontreeconservancy.org/programs/index.html#maincontent> .

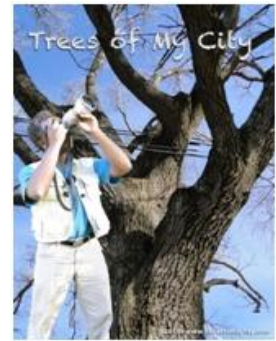


Trees of My City: Photography by Roberto Mighty January 22 - March 6 Arnold Arboretum

Newton artist Roberto Mighty presents a public, new-media, fine art project. Trees of My City is an original multimedia installation about the beauty and science of dormant, dead and decaying trees in one American city over one calendar year...and how we can expand our ideas about the cycle of life by contemplating how nature deals with death. Roberto's movie, Trees of My City, was filmed on location in Newton, Massachusetts. Through high definition video, unusual photographic perspectives, timelapse, underwater and aerial photography, digital compositing and surround sound audio, audiences will experience trees in unexpected ways and have their consciousness raised about our urban treescapes. Trees of My City was conceived and developed as a museum installation by Roberto Mighty, a filmmaker, photographer and new media artist. Approximately a year ago, while trying to make sense of the deaths of close family members, he began photographing and filming local trees. The project grew to involve noted scientists and tree advocates, including Eric J. Olson, PhD, Ecologist, Brandeis University; Kevin T. Smith, PhD, Plant Physiologist, Project Leader, USDA Forest Service; Simon A. Perkins, Field Ornithologist, Larry Sass, Ph.D., Department of Architecture, MIT; Jane Sender, Newton

Conservators; and Marc Welch, Division of Urban Forestry, City of Newton. Visit http://robertomighty.com/section/187900_TREES_OF_MY_CITY.html

"Every ending is also a beginning. Deciduous trees -- linden, elm, maple, oak and beech -- verdant in three seasons, appear in Winter to be mort. Without leaves, their stark beauty can be appreciated by those who love them for what they truly are. Keepers of life and promisers of resurrection. Superstructures for whole communities. Architecturally perfect eco-urban multifamily units. Ultimate recyclers." - Roberto Mighty



Newton Community Farm CSA Shares **Monday, January 31 - Saturday, February 12**

Newton Community Farm's 2011 CSA shares go on sale Monday, January 31, 2011. Due to the high demand for CSA shares, enrollment happens through a lottery. Applications will be accepted from Newton residents from Monday, January 31 through Saturday, February 12. On February 13th, a lottery will be held to fill the available spaces in the CSA. Non-Newton residents can apply beginning on Monday, February 14th on a space available basis. To apply for the CSA please download and fill out the enrollment form and send it in with your Friend of the Farm membership. Please note, only Friends of the Farm are eligible to enter the lottery and participate in the CSA program. Please send separate checks for the CSA and the Friends of the Farm program. 2011 Share prices: \$570 for a weekly share; \$300 for an alternate week share. Visit <http://newtoncommunityfarm.org/produce/csa/> for full information.



Consider a visit to the Jackson Homestead and Museum, 527 Washington St., to see an exhibit about the farm and its place in Newton's history. Five large and colorful panels depict the farm as an example of a vernacular New England farm, including the development of south Newton; the influence of Italian immigration on the farmscape and its agricultural history; and the stories of significant members of the Angino family, especially Jerry Angino, Newton's walking historian. (through the end of January).

Film: The Work of 1000 **Monday, February 28, 7 pm** **Green Decade 2011 Environmental Speaker Series** **Newton Free Library - Druker Auditorium**

Join the Green Decade Coalition for this screening of "The Work of 1000," which focuses on noted environmentalist Marion Stoddart, who began as a member of the local League of Women Voters, and became the force that brought the horribly polluted Nashua River back from the abyss. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion on leadership with Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong, Charles River Watershed's Bob Zimmerman, moderated by Lois Levin, with special guest Rita Barron. Mayor Setti Warren will introduce the film, which illustrates that collaboration among environmental advocates and local government leaders is essential to protecting our natural resources and mitigating climate change. Visit <http://www.greendecade.org/events.html#ess2> for more information.



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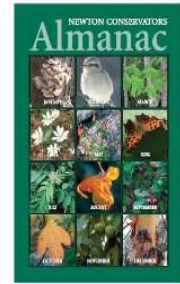
Visit <http://www.newtonconservators.org/membership.htm> for details on membership options.

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



Newton Conservators e-Bulletin

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This e-Bulletin is a service of the Newton Conservators, Newton's open space advocates since 1961. Membership information can be found online at our website -

<http://www.newtonconservators.org/membership.htm>. You can join the organization or even renew your membership online now! Did you know that you can register and pay for membership, events (like the annual Dinner Meeting), buy a copy of our Almanac, or make a donation to the Newton Conservators online? Just visit the following link to get to our registration page: <https://s08.123signup.com/servlet/SignUp?PG=1532278182400&P=1532278133476107150857400&Info=>

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