

## Newton Conservators Nature Notes

Thursday, November 30, 2006

Holiday Greetings! Don't miss **Peter Alden's free lecture tonight on invasive plants** in Newton on Thursday evening (11/30) at the Newton Free Library (7 pm). Pick up a copy of his great **Field Guide to New England**. This is the year of the Invasives! In this issue, check out Florrie Funk's accompanying article on the **dangers of invasive plants** in Newton and get a first look at the comprehensive **Master List of Plants and Animals** found in Newton prepared by the **Conservators Land Management Committee**. You have heard of CNN but what about NCC (**Newton Conservators Channel**), our **new streaming video channel** where you can catch all the episodes of the **Environmental Show** (and other Newton nature videos) any time. Did you miss Al Gore's "**An Inconvenient Truth**" in the theatres? See and discuss it at the Newton Free Library on Saturday (12/2) at 1 pm with the Green Decade. Go out looking for that partridge in a pear tree on the annual **Newton Christmas Bird Count (12/17)**. Get updates on **wild turkeys, winter moths, Crystal Lake** and more. For your holiday giving consider a **gift membership to the Newton Conservators** which includes our great **Trail Guide** to Newton's Open Spaces.

This newsletter is sponsored by the **Newton Conservators**, the local open space organization in Newton and it also serves as the organization's means of sending out time sensitive information. Welcome to the many new readers of this free email newsletter. If you wish to be removed from this email list, simply reply with "remove" in the message or subject. (Note: email addresses mentioned in this newsletter substitute (AT) for @ to foil spammers).

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### Newton Conservators Fall Lecture

**Invasive Alien Plant Update - A Newton Perspective**

**A Lecture / Slideshow with Naturalist Peter Alden**

**Thursday, November 30, 2006, 7 pm, Newton Free Library**

The City of Newton is under attack from alien invaders. They have come from far away and are taking over our back yards, parks, and conservation areas. Slowly and quietly they are creeping into our public open spaces, disrupting the natural balance of nature and crowding out our native plants. Some of them, like purple loosestrife, are quite pretty but take over our wetlands; others like Japanese knotweed grow tall extremely fast while spreading farther afield underground; still others are even sold at garden stores to unsuspecting customers.

Well known author, lecturer and naturalist Peter Alden, from Concord, MA, will present a lecture and slideshow with a stunning display of the twenty worst invasive alien plants in the Newton area. You will come away from the presentation with the knowledge of how to recognize these plants and what some of the control options are. You will find out what is happening at the state level and in the legislature in how to deal with severe menace to our city's biodiversity. The lecturer will also conduct an instant village by village poll of attendees to try to assess where in Newton these invasives pose the most threat. He has in preparation a new "Field Guide to the Invasive Plants of New England and the Northeast".

Peter Alden, was the inaugural speaker in Conservators lecture series (now celebrating its 5th anniversary). Alden, a renowned birder and entertaining and informative speaker, has led over 250 ecotours to over a hundred countries on all seven continents and lectured all over the world for travel and museum organizations. In his work for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, he spearheaded the first ever statewide Biodiversity Days, in which citizen naturalists in over 80 Massachusetts towns went out into the field to do a species census. This provided a valuable and interesting snapshot of common and unusual species present both here in Newton and across the state of Massachusetts.

He is the author of over a dozen nature field guides including the groundbreaking "[National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England](#)" (Knopf, 1998). This book is an easy to use field guide for identifying 1,000 of our region's wildflowers, trees, mushrooms, mosses, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, butterflies, mammals and much more. Other regional field guides in the series cover California, Florida, the Mid-Atlantic States, the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain States, and the Southwestern States. For younger naturalists, along with Roger Tory Peterson, he produced the *Peterson First Guide to Mammals of North America* and coloring books for both birds and mammals. Other of his books include "[The National Audubon Society Field Guide to African Wildlife](#)" (1995) and "[Finding Birds Around the World](#)" (1982).

Peter Alden will be around before and after the lecture to sign copies of his *Field Guide to New England*. In addition he will have a few copies of his other regional field guides. Not only that, he is bringing along some signed copies of books by some of his well known friends - E.O Wilson and David Sibley. These books would make some great holiday gifts for those nature loving friends and family of yours.

This free Newton Conservators Lecture Series event, cosponsored by the Newton Free Library, takes place on Thursday, November 30, 7 pm, at the Druker Auditorium at the Newton Free Library. For more information, contact Ted Kuklinski, [dolanpond\(AT\)aol.com](mailto:dolanpond(AT)aol.com), or visit [www.newtonconservators.org/lectures.htm](http://www.newtonconservators.org/lectures.htm). Don't miss this event! Peter Alden is a lively, funny, entertaining and outspoken speaker talking about a subject critical to your gardens and the city's open spaces.

### Why is it important to remove non-native invasive plants? by Florrie Funk of the Newton Conservators Land Management Committee

The New England Wildflower Society defines an invasive plant as a non-native species that is capable of spreading aggressively and monopolizing essential resources of a habitat – light, nutrients, water, and space to the detriment of other species.

Life forms evolved on this planet not as individual species but as complex, interdependent communities of organisms called ecosystems. Each species within an ecosystem depends on others to provide nutrients, circumstances necessary for reproduction, and limits to its expansion. For example, a plant may depend on a multitude of fungi and other soil organisms to decompose the remains of dead plants and animals thereby releasing nitrogen and other nutrients into the soil in a form usable by the plant. It may also depend on specific insect species to pollinate its flowers so that it produces seeds, and on other animals to help disperse those seeds. This community also depends on a variety of herbivores, predators, fungi, bacteria and other pathogens to limit the growth of any one species so that a balance is maintained. This prevents

one species from expanding its presence in the system to the point of extirpating others and weakening the biodiversity of the system. The species that make up any given ecosystem evolved together over millions of years. Even though there is constant ebb and flow, overall a balance is maintained. Studies have shown that the greater the biological diversity (i.e. the number of different species) the more able a natural community is to withstand drought, blights and other environmental stresses.

In our suburban communities, native species are weakened by loss of genetic diversity caused by habitat fragmentation. Imagine ever-smaller natural areas separated by ever-wider highways and developments. Small, isolated populations of plants and animals unable to exchange genes with other populations become inbred and die out. Compounding this problem, alien organisms which did not evolve as parts of the local ecosystem have been introduced into our natural communities. They may have been brought here intentionally by horticulturalists or they may have arrived by accident in soil or imported products. Some alien plant species introduced into a new ecosystem do not survive. Others may persist as benign members of the community. But some, not limited by local herbivores or pathogens, or for other reasons not entirely understood, grow and reproduce rapidly, displacing whole communities of native plants causing quick reductions in biodiversity and even extinction of species.

Worldwide, invasive alien species are the second leading cause of species extinction. The leading cause is habitat destruction. A study by the North Carolina Botanical Gardens has found that 4,000 non-native species are grown outside of cultivation in the United States and that 79 of these are invasive enough to cost \$97 billion in lost crops, failed recovery of endangered species and control efforts. Invasive species have contributed to a decline of 42% of endangered and threatened species of the United States. More than 28% of the world's native species are threatened or endangered, which includes 200 species in Massachusetts.

The worst offending invasive plant species here in Newton are species that were planted (and continue to be planted) as ornamentals. Examples are Norway Maples, Japanese Barberry, Burning Bush, Oriental Bittersweet Vine, Japanese Knotweed (sometimes called "bamboo"), Common and Glossy Buckthorn, Asian Shrub Honeysuckles, and Tree-of-Heaven. Many of the characteristics that make a plant a good garden choice - rapid growth, disease resistance, easy propagation - increase the chances of its becoming invasive. All of these above-mentioned plants produce seeds that are carried by birds or wind into natural areas, roadsides and vacant lots where they germinate, grow quickly and reproduce. To those who don't know how to tell one plant species from another, these dense growths of vegetation might look like nature happily doing what it is supposed to do. And many of the invasive species are very attractive plants. However, the sight of dense patches of Japanese Knotweed or monoculture groves of Norway Maples should be a heartbreaking reminder of the many dozens of species that were once there but are now gone: wildflowers, ferns, grasses, shrubs, trees, plus the insects, birds and other animals that depend on them.

Many of Newton's residents are proud to consider themselves environmentalists but are not aware of the crisis threatening biodiversity in our parks and in our own back yards. How should we deal with the problem of invasive plants? There is no easy solution, but these are some of the things that individual citizens can do to help:

- Learn to identify invasive plant species and remove any that are growing on your property.
- If your property abuts a park or wooded area, be sure that your non-native landscaping materials don't spread across your property line. Never let your yard waste be dumped into natural area parks or conservation areas. Many common landscaping plants, especially ground covers such as English Ivy, Winter Creeper, Pachysandra and Vinca, reproduce vegetatively. Cuttings from them can root and spread aggressively. A walk along the boundaries of any of Newton's conservation lands can reveal damage caused by nearby homeowners' lack of awareness.
- Learn about native plants and use them in your landscaping. Rather than contributing to ecosystem fragmentation, your yard can be part of the solution. There are many beautiful native species that can be used to replace familiar but invasive ones.
- Encourage city officials to develop a plan for the removal of invasive plants and the reintroduction of native ones on city property. This is a daunting task but one that some forward-thinking local governments across the country have taken on. In addition to funding, it will require training of personnel, manual labor and lots of volunteer effort.
- Consider the possibility that cautious and strategic use of herbicides is sometimes the environmentally correct path. (The Nature Conservancy, The National Park Service and other environmental organizations have reached this conclusion.) Many species despite being cut down to ground level, re-sprout with renewed vigor. Removal of root systems can be impractical and also destructive to soil structure and other organisms. Soil disturbance usually increases germination of invasive plant seeds. There may be a slight chance of unwanted side effects in the use of products such as glyphosate, but if the alternative is dramatic loss of species, taking that chance may be warranted. Promising research has been done in biological controls, such as the introduction of species of beetles that eat Purple Loosestrife. But these methods are in the experimental stages and also may entail ecological risks.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has published "The Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List," which includes many popular ornamentals, such as Norway Maple, Burning Bush and Japanese Barberry, that are now considered invasive. There is an importation and propagation ban on all of the 141 plants on this list, which means that the sale, trade, purchase and distribution of these plants is prohibited. This legislation is helpful in slowing the spread of these species, but in many cases, the horse is already out of the barn, so to speak

On the internet, information is available about landscaping with native plants, plant identification, and methods of dealing with non-native invasives. Good places to start are The New England Wildflower Society ([www.newfs.org](http://www.newfs.org)) and The Nature Conservancy. The National Park Service has fact sheets with pictures and descriptions of many invasive plants as well as suggested methods of controlling them. A web search of "invasive plants" will result in additional informative web sites

It was once thought that if conservation areas could be purchased, set aside, and left alone that nature could take care of itself. Not anymore! The proliferation of invasive species has led to the realization that most forests and conservation areas must now be actively managed. If the invasive species are not controlled, overall species diversity will decline and the loss will be irreversible.

## Conservators Survey Team Completes First Year by Cris Criscitiello

Reprinted from the Newton Conservators Newsletter, <http://www.newtonconservators.org/newsletters/nov06.pdf>

In the fall of 2005, under the direction of Co-chairs Beth Schroeder and Cris Criscitiello, the Conservators' Land Management Committee initiated a survey of all flora and fauna found within the city's open space and conservation areas. The most recent review of this type had been carried out in 1995 by John P. Richardson, a professional naturalist, at the direction of Martha Horn of Newton's Planning Department.

The current effort has been undertaken by a group of committee members who visit, in rotation, one of Newton's natural sites each week. Each area is searched methodically, with follow-up checks made at further visits through the seasons. Included on the team are a number of naturalists, both amateur and professional, who, among them, have skills in identification of trees, shrubs, vines, ferns, fungi, wildflowers, birds, and other animal life. An extensive list of the life-forms noted at each site has been accumulated thus far for 29 out of our 31 individual parks and conservation areas. By the year's end, the first go-around of observations in all areas should be completed.

Based on these findings, an overall, city-wide [master list and database](#) is now being compiled. This exacting effort has been undertaken by Conservators' Board members Beth Schroeder, Florrie Funk and Sue Avery, joined by Don Lubin and Walter Kittredge, experts on taxonomy. Attention is drawn to types and locations of invasive as well as native species, particularly those present only in small numbers.

This up-to-date master list can be compared with data from the 1995 Richardson Report to identify any major changes during the past decade. As this monitoring effort continues, the fate of our valued native species can be followed and the need for intervention assessed. This information will also provide a sense of the relative "wildness" of the various open spaces, knowledge which could influence future decisions about land use. It is the Management Committee's hope that this database may be welcomed as a resource for use at the Newton Free Library, in the Newton Schools, on the Conservators' Website, and by other educational and conservation organizations.

Thanks are extended to AnnaMaria Abernathy, Sue Avery, Larry Burdick, Cris Criscitiello, Henry Finch, Florrie Funk, Pete Gilmore, Debbie Howard, Sam Jaffe, Bill Joplin, Walter Kittredge, Ted Kuklinski, Don Lubin and Beth Schroeder for their interest and their hard work on the Survey Team. Thanks also to Martha Horn for her support of the project.

## Inventory of Plants and Animals Found in Newton's Natural Areas

The Land Management Committee of the Newton Conservators began a survey of the natural areas within the City of Newton in the fall of 2005. These surveys were completed by groups of committee members on a weekly basis throughout the year. Committee members ranged from inexperienced to expert in identification abilities. A dated master list was created for each individual natural area.

The Newton Master List in this document shows the overall survey results. This document establishes a baseline of existing species, which allows us to detect changes over time. We will be able to learn if species are disappearing, and can monitor the progress of invasive species. Once the Land Management Committee has enough historical data, it will become possible to identify more subtle changes retroactively.

We will have a sense of the relative "wildness" of the various open spaces, which could affect decision making with regard to siting future developments or re-assigning open space land uses.

There is a new page on the Conservators website where the information is readily available (thanks to efforts of webmaster Dan Brody). You can check it out at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/masterlist.htm>. For example you can find a detailed list of invasive species organized by open space at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/masterlist/invasives.pdf>.

## Annual Newton Christmas Bird Count - Sunday, December 17

Those interested in the avian world in Newton should mark their calendars for Sunday, **December 17th** to participate in the **107th annual Christmas Bird Count** sponsored by the [National Audubon Society](#) and the [Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology](#). The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society. It is an early-winter bird census, where volunteers follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile (24-km) diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally—all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day. All individual CBC's are conducted in the period from 14 December to 5 January (inclusive dates) each season, and each count is conducted in one calendar day. Thirty-four count circles are located entirely or partly within Massachusetts. For more information and to see last year's results, visit the Audubon website <http://www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

Newton is part of the Greater Boston Count which is organized by Robert Stymeist and will be held this year on Sunday, December 17. Begun in 1900 and done all over the country by teams of birders, the local counts are done within a specified circular area. According to the Audubon Society, "More than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action."

In Newton, the Newton Conservators help organize the count and send out teams - all levels of birders welcome. Please contact Cris Criscitiello if interested in participating this year in the Newton effort. You would be astonished at what birds are seen. The full count group will assemble at 2 Raeburn Terrace (Newton Highlands) starting at 7:00 am. There is usually an "early bird" group that goes out at 4 am to search for owls.

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.

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 early risers, the owling group could get great looks at screech owls and occasionally Great Horned and Barred Owls.

Representative members from the teams gather back at the meeting place in the afternoon 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. It should be noted that the count occurs rain, shine, or snow. There is a participation fee of \$5 which goes to National Audubon to help tabulate the data. Participants receive a comprehensive report from them on the national count results. For more information, please contact Cris Criscitiello at [mgriscisc\(AT\)massmed.org](mailto:mgriscisc(AT)massmed.org) if you are interested in participating.

## Enjoy Newton's Aqueducts on NewTV December's Environmental Show

Newton's Aqueduct pathways provide beautiful natural places to walk in all seasons. The Cochituate and Sudbury Aqueducts were originally built in the mid-1800's to carry water into the city from the west. They no longer serve that purpose, but they remain very special places to exercise and walk through Newton neighborhoods. Host Cris Criscitiello of the Newton Conservators is joined by engineer Frank Steiger, Doug Dickson and Henry Finch in exploring these pathways.

Be sure to catch this episode of the Environmental Show running repeatedly through the month of December. This educational show is a volunteer partnership between the Green Decade and the Newton Conservators with each organization presenting on alternate months. Learn to think globally and act locally with the Green Decade Coalition and learn more about your parks with the Conservators! The Environment Show is broadcast on the [NewTV](#) Blue channel (Comcast Chan. 10, RCN Chan. 15):

Mondays 3:00 p.m.  
Tuesdays 1:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.  
Wednesdays 11:30 a.m.  
Thursdays: 12:00, 4:00 and 7:30 p.m.  
Saturdays: 10:00 a.m.

## The Newton Conservators Channel - NCC

Move over CNN - Here come NCC! The Newton Conservators Channel is a new online video streaming channel featuring all the past episodes of the Environmental Show produced by the Newton Conservators as well as other videos related to the mission of the Conservators.

Our Environmental Show has been going for two years already. There are a significant numbers of our members who do not have cable access or who may have missed a particular episode of the series. Well now you can see any of our past shows online any time of day or night. Check out the Newton Conservators Channel via the [Environmental Show](#) page on our website.

The channel is organized by lineups which are collections of programs dealing with a certain topic. So far we have lineups in several areas:

**The Environmental Show (Newton Conservators)** - contains all the past episodes of the Environmental Show produced by the Newton Conservators and broadcast on NewTV ([www.newtv.org](http://www.newtv.org)).

**Wild Newton** - a collection of both long and short videos dealing with wild things (flora and fauna) in Newton. Viewer contributions of video wildlife sightings in Newton are welcome.

**The Charles River in Newton** - deals with the Charles River, Newton's great waterway. Check out new footage of the grand opening ceremony for the Blue Heron Bridge.

**Newton Angino Community Farm** - currently contains our two Environmental Shows on Angino Farm (a nice before and after picture of this successful CPA acquisition).

Here's a summary of all the Conservators' Environmental Show episodes so far with direct links. The Environmental Show production team consists of Duane Hillis, Patty Goldman, Frank Howard, Ted Kuklinski, and of course our amiable host Cris Criscitiello. Our video channel will eventually be supported by advertising (of which 50% of the revenue will go to supporting the mission of the Newton Conservators).

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL SHOW PROGRAMS

**Saving Newton's Last Farm** - Saving Newton's Last Farm describes the history and background of Angino Farm and the efforts to acquire the property to operate under the Community Supported Agriculture model.

**Newton Angino Community Farm** - Newton Angino Community Farm, Newton's last farm, is turning out crops again after many dormant years. This show tours the farm, the greenhouse, and the various plantings with Farm Manager Greg Maslowe, farm educator Liz Gleason and her students.

**Recreational Opportunities in Cold Spring Park** - This show features Newton's Cold Spring Park, one of Newton's most attractive open areas, with its combination of playing fields, exercise trail, walking paths, wetlands, woody spots, farmer's market, and scenic views.

**A Naturalist's View of Cold Spring Park** - "A Naturalist's View of Cold Spring Park" features colorful birds, plants and amphibians found in this 67-acre public preserve in Newton. The show looks at seasonal changes, invasive species, and vernal pools.

**Flora and Fauna of the Charles River** - Photographer Carole Smith Berney presents a colorful and entertaining look at the river and pathway, featuring the wildflowers, birds, herons, ducks, turtles and furry creatures found there.

**Appreciating the Charles River** - The Charles River is Newton's great waterway. "Appreciating the Charles River" takes a look at the history, recreational opportunities, and efforts to keep the river clean and accessible for the many citizens who enjoy it.

**Kessler Woods - Community Preservation in Action** - This program focuses on the acquisition of Kessler Woods via a public / private partnership. This was one of the last large, privately owned pieces of open space in Newton connecting Newton's Sawmill Brook and Bald Pate Meadow Conservation Areas.

**Newton's Envi Sci Program for Teens** - Newton's Environmental Science Program is a unique summer program that lets students explore the wilderness and learn about the environment. This episode of The Environmental Show travels along with teens as they get out and experience nature.

**Living With Wildlife in Newton - Part 1** - "Living With Wildlife in Newton - Part 1" provides background perspective on the phenomenon of why we see more wildlife in Newton these days., including the return to the suburban environment of deer, fox, moose, bobcat, raccoon, coyote, and fisher.

**Living With Wildlife in Newton - Part 2** - "Living With Wildlife in Newton - Part 2" shows practical steps that can be taken to help residents coexist peacefully with their wildlife neighbors and to minimize conflicts with coyotes, turkeys, geese and other wild Newton creatures.

**Newton's Aqueducts: Preserving Our Historic Green Pathways** - This program takes viewers on a tour of Newton's Aqueduct pathways, highlighting both their special joys and the need to preserve these beautiful greenways for future generations.

## Winter Moths

Did it seem like there were a lot less leaves to rake this year? That may have been because small pesky winter moth caterpillars had eaten a lot of them. Lately, at night in Newton, it does look like a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" lately - only with the much smaller Winter Moths replacing the avian creatures. Learn more about these pesky creatures at <http://www.umassgreeninfo.org>. An excerpt:

*For the past several years, many Massachusetts communities have reported millions of moths emerging around Thanksgiving and continuing throughout December. Coincidentally, in the spring, these same communities witness an astonishing number of caterpillars defoliating deciduous trees. The major caterpillar pest responsible for this foliar destruction is a newly introduced insect called the Winter Moth (Operophtera brumata). Initially, the hardest hit areas were in Eastern Massachusetts, especially southeastern MA, including Cape Cod. Its known range in Massachusetts and beyond is now much better understood due to the extensive pheromone trapping that has been orchestrated by Dr. Joseph Elkinton at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Winter moth is still at its heaviest numbers in coastal MA, including Martha's Vineyard and most of Cape Cod. Towns on the South shore, from Boston, appear to have larger winter moth populations than do the coastal towns on the North Shore. However, it is also found in damaging numbers as far west as Worcester. Winter moth is now established in much of Rhode Island and has been picked up in traps, at least, in southeastern NH, coastal Maine, one place in southeastern CT and out on Long Island. Massachusetts still appears to have the largest and most damaging populations of this pest.*

Today's Boston Globe had an interesting article concerning the winter moth, "An entomologist's plea: Governor, save that tree!" by Lisa Kocian. In it, we learn that a UMass professor has a possible solution to this pest but short sighted state budget cuts are thwarting his efforts to address the problem.

## Events of Interest

**Saturday, December 2, 10:00 am-12 noon** - By popular demand, a December "Urban Ark" has been added this year, with a few good seats still available! Join David and Elva DelPorto, to learn how they have transformed their Newton Centre home into a model of sustainable design. Tour their "Urban Ark," and discover how they've integrated space heat, food production, air purification, and wastewater treatment within an amazing two-story solar greenhouse. They'll share their successes and failures, and show you how to invest your time and money to get the most benefit from the least effort. With rising fuel and water prices and dwindling resources, there's no time like the present to learn methods that can provide environmental and economic security for you and your family. Directions to the meeting point will be provided to registrants; proceeds will go to The Green Decade Coalition. \$20; \$15 for Students & Green Decade members, Registration/information: contact Urban Ark coordinator Fran Seasholes at urbanark@greendecade.org.

**Saturday, December 2, 1 pm, "AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH" Showing & Discussion** - at Newton Free Library, Druker Library, Free. Even if you've already seen Al Gore's film – and especially if you haven't – join Green Decade for this showing! GDC Energy Chair Prof. Eric Olson (Brandeis University) will lead the discussion afterwards. In Eric's view, shared by many, Gore's film does a good job describing the science and the politics surrounding this issue, but is less effective at describing solutions. Eric will briefly describe ways of tackling global warming that can form a basis for your individual and political next-step actions, and he will encourage audience commentary on both the film and possible solutions.

**Saturday, December 2, and Sunday, December 3 - Newton Community Weekend at the Newton History Museum**, Admission to the Newton History Museum is free to Newton residents on the first weekend of each month. Sunday, December 3, from 2:30 to 4 Pm is **Map Sunday** time at the Jackson Homestead. Maps of Newton from the mid-19th century to the present are laid out on tables and Museum staff will help guide your explorations. Free.

**December 6, 6 pm - Friend or Foe? The Complex Relationships of Caterpillars and Ants. Lecture by Naomi Pierce - Harvard Museum of Natural History.** (In conjunction with the HMNH's new exhibition, Arthropods: Creatures that Rule.) Ants are famous for their sociality, building elaborate nests and exhibiting complex behaviors in caring for and defending their colonies. But why would some ants become caretakers to larvae of certain butterfly species? Naomi Pierce, Hessel Professor of Biology and Curator of Lepidoptera at Harvard, will examine the fascinating symbiosis between ants and blue butterflies -- a dynamic that reveals valuable information about evolution, biodiversity and conservation of endangered species. She will describe how this work has recently led to an exciting reevaluation of a hypothesis proposed by a previous curator of Lepidoptera at Harvard, Vladimir Nabokov.

Mark your calendar now for the **Green Decade Coalition's 11th Environmental Speakers Series**, beginning on **Jan. 22 with "Climate Change in Our Back Yard."** Their kick-off speaker will be Dr. Cynthia Rosensweig, of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, where she is the leader of the Climate Impacts Group. The mission of the group is to investigate the interactions of climate with systems and sectors important to ecological and human well-being. All ESS events are held at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium, at 7 pm, usually on the 3rd Monday of the month, January through June. For more information about the series, consult the Environmental Speakers Series website. Find out more about the Green Decade Coalition at <https://greennewton.org>.

## Notes of Interest

The **Newton History Museum at The Jackson Homestead** (527 Washington Street) always has interesting programs. As part of their community commitment, they are happy to send you this listing of program highlights, events, and invitations each month. You may register for programs by telephone at 617-796-1450. For more details about any of their programs, please visit their website at [www.newtonhistorymuseum.org](http://www.newtonhistorymuseum.org).

Check out **Nature Events** in nearby communities and organizations by checking out the Links page of the Newton Conservators website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/links.htm>. Check out Brookline at <http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org/>, Weston at <http://www.westonforesttrail.org/>, Waltham at <http://www.walthamlandtrust.org/index.html>, Wellesley at <http://www.wellesleyconservationcouncil.org/> and Watertown at <http://www.watertowncitizens.org/>

New brochures of **Brookline's Sanctuaries** are now available from the **Brookline Conservation Commission**. These beautiful brochures show the natural and social history of the Hall's Pond, Lost Pond and D.Blakely Hoar Sanctuaries, including trail maps and information about the plant and animal life you are likely to see. To receive copies visit the Parks and Open Space Division on the 4th Floor of Brookline Town Hall, or call 617-730-2088 or check <http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org>.

## Crystal Lake Update courtesy of Robert Fizek ([www.betterlake.com](http://www.betterlake.com))

*Thanks to all who attended the public meeting on Crystal Lake held at the Newton Free Library on November 6. It was an SRO event! The unofficial count recorded about 240 people in attendance! The Comments and discussions showed a clear mandate supporting the acquisition and indicating a genuine enthusiasm for more 'open', natural, and accessible Park land as part of an efficient, environmentally sensitive renewal of the site and recreation facility for the benefit of ALL Newton residents.*

*Aldermen Parker and Danberg -who have worked hard to put this idea on the City agenda- spoke with great enthusiasm. Aldermen Mansfield and Samuelson have also been supporting the effort, and several other Aldermen have also recorded their support. Newton Conservators President, William Hagar also took the occasion to express the support of their organization. Mr. Pat Hannon was also duly recognized for his outreach to the Community in offering the City the first opportunity for purchasing his land for public use.*

*Very importantly, the Mayor pledged to continue the negotiations to establish a fair purchase price, and work to expedite the CPA funding request and governmental approvals. Please take the time to express your thanks to all of these people for their commitment and efforts! There is certain to be more Community involvement as the process moves forward -- The [www.betterlake.com](http://www.betterlake.com) website will remain- so feel free to post your thoughts about current events and plans for the future; So please stay aware and involved!*

Mayor Cohen and the Planning Department have discussed this possible acquisition with the Community Preservation Committee and

progress is happening on getting an appraisal of the property funded and completed. There was some new information in yesterday's Newton Tab in regard to the property which may have a bearing. Stay tuned for further word.

## Wild Turkeys - EcoAlert from American P.I.E. November 22, 2006

Wild turkeys once roamed over vast stretches of North America - from New England, where they were especially plentiful, south over most of the Mexican plateau. In 1621 the Pilgrims celebrated the first Thanksgiving with a wild turkey dinner, but by the mid-nineteenth century, the once abundant turkey had vanished in New England and New York. As we celebrate this year's Thanksgiving with its domesticated cousin, we should honor and support conservation efforts on behalf of wild turkeys.

The wild turkey, like its domesticated cousin, is famous for pompous strutting and gobbling. The likeness ends there. Wild turkeys have dark feathers which help them blend in with their habitats; domesticated turkeys have been bred to have white feathers. Wild turkeys can fly for short distances at speeds up to 55 miles per hour. On the ground they can reach speeds of 25 miles per hour. Domesticated turkeys usually weigh too much to be able to fly; their weight is about twice the weight of a wild turkey.

Domesticated turkeys spend their days and nights in farm sanctuaries under sometimes questionable living conditions. Wild turkeys spend most of the day searching for food like seeds, berries, small insects and acorns. They often spend their nights in trees on low branches, preferably over water to help protect them from tree-climbing predators, like raccoons. They will fly to the ground at first light. The wild turkey has a life span which is relatively short because of its many enemies; five years is a reasonable estimate. Domestic turkeys have a much shorter life span.

Thanks to both public and private conservation efforts, wild turkeys are gaining numbers throughout the country. Programs to return the wild turkey...to the wild...have been initiated with good results in many states, like New York and Iowa, where the bird had earlier been extirpated. The wild turkey was designated the official state game bird of Massachusetts in 1991. It is also an official state symbol of South Carolina, Alabama and Oklahoma. Wild turkeys prefer hardwood and mixed conifer-hardwood forests with scattered openings such as pastures, fields, orchards and seasonal marshes. Our own Thanksgiving celebrations can remind us to honor conservation initiatives and give thanks for wildness...and wild turkeys.

Act today on this EcoAlert, and thank you for your environmental responsibility. This feature is courtesy of 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, American P.I.E. has some holiday gift ideas (including the MOLLY WILD DOLL) whose proceeds support their work - visit .

## Mass Wildlife Notes

You can visit the **Mass Wildlife** website at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/land-use-habitats/>. Subscribe to MassWildlife News, a free electronic monthly newsletter updating you on research, events, new laws and other agency activities. All you need to do is send an email to: Join-MassWildlife.news(AT)listserv.state.ma.us. Here are some notes from their newsletter:

### Holiday Gift Ideas from Mass Wildlife

Looking for a wildlife-related gift for the outdoors or wildlife enthusiast on your holiday list? The following experiences and items are available for both youth and adults. A two year subscription to Massachusetts Wildlife magazine (\$10) delivers eight full color issues of the Commonwealth's best wildlife publication. For the budding conservationist try a copy of the recently revised "Critters of Massachusetts" book (\$5). "Critters" is a perfect gift for the curious youngster or the beginning adult naturalist with an interest in backyard wildlife and beyond. For the more advanced naturalist, "Field Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies" (\$20) or "A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools" (\$12) might be just the ticket. In-depth descriptions and detailed photographs help the reader identify and learn more about these creatures. The Massachusetts Wildlife Viewing Guide (\$8.95) listing 67 sites across the state where a variety of wildlife can be seen is a perfect gift for the outdoor explorer or a visitor to the state. Click the *Publications* button at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/land-use-habitats/> for more details. 2007 hunting/fishing licenses and stamps will be appreciated by the sportsman or woman in your life. Licenses will be available for sale by mid-December. License purchases support wildlife conservation, management, and restoration of wildlife and wildlife habitat in Massachusetts.

Outdoor skills experiences are another great gift! A wonderful outdoor experience for teens aged 13-17 is the [Junior Conservation Camp](#), a two week overnight camp session packed with outdoor skills learning from shooting and fishing, to canoeing and camping, field trips with biologists and more. Camp is located in Chesterfield and will be held in August. For women 18 years and above, enroll them in one of the Becoming an Outdoorswoman (BOW) workshops scheduled for 2007. The weekend in Lenox is already scheduled for June 8-10, 2007. Other, day-long workshops focusing on winter skills, wildlife tracking, fishing, hunting, and survival are planned. All programs are designed for outdoor novices. Gift certificates are available. Click the [Education](#) button on the MassWildlife website for further details on the two programs.

For the person who has everything, make a donation via check in his or her name supporting work on rare and endangered species to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Fund. Wildlife habitat protection can also be supported by donating to the Wildlands Fund a fund solely dedicated to acquiring important wildlife habitat that will also be open to wildlife related recreation. Donations should be sent to the MassWildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough MA 01581. For more information on the above publications, programs and fund donations, contact 508/792-7270 or check [www.mass.gov/masswildlife](http://www.mass.gov/masswildlife).

### Exotic Pets are Illegal in Massachusetts

Speaking of gifts, if you think an exotic animal like a monkey, alligator, or piranha would make a great pet or holiday gift, think again. Massachusetts has very strict regulations governing the possession of both native and exotic wildlife by the average citizen. "Many people assume that any animal they can purchase in another state or over the Internet is legal to possess in Massachusetts," said MassWildlife Assistant Director Dr. Tom French, "This is simply not true. Our regulations are restrictive to the point that we publish only what you may possess, rather than what you may not. Only museums, nature centers or educational institutions are granted permits for many kinds of wildlife. The goal of these regulations is to protect both the interests of wildlife and the public." Before making any purchase, consult with a veterinarian to

determine what pet is suitable for your abilities, lifestyle and commitment to pet care.

Dr. French recommends doing business with established and reputable pet shops rather than surfing the Internet or scanning the classifieds where sellers are not necessarily concerned with or aware of the laws that might affect potential buyers. "Store owners keep up with the laws," he notes. "The store owners were an effective lobby for making domestic ferrets a legal pet in Massachusetts and know their livelihood depends on doing business by the book. They'll be happy to sell you reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish and mammals that conform to state laws, and they'll tell you if something you ask about is illegal."

Anyone with knowledge of an illegal wild or exotic animal kept as a pet should contact the Environmental Police at 1-800-632-8075 on any day of the week, or MassWildlife at 508/792-7270 on weekdays during business hours. An abstract of the regulation, titled "Keeping Captive/Exotic Wildlife" is available in the Wildlife area of the MassWildlife website.

## Newton Conservators Notes

The **Newton Conservators Newsletter** is the official publication of the Newton Conservators. The latest issue should be in the mail and if you are a Newton Conservators member likely have received it. The theme of the winter issue is "Conservators Tackle Invasives" which gives more info on this important topic and ties in with our Fall Lecture. We have some plans in the new year for combining our paper based Newton Conservators Newsletter with this email based Nature Notes. Members may have the option to receive the Newsletter just in email form - saving trees in the process. There will likely be four issues that will be available in mailed paper form for those who prefer. In between issues may be available just in email form.

The Newton Conservators have an active **Land Management Group** led by Landscape Designer, Beth Schroeder. Each week, usually on Tuesdays, the group had visited one of our open space areas to catalog the flowers, plants, animals, and other creatures that are found there. If you are experienced and knowledgeable in the areas of nature related identification, please let us know if you would like to assist next season in this long term effort to catalog the biodiversity in Newton. The results from the past year's efforts have recently been catalogued into [a summary spreadsheet](#) which will provide a very helpful record of Newton's biodiversity. See the description of this group's work in the latest Newton Conservators newsletter.

The **Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands** map guide put out by the Newton Conservators is a great resource for those who would like to explore Newton's open space. It 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. Many more folks have been observed out in our conservation areas with their trail guide in hand;.

It is available by web, mail and also at Newtonville Books and New England Mobile Book Fair. Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands may be purchased for \$7.95 online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/buyaguide.htm> or by mailing a check payable to The Newton Conservators, Inc. to The Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 590011, Newton Center, MA 02459. It makes a great gift for your outdoors and nature loving friends.

The Newton Conservators are starting to consider the next edition of this great guide, partly due to additional open spaces and features added in Newton due to such things as the adoption of the CPA! If you have any corrections that you think should be included please send them to The Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 590011, Newton Center, MA 02459.

The Newton Conservators are a nonprofit citizen advocacy organization which actively promotes the acquisition, creation, and preservation of natural open spaces for the people of Newton. Since its formation in the late 1950's, The Newton Conservators has been instrumental in safeguarding more than 200 acres of open space in Newton, creating several major public parks, and enacting ground-breaking environmental ordinances with respect to the protection and preservation of trees, wetlands and clean air, and the conservation of energy. 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.

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, Inc., 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".

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 [emaillist\(AT\)newtonconservators.org](mailto:emaillist(AT)newtonconservators.org). 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>. 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.