

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

The Newton Conservators' Audit Committee, consisting of Lalor Burdick, Margaret Albright, Peter Kastner, and Eric Reenstierna, met with Katherine Howard, Treasurer, on March 16, 2009. The Committee verified every Balance Sheet account by reconciling beginning and ending balances and by checking transactions during the year. The Committee paid particular attention to the Cash account and verified that transactions were supported by invoices, receipts and/or authorized in the Minutes of Board meetings.

We believe the statements published by the Treasurer present fairly the condition of the organization and wish to thank her for the time and effort she has expended on behalf of the Newton Conservators.

The Committee discussed various filings with the City of Newton, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Internal Revenue Service and believes that the Newton Conservators is in compliance.

Respectfully submitted,
Lalor Burdick, Chairman, Audit Committee

SUMMER BIRDS OF COLD SPRING PARK

This spring has been an exciting time for people who keep track of the birds in Cold Spring Park. A rare bird, a Eurasian teal, has been with us for months now. He first appeared in January but was then frozen out by winter ice. He returned and has been around the exertrail, about 100 yards into the Park from the little wooden bridge at the end of the Beacon Street parking area. Haynes Miller, a Conservator, saw him there on May 26th with his inamorata, a female mallard. She is three times his size, but they are in the same genus of ducks. He has been regularly intimidating male mallards much larger than he is, to keep this lovely hen for himself.

Eurasian teal are relatively rare here. Three or four are seen in Massachusetts each year. You often are peering at them at a great distance, in the middle of a large flock of our own native green-winged teal. They have different markings that are not easy to see at a distance. Our bird has been close to us for months. This kept a flow of bird-

watchers from around New England streaming into our Park. Eurasian teal do hybridize with our native green-winged teal species. If the Newton Eurasian teal can produce offspring with his mallard lady-love, then we will have some very interesting young ducks around shortly.



- photo by Pete Gilmore

There already has been a hen mallard with 12 little ducklings in the marsh near Beaconwood Road. These were all quite kosher. Keep your eyes alert for a hen mallard with unusual ducklings. You may also watch for wood duck babies, as wood ducks nest in the trees in Cold Spring Park. The male wood ducks are ornately gorgeous, and the females are also quietly beautiful.

From this point on, the song of the bird will always be described, since this can make finding the birds much easier. Use the songs to home in on an area, then "go for the visual." Bird listening and watching instead of just watching is usually, but not always, more productive. For most of us, it is more enjoyable.

In the area of the marsh between Beaconwood Road and the exertrail there are two very colorful species of birds nesting. The Baltimore Oriole is a bright orange and black bird larger than a sparrow. It is related to the red-winged blackbirds that are also around this area of the park. The Orioles have loud whistled calls and are often higher in the trees, particularly willows. Their nests are pendulous sacks which hang down from the branches like bags woven out of grasses. The female is similar in coloration to the male but is a duller orange.

A second species in this same area is the yellow warbler. These birds are smaller than sparrows and either sing perched up in shrubs and the lower parts of trees or dart

around looking for food. They are completely bright yellow and the males have red streaks on their yellow chests. They sing constantly in this marshy area. Their song might sound like “sweet-sweet-sweet-so-so-SWEET” with the “so-so” phrase dropping down the scale and the last phrase going up.

A pair of the larger red-bellied woodpeckers is nesting in this area. They have bright red napes and alternating black and white coloration down their backs. They are larger than robins, about the same size as the much browner flickers, which are also around. They make a whinnying call that is very easy to pick out, once you have focused on it.

If you venture into the more wooded areas of the park, you are in the territories of rather different species of birds. Some of these are the scarlet tanager, the wood thrush, the restart, and the wood peewee. The first of these, the male scarlet tanager, is bright scarlet all over, except for jet black wings. It is a real tropical sight. It usually is in the canopy of the larger oaks. The female has the same wings but is yellow-green otherwise. The song has a rhythmic cadence - the sound of a robin singing with a burr in its throat. Both birds prefer the higher areas of the trees, but you can get lucky. Just be sure to check your cardinal experiences.

The second species, the wood thrush, look the same for either gender. It has white underparts with bold spots on its chest. The back is brown with a strong orange-brown color on the nape and back of the head. It is usually in the understory of the larger trees where it nests and the male sings. The song is the most beautiful song in Cold Spring Park, human divas notwithstanding. It is a series of flutelike phrases that rise in pitch as it is delivered. It has an eerie, other-worldly tremor at the end, such as might occur in an audio for a Chinese painting.

The wood peewees are small, sparrow-sized birds that sit quietly on branches of the larger trees waiting for insects to fly by. They then dart out and catch the insects on the wing. They belong to the family of birds called flycatchers because they all share this mode of dining. Both sexes of wood peewee look the same, with wing-bars, or white areas on their folded wings. The male sings “peeeuuurrr” or “peeeaweee” repeatedly from his perch. A similar flycatcher, the eastern phoebe, is also in the park but has no wing-bars. It repeatedly pumps its tail and sings a harsh “phebe” song. The phoebe has a darker head than its body color, whereas the wood peewee is mostly the same color above. Both are lighter below. The wood peewees do not bob their tails.

The redstarts are small birds in the same family of birds as the yellow warblers mentioned before. This is the wood warbler family. It is a New World family of birds, not occurring in Africa or Eurasia. The redstarts are deep red-orange and jet black in the males and with yellow replacing the red-orange in the females, which are sometimes referred to a yellowstarts. Immature, or first-year, male redstarts have the colors of the female. They dart around in the canopy or below, eating insects. Their song is a series of sibilant notes which either go up or down at the very end.

This small selection of attractive species can be something to look for, but you will encounter more than these if you go looking. The idea is to have a reason to get out into nature, and check out what is around you. Butterflies, dragonflies, wildflowers, frogs and turtles are all near us. Go with a friend or two and relax into the world. Get to know the invasive species that are overrunning the state, the kudzu of the north. Keep an eye out for the Asian long-horned beetles that may be coming our way. But most of all, give yourself some peace inside, by going outside.

- Maurice “Pete” Gilmore

BIG TRASH CHANGES

The Newton Conservators are among the many organizations that support the City of Newton’s move to a more sustainable and environmentally sound solid waste policy. This has culminated in a move to automated trash pick up, an expanded recycling program, and limited pay-as-you-throw trash fees.

The City has been participating in a pilot program underway since last November in different neighborhoods. A survey conducted by the Department of Public Works (DPW) has demonstrated that the vast majority of pilot households (91%) were satisfied with the auto trash program and even more (95%) were satisfied with the move to single stream recycling. Single stream recycling simplifies recycling by putting all recyclables in one container with no need to sort.

As a result of the pilot program’s success, the City will expand it citywide. The new program is to begin on October 5th, with preparations before. Each household will receive either a 64-gallon or a 36-gallon blue trash barrel and a 64-gallon green recycling barrel. A second barrel for those who need it can be bought for \$200 per year. Another option is to purchase extra bags for about \$2.25 each. But most households will likely find that the 36- or