



*Newton Conservators
E-Bulletin
Sunday, May 31, 2020
... Newton's land trust working to
preserve open space since 1961*



June is almost upon us!

Sunny and warm days are ahead! We have some interesting volunteer open space opportunities for you to consider in this issue. **Don't miss our Half Price sale ending tonight!** Stay safe out in our open spaces and thanks for wearing a mask in closer quarters on our trails! Hope you will consider the following topics covered in this issue:



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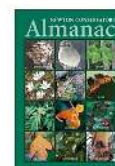
Trail Guide and Almanac 1/2 Price Sale Ends Today!



For many years, our guide, [Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands](#), has been the go-to reference to our local open spaces. It's a handy "fit-in-your-pocket" book that will point you to places all around the Newton area to explore and its 70-pages contain detailed descriptions and trail maps of 34 parks and conservation areas, featuring 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 34 natural areas.

During recent Covid times, due to the increased interest in exploring our open spaces, we offered this great guide for half price to members and non-members! Normally sold for \$8.95 + \$2.00 shipping, right now it is available for only \$4.50 (shipping included) if [you order online](#). Membership is not required for purchase. **Please make sure that you specify "Non-Member" (even if you are already a Member!)** so that you will get the special price and to make sure our server won't confuse your order with a membership renewal.

Our companion book, [Newton Conservators Almanac](#) is also at half price during this special sale. This helpful volume provides a colorful guide to what flora and fauna you might expect to encounter throughout each month in Newton. Normally \$19.95 + \$2.00 shipping, for now the special price is only \$11.25 (shipping included). [You can order online](#). Again, make sure you order as a "Non-member."



Team Work - Volunteer Opportunities

Invasives Team

Newton Conservators has always relied on its wonderful volunteers to carry out its mission. Traditionally we have had an Invasives Team, even in these times when we have had to suspend our public invasives sessions. These are folks who have had some experience at recognizing invasive plants, how to dress properly and take precautions, and are familiar with proper removal and disposal techniques. But new volunteers are welcome - please contact Invasives Team Coordinator Katherine Howard (Katherine Howard at katherineh998@gmail.com, or 617-721-2571). Our website will shortly be posting some great educational materials about invasive plants found in Newton to help you find and control invasives around your own area.



We have spent a lot of effort this spring on Garlic Mustard. This plant arrived from Europe as a medicinal and garden herb, and is now an invader of our backyards, parks, forests, and conservation areas. It quickly covers vast areas and low-light forested areas, shades out other plants, chemically alters the soil to inhibit germination of competitor seeds, and alters habitat for native insects such as butterflies. It is now moving past its flowering stage (small white flowers) to its seed bearing stage with flowers being replaced with very thin seed pods). It's still easy to pick and dispose in trash (not yard waste), or perhaps use it for cooking as you will find out in our next Newton Conservators Summer 2020 Newsletter!



Garlic Mustard going to seed - some flowers still left.



Close up of earlier stage Garlic Mustard Flowers - note serrated leaves

Sometimes our teams are not pulling out plants but putting them in! This past week, some of our team and board members were busy replanting our Dexter

Woods hillside property with native plants and shrubs after some necessary tree work.



Conservation Restriction (CR) Monitoring Team

Conservation Restrictions (CRs) are legal agreements that prohibit certain acts and uses, while allowing others, on private or municipally owned property in order to permanently protect conservation values present on the land. The owner of the property is not allowed to hold the conservation restriction on its own property. Newton Conservators has been assigned conservation restrictions on many of the open space parcels in Newton which are owned by the city. In fact, a conservation restriction is required on any open space acquired with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds (e.g. Webster Woods, Newton Community Farm). Each CR is somewhat unique depending on the nature of the property and must be approved by the state.

As holders of CRs, Newton Conservators is required each year to inspect the property for any violations of the CR agreement. This involves visiting the property, traversing it, taking photographs, and creating a report on current conditions and possible violations of the CR. The CR Monitoring teams to date have been volunteer members of our Board of Directors. Typically, 2 or 3 members will visit an individual site taking notes and photos as necessary at different waypoints on the property. We would love to have more members and volunteers involved in this process, particularly for sites that are near to where you live. Who doesn't like a nice walk in the woods? If this is of interest, please contact our CR Monitoring Coordinator, Chris Hepburn (john.hepburn@bc.edu, 617-964-1137).

On a related subject, the City's Conservation Commission is looking for additional **volunteer stewards** for a number of their conservation area properties. Ideally, there would be two stewards for each property. Stewards act as eyes and ears for our environmental planners, Jennifer Steel and Claire Rundelli, for any issues at the properties and provide written reports regularly to them on any issues that might occur (e.g. trees down, vandalism, repairs needed). If this is of interest, please contact Assistant Environmental Planner, Claire Rundelli (crundelli@newtonma.gov, 617-796-1152).

Trails Team

Newton has lots of trails in our open spaces and they have been getting more use than ever in this time of Covid. In addition, there have been important efforts at opening up new trail systems, in particular along the Charles River upstream from Commonwealth Avenue as part of the newly imagined Riverside Greenway. Like other teams, we would like to assemble a dedicated group of volunteers to assist when needed on helping to build new trails or assist with maintenance of existing trails. We anticipate a need this summer for assistance with the new Pony Truss Trail and you can read more about it in the next article below.

Volunteers for Riverside Trail Restoration Needed!

The [Riverside Greenway Working Group](#) is seeking volunteers to join their "Riverside Trail Maintenance Team." The current need is for the Pony Truss Trail, a 2000 ft. long foot-trail on the Newton side of the Charles River between the Pony Truss Bridge (accessed from Riverside Park) and the service road near the Riverside MBTA Station. The restoration is funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Recreational Trails Program.

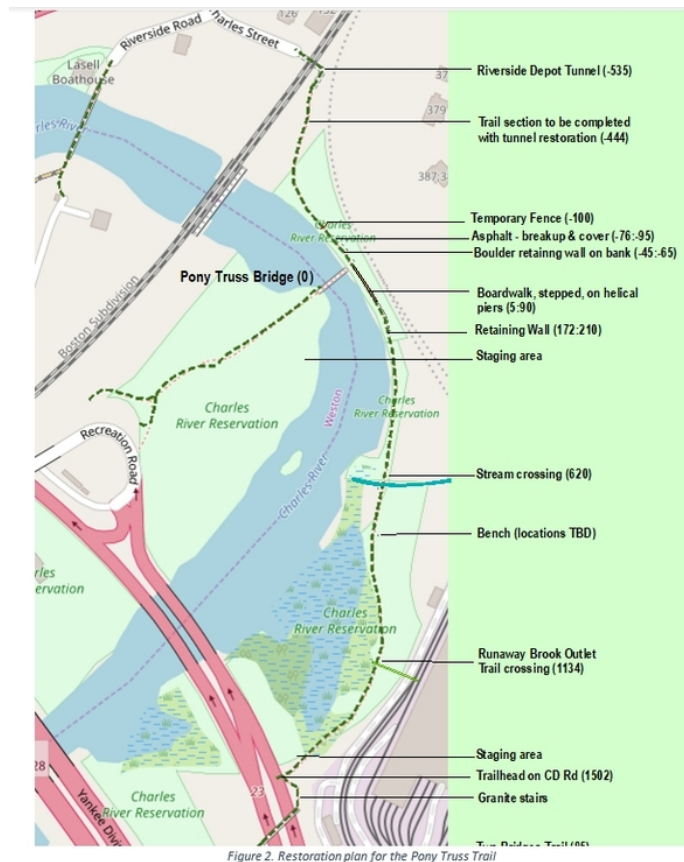


Figure 1. Restored bank and trail segment downstream from the Pony Truss Bridge

Volunteers will be helping to restore a trail that is probably 200 years old and shows the wear of time and the elements. Volunteer work hours will be credited toward the 25% match required for reimbursement under the grant. At least two birds with one stone! A third is the wonderful opportunity to learn trail building skills under the supervision of two professional trail builders, Walker Korby (Terramor, LLC), and Dick O'Brien (Conservation Works). The best benefit is to spend a few hours along the beautiful Charles River. **It should be noted that DCR currently has suspended volunteer work on its properties, but we are trying to line up interested people for the time when volunteers will be allowed again.**

The actual restoration work will mostly involve using picks, shovels and rakes to regrade the trail - which has deteriorated from normal pedestrian wear and tear, decay of previous trail infrastructure, and the gradual downhill migration of the fill installed to create the rail line above the trail used to access the Riverside Station. The segment of the trail just upstream from the Pony This section will be salvaged by constructing an 85 ft. long boardwalk supported on helical pilings, just inches from the river's edge. Other sections will require riverbank restoration, retaining structures, and two stacked stone staircases built with granite pieces from recycled curbing donated by Newton DPW.

The schedule of work will vary from day to day thru the end of July, depending on the tasks, weather, and COVID restrictions. We would like to have a team of folks who could be available part time with prior notice of a day or two. Trail volunteers will need to fill out a DCR Volunteer Release Form and log work hours. Appropriate work shoes and gloves are required to avoid injury. Long sleeves and pants are recommended given the potential for tick and poison ivy exposure. A face mask must be worn, and social distancing maintained in compliance with current COVID guidelines for construction sites.



If you are interested in volunteering or need further information, please contact Larry Smith (larry.lmsmith@gmail.com), who can explain the program further and provide the necessary paperwork to participate. (Note: you will be offered the option to register online, receive emails about volunteer activities, and to log and track your volunteer hours)

Background

The Riverside Greenway is a wonderful vision for a combination of a shared-use, ADA-compliant trail, and a network of foot-trails connecting the current terminus of the Blue Heron Trail in Lyons Field in Auburndale with the Lower Falls "Trestle" Bridge. The [Riverside Greenway Working Group](#) (RGWG) is a coalition of trail advocates from the [Newton Conservators](#), [Bike Newton](#), [The Lawrence and Lillian Solomon Foundation](#), and the neighborhoods of Newton Lower Falls and Auburndale. Since 2017, the RGWG has been defining workable segments of this network, developing designs, and seeking funding for the list of more than 20 projects, with a cumulative value of over \$6M.

The [Pony Truss Trail](#) is the first project undertaken for construction, which began recently. The Pony Truss trail, named after the key trail landmark Pony Truss Bridge, is identifiable on maps dating back to 1875. It provided a footpath for canoeists, traveling from Boston on the trolley to Riverside Depot, to walk to boathouses at Riverside Park across the Pony Truss bridge. The rerouting of the Lower Falls Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad to its current location on the Newton (south) side of the Charles River created a steep slope (approximately 40%) above the trail. The erosion of this slope has been a significant source of the trail's degradation.

Support These Trails

Some of the design studies have been supported by grants from the Solomon Foundation but with primary funding from the Massachusetts DCR Recreational Trails Program and the new MassTrails Program. These state reimbursement grants require a 25% match. The match requirement can be met with volunteer time or cash. Volunteers on the Riverside Trail Maintenance Team will receive valuable training which will eventually help to assist the DCR in maintaining these trails in perpetuity.

Not everyone has the time or physical endurance for trail work. If this is the case you can still support the effort by making a tax-deductible contribution via the

Newton Conservators, earmarked for the "Trails Fund" on their [website](#), or by sending a check with the memo line "Trails Fund" to Newton Conservators, PO Box 590011, Newton, MA 02459

New Video on Raising Giant Cecropia Moths

Nature podcaster and photographer J.C. Giraldo (www.activistplanet.org) recently interviewed well known Brandeis ecologist and Newton Conservators Advisor Eric Olson about raising giant Cecropia Moths. A video of that interview is now available on YouTube at



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E8S7EMMSHM&t=1685s>.

It is a fascinating story and you can read a little about it in Eric's article in our Winter 2019 Newton Conservators newsletter

(<https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/newsletter-2020-winter-webster-ramble.pdf>).



Tennis Eases Back in Newton

Tennis Court Rules

- Court change at the top of every hour
- Each player should bring their own can of balls
- Please wear masks when not playing
 - Only users from the same household per court
 - (PHASE 1 ONLY)



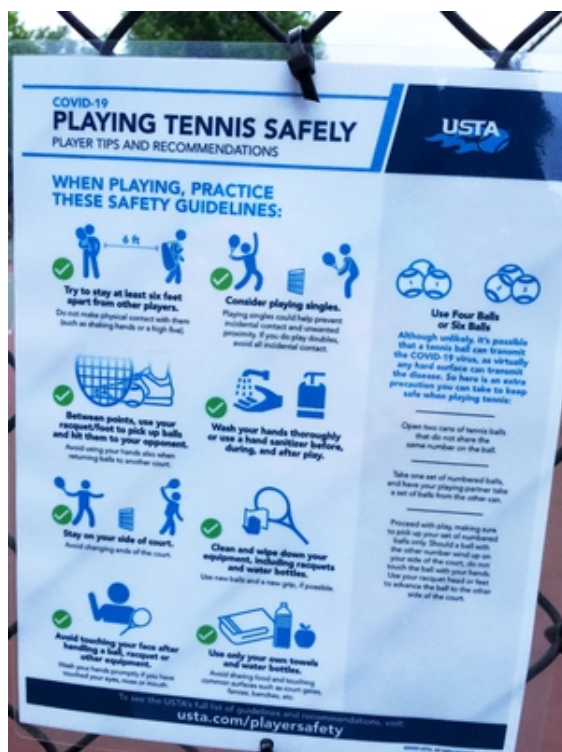
Open Tennis Courts As of May 29, 2020

- Newton North High School
- Newton South High School
- Albemarle Playground
- Angier Tennis Courts
- Cabot Park
- New Cold Spring Park
- Hamilton (aka LFCC)
- Newton Highlands
- Pellegrini Playground
- Solomon Schecter Playground
- Sterns Park
- Upper Falls Playground
- Ward School
- Warren House (East & West Side)
- Weeks Park
- Wellington Park

Per the Mayor, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, and the Commissioner of Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department

Tennis Court Updates are posted at:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicaax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?>

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IPM Proposal for Three Fields in Newton

Here is information from the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department and IPM Committee concerning a proposal for 3 fields in Newton. There will be a **public info session on Zoom on Thursday, June 4, at 6 pm.**

For over a year the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture has been working directly with City of Newton Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee to approve a pesticide application on **June 22, 2020 (rain date June 23, 2020) at three locations: the Russell Halloran Athletic Complex (1.95 acres), Lincoln Warren Field (1.1 acres) and Weeks Field (2.34 acres).**



To help us make decisions about when to allow use of pesticides, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department works closely with the city's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisory Committee to identify specific pest thresholds for various pests at each of our athletic fields. The IPM Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from city departments including Parks Recreation and Culture, Health and Human Services, Newton Public Schools, and others, as well as Newton residents with expertise and interest related to field maintenance, environmental advocacy and recreational field use. When the Parks and Recreation Department observes and documents pests beyond the agreed upon threshold, our formal IPM plan is activated. This is the only acceptable occasion to utilize pesticides.

The City of Newton works hard to limit and avoid whenever possible the use of pesticides on any city property through its comprehensive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. Our fields undergo heavy use which leads to soil compaction and wear areas. That, in turn, leads to weed growth. By acting with a carefully crafted IPM program, that monitors fields regularly, we expect to create an environment in which athletic turf can again prevail in specifically targeted areas. Any limited approved use of pesticides under the city's IPM program is

combined with best practices such as aeration, slice-seeding, fertilization, irrigation and other steps to keep the turf as healthy as possible.

The application area will be treated with Pylex and/or Q4 Plus. These are both post-emergent selective herbicides used for broadleaf and grassy weed control. These are the least toxic, most appropriate products for reducing the infestation of Knotweed, Crabgrass and White Clover in these fields.

Our plan involves applying pesticides when school is not in session, notifying abutters and field users, posting information at field entry points 48 hours in advance and posting the treated areas for 72 hours after the application to protect people and pets from exposure. Note that the city's protocol exceeds MA state regulatory requirements for notification and posting. All pertinent information will be posted to the City of Newton webpage.

*Informational zoom meeting on Thursday June 4th 6:00 pm
Please join the ipm zoom meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89658714716>

Inspiration in Covid Times



Chalk Flower Garden on a Basketball court at Wellington Park



PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP



In case you missed our renewal letter last December, we would be very grateful for your continued support by renewing your membership. Perhaps, consider renewing at a higher level, adding an extra donation, or purchasing a gift membership for someone else who is passionate about open space.

You can renew or join the Newton Conservators online at <https://newtonconservators.org/renewal-2020/>. A link to our annual members' renewal letter outlining last year's activities can also be found at the above link.

Donations may be made at our secure link <https://newtonconservators.123signup.com/donation/21167>. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, we also accept donations for a number of affiliated local open space groups including Friends of Webster Woods, Friends of Cold Spring Park, the

Riverside Trails Working Group, a Trails Fund, and others. As part of the donation process, you can specify a group in the "Comments" section of the form.

Thanks so much!

Mission: *The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters. A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.*

- E-Bulletin Editor & President Ted Kuklinski, Newton Conservators (ebulletin@newtonconservators.org)

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