



**NEWTON  
CONSERVATORS**

SUMMER ISSUE

# NEWSLETTER

*Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961*

NEWTONCONSERVATORS.ORG • SUMMER 2020

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## The Riverside Greenway Moves Forward

*By Ted Chapman, Riverside Working Group, Project Manager*

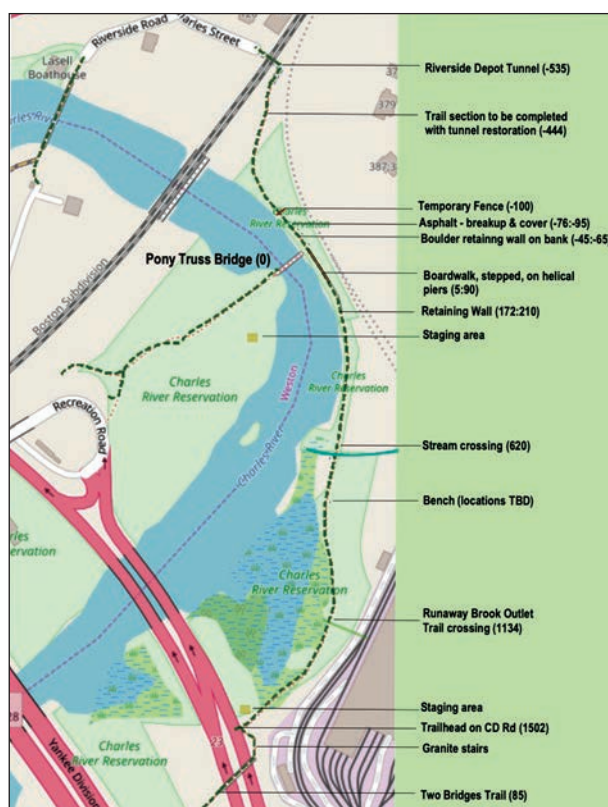


Figure 1. Restoration plan for the Pony Truss

The Riverside Greenway Working Group (RGWG) is a coalition of local trail advocates, including Newton Conservators, Bike Newton, the Solomon Foundation, and residents of Lower Falls and Auburndale. Newton Conservators functions as the fiscal agent for RGWG grants from the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR) Recreational Trails Program and MassTrails. The Solomon Foundation has provided financial and invaluable technical support with the long-term goal to close a gap in the Blue Heron Trail between Lyons Field and the Trestle Bridge in Newton Lower Falls. This Greenway will help connect transportation resources and to restore recreational opportunities that this part of the Charles River once offered.

Beginning in 2017 with a design study of the Two Bridges Trail between Newton Lower Falls and

the Riverside MBTA station, the RGWG has defined over 20 unique projects, which when linked together will create a network of trails along three miles of Charles River shoreline. This article will describe several of these projects that are actively moving forward.

**The Pony Truss Trail.** This historic 2000-foot-long trail that runs along the Newton bank of the Charles River, from the Riverside Depot Tunnel to the CD Road and Two Bridges Trail, is getting a face lift as this report is being written. The CD road is a service road (the old 128) that runs from Grove Street to Riverside Park.

In the 1800s this trail was the route from the Riverside Depot across the Pony Truss Bridge, then across the river to the boat houses, athletic facilities, and pool in what is now the Riverside Park in Weston. Sections of the trail are being washed into the river by sediment coming from the steep bank of the Green Line Spur above it. The restoration of the trail bed will result in a non-ADA-compliant three-foot-wide footpath and will include two stacked-

granite staircases, using recycled curbing from the Newton DPW, and an 85-foot-long boardwalk. Restoration work began in mid-May and will be completed by July, depending on current COVID guidelines.

**Riverside Station Development.** Riverside Station is a vital transportation link, and the development now being approved for the site will become home to more than 1000 new Newton residents, a 150-key hotel, and 250,000 square feet of office. The RGWG introduced the principals of Mark Development to the Charles River that abuts Riverside. Realizing the potential of the Greenway and adjacent park system along the Charles, Mark Development committed \$3M to cover four key elements of the Greenway. This agreement will be a condition of the special permit, now in process, to be approved by the Newton City Council.

- 1. Riverside Depot Tunnel:** The design and construction of a trail under the Framingham-Worcester Commuter Rail line will connect the Pony Truss Trail to the Auburndale Riverside Park. The tunnel is one of the “Auburndale Links” that form a nexus to the park. The other three are the Lasell/Recreation Road Bridge, the Charles Street I-90 underpass, and the Pigeon Hill Trail.
- 2. Riverside Connector:** Full design and construction of a trail connection between the Riverside Station Development, the Two Bridges Trail, and the new shared-use trail on the CD road, connecting to Riverside Park in Weston.
- 3. MWRA Link:** Full design and construction of a trail shared-use link between the new shared-use trail on the CD road from Riverside, under Recreation Road and the Commuter Rail line to the shared use path around the MWRA site.
- 4. Two Bridges Trail:** Full design of the Two Bridges Trail from Riverside Station to Deforest Street in Lower Falls and a ramp to the Leo J. Martin Golf Course.
- 5. A \$50,000 donation to the Newton Conservators:** To support the monitoring of the design, construction, and to supplement the DCR’s ongoing maintenance of these trails.

As negotiated, the agreement will require the fulfillment of these conditions as part of the construction of the Riverside Station Development to be granted an occupancy permit under the Special Permit for the site. If these conditions are not met, Mark Development will pay the balance of

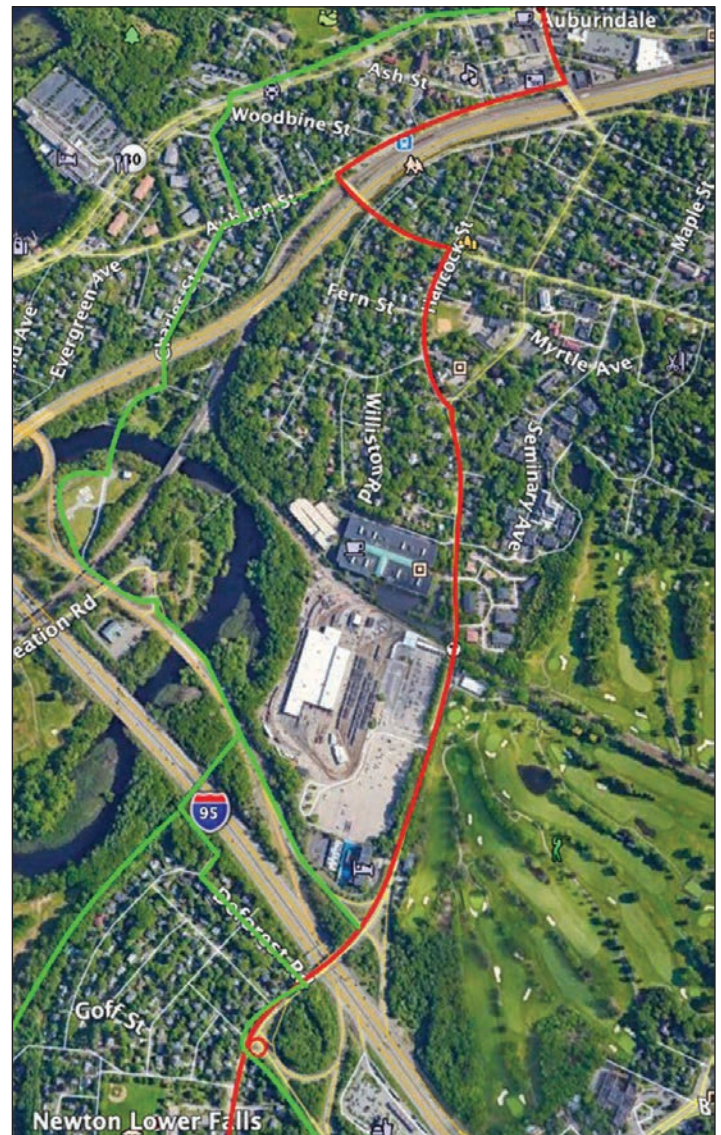


Figure 2. Proposed shared use bike/pedestrian improvements. Grove St. (red), Riverside Greenway (green)

any work not done to a fund, held by the city, earmarked for these projects. There are obvious benefits of this work being done by a private entity because of efficiency and cost related to a publicly funded process.

Equally important, Mark Development will be building a separated, protected 2-way cycle track and pedestrian walkway on Grove Street across the I-95 overpass and the entire length of the new Riverside Station Development. The Lower Falls Improvement Association suggestion to the Land Use Committee that this infrastructure be extended south to the Hamilton Community Center in Lower Falls and north to Williams School and Auburndale has received some traction. Simultaneously, the DCR has funded two studies that are in progress: 1) the 100% design of a shared-use path along Quinobequin Road; and 2) a conceptual



study of how to connect the Two Bridges Trail to the Quinobequin Trail.



**Auburndale Links.** Four important components of the Greenway converge at the small DCR-owned Auburndale Riverside Park.

- 1. The Riverside Depot Tunnel:** The Depot was the end of the train line for folks coming from Boston in the late 1800s to rent canoes and to access the recreational opportunities via the Pony Truss Trail, but also to the boathouses in the park.
- 2. Lasell/Recreation Road Bridge:** This bridge was scheduled to be replaced along with the Pony Truss and Lower Falls Trestle Bridges in 2011. That restoration is now scheduled for 2023 by Mass DOT as a vital ADA-accessible river crossing on the Greenway.
- 3. The Charles Street I-90 underpass:** Will be a primary bike commuter transportation corridor reaching Commonwealth Avenue and the Auburndale Commuter Rail Station.
- 4. The Pigeon Hill Trail:** The RGWG has grants totaling \$212,000 from the DCR-RTP, MassTrails, the Newton Community Preservation Act, and the Solomon Foundation to produce a 100% design for this recreational trail. This will restore access between the Auburndale Riverside Park, the Pigeon Hill neighborhood, and through to Commonwealth Ave and the boathouse.

**Pigeon Hill Trail.** The Pigeon Hill Trail and Charles Street Underpass will connect to Commonwealth Ave via the neighborhood streets Charles, Evergreen, Auburn, and Bourne (see graphics above right). The RGWG has

met with the communities and the City of Newton to brainstorm solutions that maintain the residential character of those streets. The goal is safety and shared use using the concept of ‘Neighborhood Ways’ or the Dutch ‘Woonerf Way.’ The guidelines being discussed include:

- Keep a neighborhood feel
- Don’t separate people, cars, and bikes
- Define entrances
- Define behavior expectations by design
- Use frequent reminders (twists and turns in the roadway called chicanes)
- Signs to make behavior clear
- Make it pretty – landscaped chicanes where appropriate



*An example of chicanes, twists and turns in the roadway*

*Continued on page 4*



Designer's sketch of the plan for Commonwealth Avenue at Lyons Park in Auburndale

**Commonwealth Avenue.** In much of Newton, the Commonwealth Avenue carriageway is a shared use/neighborhood way. When the RGWG became aware that MassDOT will be replacing the Route 30 Charles River Bridge in 2022 and that Weston was planning to install a shared-use trail along the length of Route 30, we approached MassDOT to include a shared-use trail over the bridge with access to Norumbega Road. We then suggested the city of Newton convert the north side of Commonwealth Avenue from Lyons Field to the Bridge to a separated, shared use path. Both these are now being designed. The city has completed the 25% design and

received a strong score on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which provides Federal highway funds for transportation projects. The city will proceed to 100% design. The plan is to separate auto, bicycle, and pedestrian tracks in this section of Commonwealth.

**Auburndale Park.** In anticipation that the goal to connect Lower Falls to Auburndale via an ADA accessible shared-use trail is viable, the RGWG met with Newton Parks and Recreation to upgrade the Marty Sender Trail to meet ADA standards and deal with flooding issues on the Blue Heron Trail in Lyons Field. Part of this work was approved for 2020 using Community Development Block Grant funding for accessibility. The balance will be applied for through a MassTrails grant.

The Riverside Greenway Working Group with support of Newton Conservators, Mark Development, MassTrails, the City of Newton, the Massachusetts DCR, DOT, and MBTA, and the Solomon Foundation is well on the way to making the vision a reality. Opportunities for volunteering and financial support are welcome. See the website <https://riversidegreenwayma.wildapricot.org/> for more information.



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN TODAY!

**YES, count me in! I want to be a nature steward and help Newton Conservators protect and preserve the natural areas in our community.**

**Please renew/accept my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:**

- |                                                  |                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Directors' Circle | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family Membership          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Patron            | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual Membership      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student Membership         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sustaining Member  | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$_____ |

**Want to make an even bigger impact?  
Help us support these conservation areas:**

Woodcock Meadow \$\_\_\_\_\_ Trail Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_  
Ordway Endowment Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_  
Land Stewardship Areas (Dexter Rd., Bracebridge Rd.)  
\$\_\_\_\_\_

New members receive Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to volunteer!  
Please email me.

Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc. and send to P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459, or visit [newtonconservators.org/membership/](https://newtonconservators.org/membership/) to renew/join online. Consider including Newton Conservators in your estate planning. Contact us at [president@NewtonConservators.org](mailto:president@NewtonConservators.org).



## President's Message

This is not the spring we expected! COVID-19 has certainly been a spoiler for what should be one of the most delightful times of the year. Our usual ambitious spring walk series highlighted in our last issue was completely canceled. The equally ambitious public invasives-removal program including NewtonSERVES also went by the wayside. And the highlight of our year when we gather at the annual dinner meeting was postponed at least for now to October 21.

Sadly, we have not been able to partake of many of the usual routines of daily life — movies, sports, restaurants, shopping, religious services, libraries, picnics, parties, weddings, concerts, graduations, and of course for some of us, public meetings at City Hall. It seems like “Zoom” has transformed from a somewhat ancient PBS kids program to an online platform where we spend many hours a day doing what we used to do in person.



*Toadshade, Cold Spring Park*

Yet in these strange times, the need for open space has only become more apparent. It has become our refuge and solace when we can't go about our other regular activities. While playground and court usage have been curtailed, our open spaces have largely remained open to welcome our stressed Newton populace. A recent mobility report for Massachusetts ([https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-05-16\\_US\\_Mobility\\_Report\\_en.pdf](https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-05-16_US_Mobility_Report_en.pdf)) indicated that parks increased 99% in usage during the pandemic! With more time at home, folks are out walking, exploring, and discovering our parks and conservation areas. It has been heartening to see that many are finding these special places with the help of our trail guide (pocket version or online). There are numerous parents with strollers, folks walking their dogs, joggers, and even folks bringing their laptops to park benches!

Getting up early to go birding at Dolan Pond has been my greatest pleasure this spring, noting each arrival of old avian friends either passing through town on migration or taking up residence for the summer. Pete Gilmore's article on the decline in bird population in this issue is very relevant and alarming.

Katherine Howard updates us on invasive efforts and has been leading socially distanced teams even in the face of the pandemic — since the invasives are growing still, and we do not want to lose ground. Much like the old lemons/lemonade saying, Andreae Downs reminds us that if life gives us so much invasive garlic mustard, perhaps we should make pesto out of it! Look for it in your neighborhood and pull it before the seeds spread.

A major initiative in the past year has been trails! Alan Noguee reports on the major trail renovations at Cold Spring Park — what could be called the “Central Park of Newton” — while Ted Chapman discusses the fabulous progress and plans for the Riverside Greenway along the Charles River. With a goal of building and maintaining our local trail systems, we are recruiting a dedicated “Trails Team” or, alternatively, seeking financial support for trails via our established “Trails Fund,” which is already being put to use on the Riverside Trails projects.

Previous foresight on creating open space has made life much better for us in these sad times. After much work and public input, Newton's new Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is nearing completion and will guide us for the next seven years. How valuable open space is to our well being! With the summer approaching, please get out and enjoy our open spaces safely. Please respect these spaces by following the rules and using proper social distancing and masks where appropriate. This too shall pass!

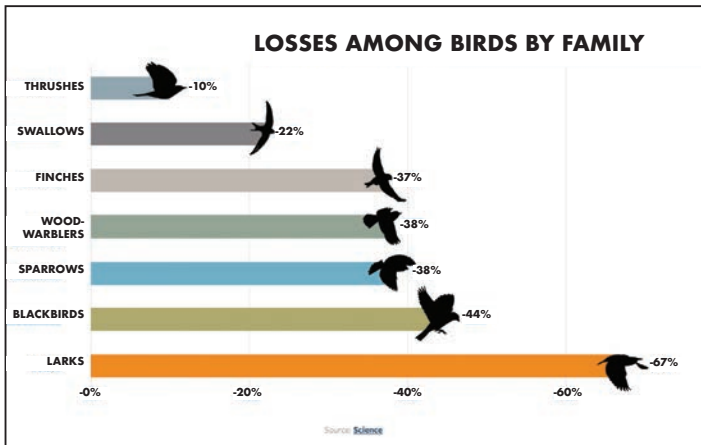
All the best,

*Ted Kuklinski*

Ted Kuklinski  
President, Newton Conservators

# Declining Bird Populations

The publication of the paper “Decline of the North American Avifauna” in the journal *Science* in October of 2019 caused a stir in the press. In this paper authors K.V. Rosenberg et al. document a decline of 29% of the overall bird populations in North America from 1970 through 2018. There have been criticisms of the paper, but none have raised significant challenges to the overall picture.



Losses among birds. From *Science* magazine

The authors note that ornithologists have been using radar to track large-scale bird migrations in North America for years. A 14% decrease in the biomass of birds, recorded on the National Weather Service NEXRAD radar from 2007 through 2017, was reported by Adriaan Dokter in a 2018 report in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*. The most significant declines have been in the eastern half of the United States. This report referred to species such as Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Wood Thrushes, and Indigo Buntings that nest here but go south for the winter.



European starling

A criticism of the 2019 paper notes that the declines in European Starlings and House Sparrows account for 15% of the losses. Since these are introduced species, they

could be of less concern; on the other hand, they associate closely with humans. The cause of their declines is probably not only habitat destruction, but also other factors such as pesticide ingestion and inhalation of pollutants that may be affecting humans as well.

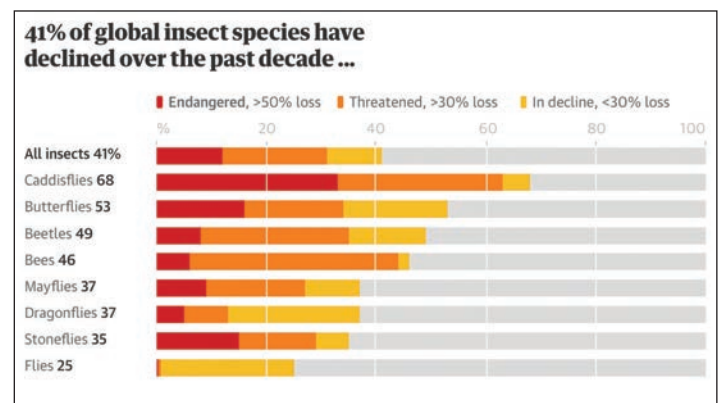
## Effect of Pesticides and Herbicides

Locally, lawn maintenance that uses pesticides and broad-leaf herbicides is having an effect on avian and insect life. Several bird families are present in our neighborhoods only when we allow conditions to be free of toxins. Toxic lawns drive American Robins, a thrush, away, or kill them. The last *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas*, finished in 2013, documented the decline of breeding American Robins in our state, but with some increase in overwintering American Robins from the north. Another local thrush, the Wood Thrush, has experienced a precipitous decline in Massachusetts. The Wood Thrushes, with lovely rising and fluid songs, have almost vanished from Cold Spring Park, where they nested in greater numbers just a few years ago.

Sparrows are seed eaters and pesticides in grass seed will harm them. We often see House Sparrows, for instance, feeding on grass seeds around our streets and yards. This may be part of what is responsible for their decline, referred to in the Rosenberg article earlier. Our lovely Baltimore Orioles are in the blackbird family, which is undergoing a 44% loss currently (see figure losses of birds, upper left). They are insect eaters and breed in Newton. They do poorly when we spray to eliminate moth infestations and kill all insects in the process.

## Loss of insects

In conjunction with these ominous reports, there are now studies on the loss of insect biomass worldwide. Since many birds eat insects, there is a connection. Of course, the loss of insects is a phenomenon with much broader implications than its effect on birds. Pollinators are responsible for much of what we eat, directly or indirectly.



The Guardian graphic. Source: Sánchez-Bayo & Wyckhuys, *Biological Conservation*, 2019 (1)

In the last thirty years the flying insect biomass has declined by more than 75% in German nature preserves. Carl

Hallman's 2017 article in the *PLoS-ONE Journal* (Public Library of Science) fits into the picture that is gradually becoming more complete worldwide. More studies are now underway as the gravity of this problem dawns on us. We don't think much about the loss of bugs and are inclined to believe that such a decline would make the world a more comfortable place. Yes, and no.

### Effects of Climate Change

The recent report by Mass Audubon, "*State of the Birds 2017*," predicts that, in the coming years, our state bird, the Black-capped Chickadee, will vanish from the eastern region of Massachusetts and will be restricted to the higher elevations of the Berkshires and the Worcester hills. The report attempts to predict the effects of climate change on our avifauna. In this vein, the report notes that 305 common bird species in our state now overwinter, on average, 40 miles farther north than in 1966.

"*State of the Birds 2017*" points out that, on average, many plant species here now bloom two weeks earlier than in the recent past. This couples with insect activity on those plants. At the same time, bird species migrating from the south arrive two days earlier than before. Since the timing of nesting is crucial to using insects for feeding young birds, this decoupling of plant blooming and migrant arrival is of concern. Whatever climate change brings, the birds and plants will adjust and so must we.

### Citizens Can Make A Difference

The 2019 Science study looked at 529 species of birds that together comprise 76% of the breeding bird species in the United States and Canada. There were increases in some groups of birds, notably the raptors (after the elimination of DDT) and waterfowl such as ducks and geese. The success of the latter is due to the wetland conservation efforts that were led for years by hunters. These two population



*Eastern Bluebird*

increases show that we can make a difference when we energize enough political will.

The Eastern Bluebird, another thrush, has increased in Massachusetts, due to the efforts

of thousands of people who put up nest boxes for these cheerful and colorful thrushes. This is another example of what can be done on our part with the will to act. Eastern Bluebirds prefer the edges of fields like those that still exist in Nahanton Park, between the upper and lower gardens. The bluebirds were once regular nesters in the boxes there but are now seen there infrequently.

The *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas, 2013* documents that the population of Wild Turkeys is thriving in Massachusetts. They seem comfortable near human habitation, where they are not hunted. Mass Wildlife, the state government bureau, played the principal role in their return. Our local Red-Tailed Hawks have also adapted to human presence and can be seen in Newton, as well as along the highways.

It has become more urgent for all of us to get outdoors more often and become aware of the changes happening right now in our world. The next generations will live in a different world; we need to act locally to send them into the best world possible. The time to act is now.

**Note:** Sources and tables for this article can be found on [NewtonConservators.org/newsletters](http://NewtonConservators.org/newsletters). ♦

✍️ Pete Gilmore

### MISSION

#### Newton Conservators, Inc.

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.

*The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 59 years ago in June 1961.*

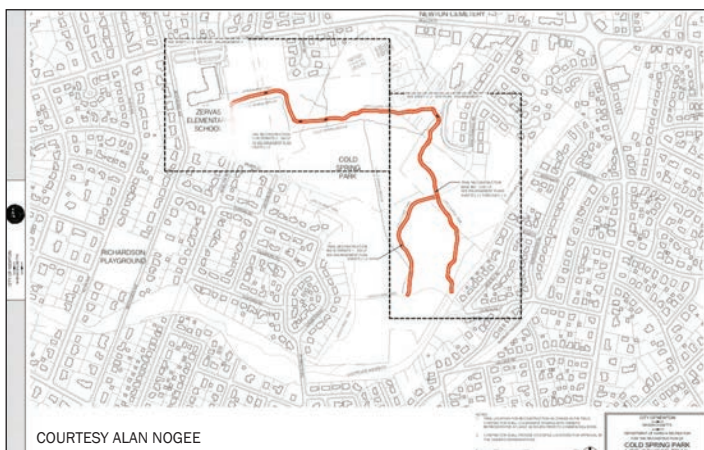


# Cold Spring Park Has a New Look

By Alan Noguee, Park abutter and Founder, Friends of Cold Spring Park

Two years ago, I started a petition to restore the stone dust Life Course trail around Cold Spring Park to its original (1983) condition. The trail, which gets heavy use from walkers, runners, dog-walkers, and people of all ages, had become dangerously eroded. I encountered many stories of injuries from people who had tripped on exposed roots, rocks and landscape fabric. Perpetually muddy sections were everywhere, especially in the wetlands behind the playing fields off of Beacon Street.

More than 400 signatures and a meeting with the Department of Parks & Recreation and Culture later, it was clear that Parks & Rec would be supportive, but that most of the funds for a renovation would have to come from the community.



Phase 1 of the Cold Spring Park trail renovation (both rectangles).

With help from Newton Conservators, I started Friends of Cold Spring Park, with a goal of restoring the trail, and providing more protection for the park ecosystem and wildlife. Invasive plants, especially glossy buckthorn, have taken over approximately 90 percent of the park's understory, preventing germination of the red maple trees that comprise Cold Spring Park's red maple swamp — one of the city's oldest natural areas. Today, it is not clear the red maple swamp can endure, despite heroic efforts by the Newton Conservators to remove buckthorn.



Friends of Cold Spring Park present a check to Newton Mayor Fuller for their share of trail renovations.

Our first project was working with Eagle Scout Alex Rivero, and Boy Scout Troop 109 of Waban, to widen and extend wooden walkways over the muddiest sections of trail. Alex and his dad became key members in our core group, helping get the organization off the ground. Along the way, we helped organize opposition to siting the NewCAL Senior Center in Cold Spring or any other city park.

I cannot thank the Conservators enough for their help, including agreeing to be our fiscal sponsor until we achieved tax-exempt status on our own. Beth Wilkinson provided extensive brainstorming and strategic advice. Katherine Howard acted as our treasurer and continued to coordinate and increase invasive removal projects in Cold Spring Park (and all over the city). Henry Finch, along with Beth and Katherine, provided lots of input at our meetings. Bob Jampol, Bill Joplin, Becky Briesacher, Jon Goldberg, Councilor Andreae Downs, Jenn Martin, and Anndy Danenberg round out our core group, along with the Riveros. The Waban and Newton Highlands Area Council have provided moral support.

Parks & Rec staff members were incredibly helpful with the trail renovation. Stephanie Lapham maintained excellent communication with us and helped keep the project forward. New Open Space Coordinator Luis Perez Demorizi did detailed engineering drawings, specs, and managed the contracting process. Right before the coronavirus shutdowns, we presented a check to the mayor for our share of the project.

In April, we celebrated (via zoom) the completion of Phase I of the trail renovation, covering almost half of the 1.5 mile trail. You can now walk from the Beacon Street parking lot south to the dog park or to the Dunklee Street park entrance, or to the Zervas Elementary School, without mud or tripping hazards. We raised \$25,000 from individual donors, the Krieger Family Trust, and Newton Wellesley Hospital, half of which went to the first phase of trail restoration. We got a lucky break when *Defending Jacob* came to the park to film the AppleTV+ series by that name. At the request of our City Councilors from Wards 5 and 6,





PHOTO: BILL JOPLIN

*Cold Spring park before trail renovation near the bridge by the Beacon Street Parking lot*



PHOTO: BILL JOPLIN

*Cold Spring park after trail renovation*

Mayor Fuller negotiated a \$20,000 location fee to go toward trail restoration. Parks & Rec contributed \$9,000, about half of which came from dog park fees, to provide better access to the dog park.

We've made progress with invasive plants, too. In addition to removing more buckthorn and lots of garlic mustard, we worked with the Conservators to clear most of the small meadow at the intersection of the Life Course with the trail from Beaconwood of invasive Tree of Heaven (ailanthus) that had taken over the meadow. Last fall,



PHOTO: BRUCE WENNING

*Glossy Buckthorn*

we scattered thousands of seeds of local native shrubs and wildflowers, some of which are now starting to come up.

We've helped educate the community about the natural resource value of the park. Sam Jaffe, who grew up next to and exploring the park, and now directs The Caterpillar Lab in Marlborough, New Hampshire, gave a fascinating keynote presentation to our public kickoff meeting last June. Brandeis biologist Eric Olson gave a wonderful public presentation on the red maple swamp at a Green Newton monthly meeting. We also built a website and Facebook

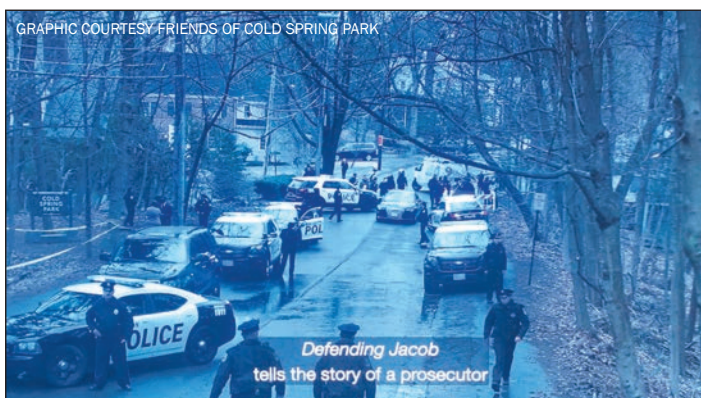
page with lots of information on the park and its many natural and recreational assets.

Last week, we received our 501c3 charitable status from the IRS. Good thing, because we still need to raise about \$60,000 to complete restoration of the trail, including the heavily used but very rocky section of the Cochituate Aqueduct (where a neighbor just tripped and had a bad fall). We intend to develop a park management plan and do more native plant restoration. And we will advocate for permanent protection for this incredible green space in the heart of Newton. Come for a visit some time! And please consider supporting us, along with the Conservators.



*Friends of Cold Spring Park website*

**For more information about the park,** see the Newton Conservators' Spring 2019 newsletter with an article entitled "Cold Spring Park needs some love." [https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/19win\\_cold\\_spring.pdf](https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/19win_cold_spring.pdf) ♦

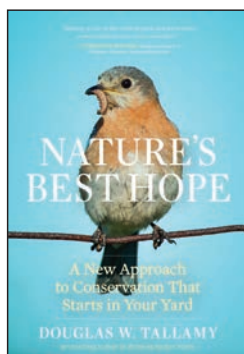


*Apple TV production of Defending Jacob shot partially in Cold Spring Park*



# Invasives Update

With complete indifference to our raging pandemic, garlic mustard is in full bloom; knotweed is pushing up; and summer will bring black swallow-wort vine, doubtless in vastly increased numbers. Such human-introduced non-native invasive plant species, if left unchecked, will degrade biodiversity and lead to decline and local extinction of native plants, insects, and animals (yeah, humans eventually, too, if we are still around).



In the “What Each of Us Can Do” chapter of Dr. Doug Tallamy’s new book *Nature’s Best Hope*, his commandment to “Remove Invasive Species” is second only to “Shrink the Lawn.” (His third is “Plant Keystone Genera,” native plants that support local ecosystems, such as oaks, cherries, asters, goldenrods, and many others.)

A new challenge in the era of Covid-19 has been how to remove invasives while observing safety requirements. NewtonSERVES was cancelled citywide, including our four planned pulls, as were our



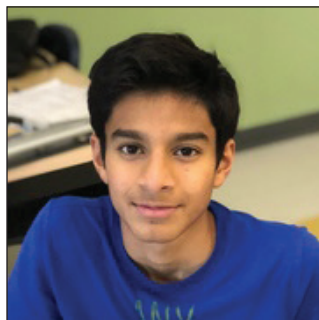
Summer intern Lara Simshauser from the Winsor School

much done as we were pre-Covid, because it is the same group of dedicated people who did that work anyway. The sad aspect is that the group could have been much larger, given all the people at home, experiencing spring and appreciating nature, and seeking fun and meaningful outdoor family activities.

Newton Conservators decided we could not invite new/

subsequent group sessions due to safety concerns. Experienced pullers (those “regulars” to our sessions who also pull on their own) have, however, still been working away; we also show up at the previously scheduled dates and times and work individually, keeping far apart.

An interesting aspect of the Covid impact is that we are getting about as



Summer intern Veer Gadodia from Newton North High School



Garlic Mustard



Japanese Knotweed

biodiversity, including removal of invasives and promotion of native species.

Working to organize the invasives information on our website is intern Veer Gadodia, a wonderful NNHS student volunteering his time and excellent technical website skills. He has been joined for projects, including invasive pulling, by Lara Simshauser, an intern from the Winsor school. Finally, board member Peter Barrer, who has taken on the role of website content manager, oversees the project.

Veer is making great progress, and you will soon be able to see the website updates.

— Katherine Howard

inexperienced people and families to activities where it would have been hard to maintain safety precautions.

We will, however, engage such new people with outreach, improved access to invasives information on our website, and promotion of outdoor exploration and plant identification using resources such as the iNaturalist app. We always encourage people to learn the species around them and to work in their own yards and neighborhoods to remove invasives and to plant natives, and we are available for questions and consultations.

The city has continued to be very supportive and picks up our bags for disposal in a state-authorized invasives dumpster. The city’s new Open Space and Recreation Plan, currently being finalized, has a greatly expanded focus on improved



Black Swallow-wort



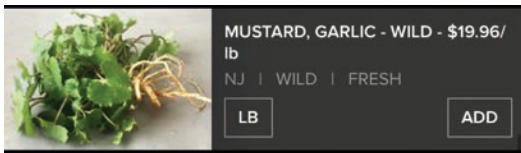
# Eating the Weeds

By Andreae Downs, Newton City Councilor

## “If you can’t beat them, eat them” (att. Euell Gibbons)

In these pandemic times when food delivery and even pickup is a game of chance, my home unit of three has started cooking with the invasive plants we pull.

Many of our invasive plants originally were brought to the United States because they were delectable. Purslane, dandelion, garlic mustard, they all were planted in herb gardens — and then proceeded to take over the landscape.



In fact, when scouting a high-end restaurant-

delivery service, my daughter found that garlic mustard and Japanese knotweed command premium prices! (Remember in Colonial times, salmon and lobster were considered food for the poor?)

If you know a plot of clean land (not somewhere oil or pesticides might have been dumped, for instance), and take proper pandemic precautions (gloves and a mask are a must,

Graphics of garlic mustard and Japanese knotweed courtesy of Andreae Downs

along with the hat and sunscreen), you can supplement the larder and even boost your vitamin intake (as both plants are packed with nutrients).

Garlic mustard, a member of the broccoli family, can be cooked like a more delicate broccoli raab. Friends of Cold Spring Park who attended my fundraiser in February sampled them in “spinach pies” with feta. (They were a hit.)

I have used them instead of spinach in the Indian curry called Saag. You may want to cut them with some actual spinach for a milder version, but we like the additional flavor.

In the Cuisinart with some walnuts, actual garlic cloves, and a splash of olive oil, I’ve made raw garlic mustard into pesto. It’s not a basil pesto, but it works well on pasta or pizza.

Japanese knotweed can be used instead of rhubarb. It is less sour, so you may want to add less sugar. We have baked it into a fruit bread. Euell Gibbons has a recipe for knotweed pie in his book *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* (\$10 on Kindle).

### Tips:

1. Use the tender parts of the plant, the young knotweed shoots, or the tops of the garlic mustard. Throw the roots in the trash, not the compost, to destroy the plant, which we don’t want overtaking our open spaces.
2. Put the parts you plan to eat in a large basin of cold water to clean and freshen. Remove any dead leaves, sticks, and other plants from the basin. Swish the plants around and remove before draining the basin—we use our kitchen sink— to get rid of any grit. Repeat at least once.
3. Mince the remaining clean plants before use—unless you are making pesto. I find there are often tough pieces I have missed, and this method gets a more palatable end-product.
4. When in the spring or summer is each plant best harvested? It’s really when they are big enough, usually just when there are groups doing the garlic mustard pulls.

The season for picking ends soon — but the pesto freezes well, and so do the finished pies. Help a park, and enjoy! ♦

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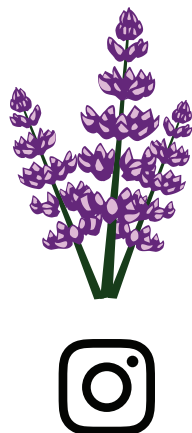
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**Magnolia Warbler**  
*photo by Suzette Barbier*

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