

August News



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Saturday, August 8, 10am-Noon Pony Truss Trail Volunteer Opportunity

Earlier this summer, we alerted you to our Trail Team volunteer opportunity - especially for work on the restored Pony Truss Trail with the Riverside Greenway Working Group. Unfortunately, the MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) was not allowing any volunteer work on its properties due to Covid-19.

Last week, permission was received from DCR for some volunteer work to help with construction of the Pony Truss Trail behind the Riverside MBTA station in Newton. For those who are available, we will meet near the storage container on the old road behind Riverside. This is accessible from the on-ramp to I-95 North from Grove Street. Bear right as you go down the ramp onto the old road.



If you are interested in volunteering or need further information, please contact Larry Smith (larry.lmsmith@gmail.com). Please let him know if you plan to attend this volunteer session 10 am -Noon, on Saturday August 8. You will also need to download and fill out a [release form](#) and email it to Lisa Barstow (DCR) at the address on the top of the form before attending. When filling out the form, the sponsoring group is the Riverside Greenway Working Group and the Start of service is 8/1/20 continuing through 8/31/2020. The form also lists the protective requirements due to Covid (e.g. masks, distancing, tools, and a 2 hour work limit).

If you just want to stop by to learn about the project and perhaps work at a future date, that's great too. Please bring your own tools if possible. Useful tools are: hoe, shovel, garden rake and mattock (a form of pickaxe). In addition, there are numerous invasive plants which we can remove. Long pants are recommended to protect you from poison ivy, which is plentiful.

Crystal Lake and Charles River Water Advisories Issued

Crystal Lake Closed

The city reports that Crystal Lake is unsafe for swimming due to high levels of fecal coliform and e-coli bacteria. No people or pets should have contact with the water. Current bacteria levels can cause illness. The city is posting signs at Crystal Lake indicating that the water is unhealthy.



Water test results obtained Thursday, August 6 from a sample taken at Crystal Lake yesterday, Wednesday, August 5, 2020, indicated high levels of bacteria. The high levels of bacteria may be the result of the recent heavy rain. Resampling has been conducted Thursday, August 6 and the results are expected on Saturday, August 8. The accepted level of E. coli for a single sample is 235 cfu/100 ml or below. The accepted level of fecal coliform is 200 cfu/100 ml or below. (CFU stands for colony-forming units, the unit of measure used for samples like this.) Exact values from August 5, 2020 are pending. It is known the values exceed 600 cfu/100 ml. They will be posted at http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/parks/aquatics/crystal/water_testing.asp

Charles River CyanoBacteria Alert

The city reports that a cyanobacteria bloom (a.k.a., blue-green algae) was observed on Wednesday August 5, 2020, by the Charles River Watershed Association in sections of the Charles River in Newton, Weston and Waltham. Contact with the Charles River in this area is unsafe for people and pets. Cyanobacteria can cause illness. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health will retest the river when the bloom is no longer visible. For general questions about cyanobacteria, contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health: 617-624-5757 or visit mass.gov/dph/algae.

The Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) reports that *"While many may already be aware of the cyanobacteria bloom public health advisory for the Lower Basin of the Charles River between the Mass Ave Bridge and Longfellow Bridge, there is now a confirmed second bloom location in the Lakes District (Newton, Waltham, Weston) of the Charles River, observed between Wares Cove and Fox Island.*



Our Aquatic Scientist, Lisa Kumpf, and interns will closely track the cyanobacteria blooms by collecting water samples and visual observations..... For now, we suggest that the public avoid contact with the water in these areas and rinse off with clean water. Cyanobacteria is extremely toxic to pets as well.

Cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, are bacteria that naturally live in rivers and lakes. The Charles River has had a cyanobacteria bloom in its Lower Basin since June 24, with a brief period of respite last week when the concentration of these organisms temporarily fell below the state's advisory threshold.

This summer we have been experiencing low streamflow due to our current drought status. Temperatures have also remained high. These factors, in addition to intense rainstorms that bring stormwater pollution, create the perfect environment for cyanobacteria to bloom. What's worse: climate change predictions for the Northeast tell us this is only going to get worse if we do not address these issues now."

CRWA provides water quality information for various points along the Charles on their website at <https://www.crwa.org/flagging-program.html>.

To counter the bad news about the Charles, the latest communication from Mayor Fuller reported "Good news for people who walk along the Charles River Pathway System. Newton received a \$56,700 state MassTrails Grant to begin the process of constructing a new, fully accessible Christina Street Bridge over the Charles River just off Needham Street (near the Price Center). The City will provide \$14,700 in matching funds to survey existing conditions and begin a structural review of the current bridge which is in disrepair and closed, leaving a gap in the trail."

Mosquito Alert

Newton's West Nile virus risk has been upgraded to "moderate," along with nearby communities including Boston, Brookline, Watertown, Cambridge, Somerville and others. Based on criteria established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a moderate risk level indicates, "Infection with West Nile virus is likely or has already occurred." (Newton's EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) risk level is "remote," the lowest level.)



Mosquitoes trapped in Newton on July 21 tested positive for West Nile virus. There have been no reports of human or animal West Nile virus (WNV) infection statewide so far this year. WNV is most commonly spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who are infected with WNV (approximately 80%) will have no symptoms.

A smaller number of people who become infected (~ 20%) will have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands. They may also develop a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

- Schedule outdoor events to avoid the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks.
- Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), IR3535 (3-[N-butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid) or oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-menthane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label. More information on choosing and using repellents safely is included in the link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mosquito-repellents>
- Keep mosquitoes out of the house by repairing any holes in screens and making sure they are tightly attached to doors and windows.
- Remove areas of standing water around the house.

Removing Invasive Black Swallow-wort to Help Monarch Butterflies



Monarch on Common Milkweed (the good plant)

Have you seen the pea-like pods of the black-swallow-wort (below) climbing up fences and plants all over Newton? We're asking for your help to remove them. This is what the pods look like now - often they are hiding behind leaves or under shrubs. In another few weeks they will be starting to burst open to spread their seeds in the wind.



Black Swallow-wort seed pods

Why do we care so much about removing these plants?

As you probably know, the population of Monarch butterflies in Massachusetts has declined significantly in the past decade. They, like bees, are important pollinators in our environment. Common milkweed is the only plant that monarch larvae can eat, and loss of meadow habitat in the state has led to a loss of available milkweed to feed the caterpillars.

To make their situation worse, to the female monarch butterflies, black swallow-wort appears to be a fine plant on which to lay their eggs. It is in the same family as common milkweed. However, when the monarch larvae hatch, they do not recognize the plants as food, and they starve to death.

Please look for the black swallow-wort vines, and remove them, or at least their pods.

Look in your yards and the edges of fields, parks and parking lots for this vine with glossy "opposite" leaves (i.e. in pairs) and small purple flowers that turn to pea-like pods hanging down. **Then, dig up, pull up, cut down, or as a last resort just pull off the pods - and get the plants and pods into trash bags and dispose as trash - before the pods burst!**



Black Swallow-wort seed pods bursting - Photo Credit: Larissa Smith

If you aren't familiar with the plant, see the Black Swallow-wort flyer at https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/swallowwort_flyer.pdf

More information is also at the Newton Conservators website: <https://newtonconservators.org/controlling-invasive-plants-lets-start-in-our-own-back-yards/>

Mysterious Seed Packets in the Mail

As if we didn't have enough problems with invasive plants already, people all over the country have been receiving packets of unsolicited seeds. If you receive such a package, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has advice at the following link, <https://www.mass.gov/forms/receipt-of-unsolicited-seeds>, which has instructions on where to send them. They state, "While the exact types of seeds in the packages are unknown, the seeds are thought to be invasive plant species, and not believed to be harmful to humans or pets but could pose a significant risk to agriculture or the environment."



Spotted Lanternfly Lecture Available Online


If you missed the invasive Spotted Lanternfly program by Josh Bruckner of the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources in June, you can watch [a video of the program](#) on the Conservators' YouTube Channel. The pretty but very destructive pest is not in Massachusetts yet but is working its way north from Pennsylvania. See Massachusetts Natural Resources website for more [information on the Spotted Lanternfly](#).



Summer 2020 Newsletter

Our summer newsletter has been published and mailed to members and is also available online at <https://newtonconservators.org/newsletters/>. This issue contains some great articles:

on the Riverside Greenway, declining bird populations, Cold Spring Park, Invasives in Newton, and even recipes using invasive plants!



NEWSLETTER

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

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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 Trail

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 Goose 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-

Beginning in 2017 with a design study of the Two Bridges Trail between Newton Lower Falls and the Riverside Depot Tunnel, the RGWG is a coalition of local trail advocates, including Newton Conservators, like 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 Mass Trails. 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 Lyon Field and the Treville 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.

ALL GRAPHICS COURTESY OF TED CHAPMAN, RIVERSIDE GREENWAY WORKING GROUP

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Inspiration in Covid Times



Buttonbush Flower (No - it's not Covid 19!)



Summer Raspberries



Early Morning - Dolan Pond Conservation Area



Sculptures in the Park

PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

We would be very grateful for your continued support by joining Newton Conservators or 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, Friends of Houghton Garden, 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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