



**NEWTON
CONSERVATORS**

WINTER ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

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

NEWTONCONSERVATORS.ORG • WINTER 2020-2021

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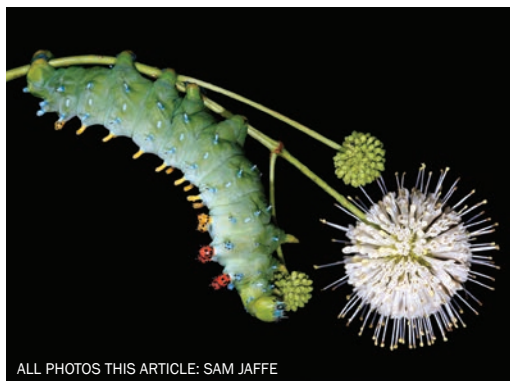
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Arriving at the Whole Story



ALL PHOTOS THIS ARTICLE: SAM JAFFE

Left to right: Cecropia Giant Silk Moth, Hyalophora cecropia: found on buttonbush, Boston MA. Elm Sphinx, Ceratomia amyntor: Mimic of dried elm leaves, found at Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge, Harvard MA. Abbott's Sphinx, Sphecodina abbottii: False-eye and grape-patterns, found in Newton, MA on fox grape.

My name is Sam Jaffe, and I founded The Caterpillar Lab — an educational outreach, art, and science non-profit organization that uses native caterpillars and their stories to engage and inspire the public with their own, local, and ecologically important creatures. The Caterpillar Lab is a fluid thing, constantly changing as we learn from our audiences and our creatures alike. I would like to share with you a little about how my work, my perspectives, and The Caterpillar Lab's goals have shifted over the years and present a short piece that demonstrates how we now understand our caterpillars and how we hope to challenge our audiences to see the natural world in a new way.

Twelve years ago, my work was only caterpillars. But much has changed over the last decade. When I started photographing and educating with these charismatic insects, my attention was squarely focused on the caterpillar as an object, a moment in time, something beautiful, curious, and unexpected. My images of caterpillars, which highlighted their impressive camouflage,

bright warning colors, or strange inflatable tails and false eye-spots drew people in, sparked interest and imagination. But today, caterpillars represent so much more to me. From working so closely with these insects for so long, from rearing over five hundred species and countless thousands of individuals, and from bringing them to meet audiences every spring, summer, and fall, the world of caterpillars has exploded in size.

A caterpillar is indeed beautiful and inspiring on its own; I will never tire of them as individual characters that deserve our attention just for being... awesome! But a caterpillar also represents something much bigger, and much more meaningful. At the Lab, we have seen caterpillars grow, shed, pupate, and emerge as adults, we have gathered a seemingly endless variety of host plants to supply for our specialist feeders, and we have witnessed time and time again as parasitoid wasps and flies have fed on our caterpillars internally, emerged, and moved through their own cycles of growth and reproduction.

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The whole story of a caterpillar's life and influence in the natural world is an endless one — one that I now hope to tell and promote through The Caterpillar Lab. As you will read, that story is not always easy to witness, and it is not always beautiful on its surface. The whole story represents something beautiful; an endless series of relationships traveling up, down, and across food webs that redefine caterpillars as more than simple, isolated organisms. *Caterpillars are at the center of it all, consuming and passing on energy and balancing the ecological world.*

A caterpillar's whole story can teach us so much: the crucial importance of biodiversity, the threat of rapid environmental change, and the incredible, nearly inconceivable scope of the world around us. It is a story that is important to tell, a story that challenges, and a story that The Caterpillar Lab now champions. *Twelve years ago, my work was only caterpillars. Today, my work is the entirety of the ecological world, with my caterpillars standing front and center.*

As you read through the following piece, I hope you begin to see the scope of this story with the same eyes that I do and embrace the challenges it presents.

Beautiful. This is beautiful.

No more apologies. No more excuses. If we value the natural world, we must accept the importance, the meaning, and the beauty of moments like this one. A natural interaction. An ending and a beginning. Energy passed on, changed, and repurposed. If we are naturalists, birders, gardeners, walkers, lovers of any particular small corner of the ecological world, then we owe it to what we love to

recognize what an image like this one truly represents.

A web of connections. The smallest, most insignificant things made infinite through all they come to represent. In isolation, a creature is just an object. Placed in its environment, using and being used, a creature becomes more. It is the seed of pollination, of migration, of diversity, of sustenance, and resilience. A creature



Speared Dagger, Acronicta hasta, playing host to an Aleiodes parasitoid wasp. After consuming the caterpillar from the inside, the wasp larva turns the body of its host into its cocoon, earning it the name mummy-making wasp. This species is host specific and uses only a few species of dagger.



Dolba Sphinx, Dolba hyloeus, playing host to multiple Microgastrine parasitoid wasps. The wasp larvae feed on the caterpillar internally, emerge, and spin their silk cocoons upon the caterpillar's back. Also pictured is a green Pteromalid hyperparasitoid wasp that emerged from one of the Microgastrine wasp cocoons. A wasp for a wasp for a caterpillar. These likely use only a few species of sphinx caterpillars.

rot. But these actions build so perfectly upon and across each other. Native organisms interacting in strange, wonderful, gruesome, close, so-close-it's-gross ways are what build, nourish, and sustain everything we value in the natural world.

So today I feel like being bold. When it comes to native and balanced organisms in our environment... it is not okay to hate a wasp. It is not okay to turn away from an unpleasant moment. To play favorites. Because that is not how the natural world works. That is not how ecology



Brown Angle Shades caterpillar, Phlogophora meticulosa, with a cluster of ectoparasitoid Eulophid wasp larvae. These wasps are more broadly generalized and use many early spring feeding caterpillars as hosts. As with all parasitoids, the caterpillar does not survive the encounter.

can be pretty in isolation, but in the talons of a raptor, or buzzing in the calyx of a bloom, or feeding on a leaf, or in the body of its host, it is simply radiant.

The natural world can indeed turn stomachs on occasion. It can shock and sting and devour and

works. That is not how evolution works. All of the things we love are here because it is ALL here. All interacting, using, winning, losing, breeding, dying, decomposing, bleeding, and transferring energy in a magnificent never-ending web that is as hard to hold in our minds as an infinite universe or the beginning of time.

The bees and the butterflies. The birds and the bugs. They are MORE because of a moment like this. They are here because of moments like this. Do you

celebrate the colors, characters, and diversity of plants? Then there is no choice but to celebrate the same in the caterpillars which have shaped them and that balance them. Do you celebrate the colors, characters, and diversity of caterpillars? Then there is no choice but to celebrate the same in the parasitoid wasps which have shaped them and that balance them.

Spend this next spring and summer following the threads of connection. Be a naturalist investigator. I trust you will

come to the same conclusion we have. There is only a myth of isolation. Every single native creature out there is a super organism made bigger and more beautiful through what it takes and provides than it could ever be on its own. So be shocked. Be grossed out. But don't miss how beautiful this is.

How beautiful it ALL is. ♦

☞ Sam Jaffe, Director - *The Caterpillar Lab*
172 Main St. (Route 101), Marlborough NH, 03455

Annual Meeting

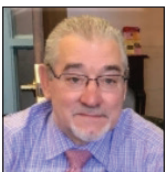
After months of pandemic cocooning, the Newton Conservators emerged to talk all about caterpillars and moths at their 59th Annual Meeting.

Originally scheduled for May 6 at American Legion Post 440, the dinner-free gathering was held virtually on October 21. But while the dinner was gone, "free" also meant more as the Conservators threw open the virtual doors and invited the general public in to enjoy the festivities.

Featured was Newton's own caterpillar expert, Sam Jaffe. Jaffe, Director of The Caterpillar Lab, presented "Caterpillars: The Whole Story." The multimedia presentation used photos and a live microscope to explore butterflies, moths, plants, parasitoids, and the many caterpillars positioned at the center of it all (see Sam Jaffe's article "Arriving at the Whole Story" above).

As is traditional at the annual dinner meeting, the Conservators made awards in three categories to people or groups who have advanced the cause of open space conservation in Newton.

Directors' Awards are given each year to individuals or groups who have made a significant contribution to the preservation of open space in Newton. This year the Conservators honored three city employees who, as Conservators' President Ted Kuklinski observed, are more than employees. "I consider them friends, and friends of open space."

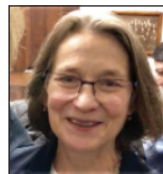


Bob DeRubeis: In the course of 32 years, DeRubeis, the recently retired Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Commissioner, worked for five Newton mayors. The Conservators recognized DeRubeis, "In gratitude for his many decades of stewardship to our Garden City parkland in his

leadership roles with the Newton Parks and Recreation Department."



Alice Ingerson: Long-time Community Preservation Committee Program Manager Ingerson notably oversaw the proposed use of CPA funds to assist in the acquisition of Webster Woods. The Award comes "In gratitude for her role in shepherding so many of our open space related Community Preservation Act projects through the government process."



Ouida Young: As City Solicitor, now retired, Young served on the Webster Woods Advisory Panel for Newton's most significant open space acquisition in a decade. The Conservators acknowledged her "In gratitude for her role in clearing the legal hurdles for open space projects over decades as Solicitor in the Newton Law Department."



The Charles Johnson Maynard Award is given each year to recognize efforts "to improve biodiversity, habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection." Charles Johnson Maynard was a well-known naturalist, ornithologist, author, and publisher who was born and lived in Newton from 1845 until his death in 1929. The 2020 award was presented to **Alan Noguee**, the Founder of Friends of Cold Spring Park.

Noguee, a long-time Newton resident, has had a 40-year career working to clean up our energy system. He spent 17 years with the Union of Concerned Scientists, as the Clean Energy Program Director and Director of Climate & Energy Strategy & Policy. He drafted the original Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard Bill and led

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the environmental and consumer coalition that won its passage in 1997. The Conservators singled out Nogee “For his leadership and tireless efforts to establish and lead the Friends of Cold Spring Park, raising public awareness and support to protect and enhance this large, diverse, and beloved open green space.”



The Webster Woods Team

Row 1: Rory Altman, Councilor Lisle Baker, Peter Barrer, Suzanne Berne, Dan Brody

Row 2: Kathy Cade, Suzanne Carleo, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Alissa Giuliani, Jeff Goldman

Row 3: Barney Heath, Ken Kimmel, Rebecca Mayne, Eric Olson, Richard Primack

Row 4: Steve Small, Jennifer Steel, Beth Wilkinson, Jonathan Yeo, Onida Young

significant accomplishment, which will be enjoyed by many generations of people to come (and the plants and creatures that live in the woods), was accomplished through a combination of political skill, legal expertise, political acumen, financial and land-use analysis, the ability to communicate scientific knowledge in a clear and engaging way, and just plain hard work by many. The Conservators note with pride that then-president Beth Wilkinson chaired the Webster Woods Advisory Panel, and two other board members and three advisers served on it.

Environmentalists of the Year:

The Environmentalist of the Year Award, first presented in 1981, goes to the individual or group that has made the greatest contribution to the protection of Newton's environment. Through incredible teamwork that started in earnest in the summer of 2015, the Conservators noted, Webster Woods officially was saved as city-owned open space in perpetuity in December 2019. That

It's not every year that the Mayor takes the microphone at Annual Meeting, but Mayor Ruthanne Fuller “Zoomed” in to accept the award on behalf of all those awarded Environmentalist of the Year.

“There's something stunning about the word ‘perpetuity,’ the Mayor reflected.” Because of this large group of people, I think all of us should feel really good that in perpetuity Webster Woods is going to be there for all of us to have for generations and generations and generations of Newtonians”

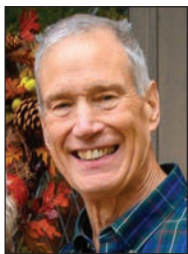
The Conservators also paused to take sad note of the deaths of two former Directors. The world was a different place on February 15 when Deborah Voss Howard lost her battle with Alzheimer's disease. A former state deputy undersecretary for environmental affairs, Deb served the Conservators as both a director and an advisor. She also sat on the board of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and served on the Newton Conservation Commission and the Urban Tree Commission. In 2011 Deb and her husband Frank received a Directors' Award for their lifetime of service to the Conservators, to conservation and to Newton.

On June 30 former Board member Octo Barnett passed away after a long illness. Octo, a pioneer in medical informatics, and his wife, Sarah, were early active members of the Conservators and were enthusiastic attendees at our annual meetings. Octo's activity, while he was on the board of directors during 2009-13, focused on the Webster Conservation Area. The Conservators remain mindful of Octo's insistence on the need to maintain conservation restrictions on City properties.

Next year's Annual Dinner Meeting — our 60th! — now is scheduled for Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at American Legion Post 440. On that date we plan to celebrate this year's award recipients in person. Possibly with real caterpillars and butterflies! ♦

— Margaret Doris

Duane Hillis



We are sad to report that our former board member, Duane Hillis, passed away on November 3. Duane was President of the Friends of Nahanton Park for 30 years and received our Environmentalist of the Year Award in 2016 as part of the Woodcock Meadow team. He had received the same award in 2006 for his instrumental work on the CPA acquisition of Angino Farm (now Newton Community Farm). He was also the force behind our video open-space advocacy with the Environmental Show on NewTV, where he produced our first episode on “Saving Newton's Last Farm.” Duane was truly a force both of and for nature and a conservator in the truest sense of the word.

History of Newton Parks, Playgrounds & Recreation:

1. The Prequel

Editor's Note: This article begins a series to be run in the newsletter in the coming year about the history of Newton parks. The references for this article will appear in the online version. Be sure to look at the Parks, Playgrounds and Recreation chronology elsewhere in this issue to review the scope of this history.

Parks and playgrounds in Newton have their roots in several waves of immigrants involved in the German gymnastic movement beginning in the early 1800s. These influences blend with both the aesthetic parks movement of the late 1800s and the child-centered playground movement of the early twentieth century, which in Newton culminates in the formation of the Playground Commission in 1912.

The story begins in 1806 during Napoleon's incursions into Prussia. A young linguist, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, happened to see the defeat of Frederick William III at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt.¹ Consequently Prussia was humiliated, lost half her territory, and fell under the hegemony of France.² Jahn wrote an influential book on *German Nationality* expressing his passion for the German culture and the desire to see the various German states independent of Napoleon and unified as a nation.¹ Jahn saw gymnastics as a way of developing men fit for a resurgent military Prussia, which gave rise to the German gymnastics (Turnverein) movement.^{3-4, 5-7}

After the fall of Napoleon, the King of Prussia no longer agreed with Jahn, who became a political prisoner. Prisoners as well were three of his followers, Charles Follen, Charles Beck, and Franz Lieber, who (with the help of the Marquis de Lafayette) emigrated to New England in 1825. Charles Beck was hired as the first teacher of physical education in the US at the Round Hill School, Northampton, MA.^{2,10} Charles Follen became the first German Studies professor at Harvard and initiated the first college gymnasium in the US and first outdoor public gymnasium in Boston. Franz Lieber succeeded Follen as director of the Boston Gymnasium and established the first swimming school and the first public swimming pool in the US.^{11,12}

The post-Napoleon German immigration to the US brought many Turnvereiners, who established gymnastic societies all over America.^{8,14,4} After the Civil War, the



PHOTO: COURTESY OF JACKSON HOMESTEAD

Youngsters performing a Turnverein-style gymnastic feat at Victory Field, 1935

movement evolved into more of a physical education culture interacting with other immigrant groups, particularly the Swedish around Boston, who brought their own systems of exercises.³⁻⁴ The new Turners persistently advocated for physical education and fitness and successfully lobbied local school boards to include physical education and

school gymnasiums in the curriculum. Turner instructors served as PE directors in many school systems in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.^{2,4,14}



PHOTO: COURTESY OF JACKSON HOMESTEAD

Arbor Day at Nathaniel T. Allen's English and Classical School in West Newton.

In 1860, Newton was the site of the first indoor gymnasium in America, when Diocletian Lewis invented and taught a system of calisthenics for those not already

physically fit, including women, at Nathaniel T. Allen's English and Classical School (today's Allen House)¹⁵ in West Newton. The next year, Lewis founded the first school for training physical education teachers, the Normal Institute for Physical Education, in Boston.¹⁶⁻²⁰ The second was that of the North American Turnerbund, which opened in New York in 1866.¹⁷ In 1889, Mrs. Mary Hemenway founded the Boston Normal School for (Swedish) Gymnastics, which taught female public school instructors¹⁷ (with nine exceptions, one of which we shall see) and eventually became part of Wellesley College.²¹⁻²²

Note: Sources and tables for this article can be found online at NewtonConservators.org/newsletters.

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Parks, Playgrounds and Recreation Chronology

- 1726:** Newton Centre Green established.
- 1811:** Friedrich Ludwig Jahn founds the German Gymnastic Movement. Beck, Follen & Lieber were followers of Jahn.
- 1825:** Charles Beck hired as first teacher of physical education in US at Round Hill School, Northampton, MA.
- 1826:** Beck establishes first outdoor gymnasium in US at Round Hill School.
- 1826:** Charles Follen becomes first teacher of German and starts first college gymnasium in US at Harvard and first outdoor public gymnasium in Washington Gardens in Boston.
- 1827:** Franz Lieber succeeds Follen as director of the Boston Gymnasium and establishes the first swimming school and first public swimming pool in the US.
- 1845:** Kenrick Park established in Newton Corner.
- 1847:** Walnut Park established in Newton Corner.
- 1848:** First Turnverein (German Gymnastics Association) formed, in Cincinnati.
- 1851:** First YMCA formed, in Boston.
- 1852:** Newton Tree Club organized by J.F.C. Hyde – first improvement association in US.
- 1860:** Dioclesian Lewis develops and teaches gymnastics for women at the Nathaniel T. Allen house in West Newton.
- 1861:** Edward Hitchcock appointed director of hygiene and physical culture at Amherst. Develops the Hitchcock system of gymnastics.
- 1861:** Boston Normal Institute for Physical Education founded by Diocletian Lewis.
- 1864:** Catherine Beecher and Dio Lewis collaborate on further developing calisthenics at school for girls in Lexington, MA.
- 1868:** Washington Park constructed in Newtonville.
- 1875:** August Hemenway gives the Hemenway Gymnasium to Harvard.
- 1875:** Newton Board of Park Commissioners formed at the behest of the Newton Horticultural Society to lay out city parks.
- 1879:** Dudley A. Sargent is appointed assistant professor of physical training at Harvard and becomes director of the Hemenway Gymnasium.
- 1881:** Sargent becomes director of the Normal School of Physical Training in Cambridge, Ma. In 1916, this becomes the Sargent School for Physical Education.
- 1882:** Newton City Council establishes first standing committee on parks. State Legislature authorizes Newton to take land for parks and squares.
- 1883:** Farlow Park donated to Newton.
- 1883:** YMCA Training School started at Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1885:** Boston Women's Club establishes Boston Sand Gardens for children following suggestion by Dr. Marie Zakrzewska after her visit to Berlin.
- 1889:** Newton Centre Playground established.
- 1889:** Mrs. Mary Hemenway and Baron Nils Posse introduce Swedish Gymnastics and establish the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics.
- 1889:** Boston Conference in the Interest of Physical Training decides on calisthenics for schools.
- 1890:** Newton Centre Improvement Association and City provide funds for Newton Centre Playground.
- 1891:** Edward M. Hartwell, the first historian of physical education, is named supervisor of physical education for Boston. Develops calisthenics for schools.
- 1891:** Basketball invented at YMCA College in Springfield, Massachusetts, now called Springfield College.
- 1893:** Ernst Hermann enrolls at Boston Normal School of Gymnastics.
- 1894:** Auburndale, Lower Falls and Cabot Parks established. Moses G. Crane of Newton Highlands invents Pushball for the Newton Athletic Assoc.

- 1896:** Volleyball invented at YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts.
- 1898:** Joseph Lee, a Boston philanthropist, creates the Columbus Avenue model playground and documents its use and benefits.
- 1906:** Playground Association of America formed with Joseph Lee as its president.
- 1908:** First “traditional playground” with gymnastic equipment was installed in Boston, on Tremont Street (formerly Washington Gardens).
- 1908:** Massachusetts Playground Law passed through leadership of Joseph Lee.
- 1908:** Newton Forestry Department created.
- 1909:** Upper Falls and West Newton Playgrounds added.
- 1912:** Newton Playground Commission formed.
- 1912:** Ernst Hermann becomes first Superintendent of Playgrounds in Newton.
- 1913:** Edmands family donates Edmands Park.
- 1916:** Ernst Hermann begins teaching at the Sargent School for Physical Education.
- 1924:** The Newton Playgrounds’ “American League” adult baseball league starts.
- 1929:** Sargent School for Physical Education becomes part of Boston University with Ernst Hermann as its first director and, later, dean.
- 1929:** Newton Theological Institution donates Thompsonville (Bowen) Playground.
- 1930:** Crystal Lake Bathhouse completed. Cold Spring Park purchased. Claflin Park formed.
- 1930:** Playground Association of America becomes the National Recreation Association.
- 1939:** Newton Playground Commission becomes the Newton Recreation Commission.
- 1941:** Albemarle Park developed from the defunct Albemarle Golf Course.
- 1952:** Newton North Little League chartered by Little League Baseball.
- 1954:** Newton Parks Commission formed.
- 1961:** Newton Conservators founded to advocate for open space in Newton.
- 1962:** Handicapped Day Camp begun.
- 1964:** Gath Pool constructed.
- 1964:** The National Recreation Association merges with four other organizations to form the National Recreation and Parks Association.
- 1973:** Newton’s Arts in the Parks started.
- 1975:** Newton Special Needs Program begun.
- 1980:** New Cold Spring Park (Beacon St. side) developed.
- 1980:** Farmer’s Market begun at Cold Spring Park.
- 1981:** Newton Commonwealth Golf Course formed.
- 1982:** Newton Recreation Commission absorbs the Parks Commission to become the Parks & Rec Commission. The Forestry Dept. is absorbed into the new Dept. of Parks & Rec.
- 1982:** Kennard Park and house donated.
- 1987:** Nahanton Park formed from the Almshouse and Working Boys Home properties.
- 1990:** Newton Tree Advisory Task Force (Tree Commission) created.
- 2001:** Newton accepts the Community Preservation Act (CPA).
- 2008:** CPA funds used to buy 0.2 acres and conservation restriction on Crystal Lake.
- 2009:** Newton’s first off-leash dog park designated in old Cold Spring Playground.
- 2017:** Newton Highlands (Joseph Lee) Playground renovated with CPA funds.
- 2019:** Newton Parks and Recreation Department renamed Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. ♦

Michael Clarke

Thank you, AnnaMaria Abernathy

AnnaMaria Abernathy retired from the Conservators' Executive Committee as of the annual meeting on October 21. Fear not: she is **not** leaving the Board of Directors. However, this is a good juncture at which to share some of the important work she has done (so far) for Newton Conservators and the mission of conservation in our city.

AnnaMaria served as Secretary since 2003. Board member Dan Brody provides a great analysis of her work in that role:

"AnnaMaria has three qualities that have made her an outstanding board secretary: 1) exhaustive knowledge of conservation issues in Newton; 2) skill at accurately capturing on paper the arcane details of board motions and the sometimes rambling thoughts expressed by board members during meetings; and 3) fortitude in maintaining a high level of attention throughout loooooong board meetings."



AnnaMaria's service to Newton Conservators goes far beyond her work as Secretary. In the late 1960s and 70s, AnnaMaria was instrumental in preserving 13 acres of what had been the historic Norumbega Park, now the Norumbega Park Conservation Area in Auburndale.

AnnaMaria was president of Newton Conservators from 1984 to 1986. During that time, a series of Land Use Forums were held, and the Conservators weighed in on important land use decisions – including the development of what is now Nahanton Park, the Lacy Estate (now the Ledgebrook condos), and the Capasso development adjoining Cold Spring Playground.

In the early 90s, AnnaMaria worked on the boards of both the Newton Conservators and the Newton League of Women Voters to develop standards that strengthened the environmental mission of the Parks and Recreation Commission and set standards for land acquisition. As a result of that work, in 1993 she received both the League's Jane Leighton Award and the Newton Conservators' Environmentalist of the Year award (for land-use activism).

AnnaMaria and husband, Fred, also saved Newton from losing open space to additional cell towers when they shared a study by Harvard students that showed that existing structures were sufficient.

These are only a few highlights from the decades that AnnaMaria has devoted to saving open space in Newton. In addition to accomplishing so much, AnnaMaria is a wonderful friend and colleague. Her unwavering support and high standards make us all better.

Everyone who enjoys our parks and conservation areas all across Newton can thank AnnaMaria for her work to preserve them. Look for her out walking the trails, especially in her beloved Auburndale. ♦

— Beth Wilkinson

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.

The Newton Conservators' Newsletter® is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and March. Deadlines for these issues are the second Friday of the month before the issue is published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to articles@newtonconservators.org. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Sam Jaffe, Michael Clarke, Margaret Doris & Pete Gilmore.

President's Message

This will certainly be a holiday season like none other with all the disruption of family gatherings due to Covid. In addition to the usual winter coats, hats, gloves, and scarfs, face masks are now *de rigueur* winter fashion, but at least they help keep your face warm! All the better to get outside to experience the frosty wonder of a New England winter, perhaps interspersed with a few unseasonable bouts of summer-like warm days. The arrival and distribution of an effective Covid vaccine will be a source of great thanksgiving for all of us.

With our fall walk series canceled this year in the interest of safety, walks coordinator Beth Wilkinson contacted some of our knowledgeable walk leaders to see if a pivot to the virtual world instead of the physical was possible. Thus was born our first ever fall webinar series, where we learned about butterflies, invasives, freshwater pond life, fall birds at Cold Spring Park, ferns, and turkeys. Beth hosted and handled Q&A duties, and Barbara Bates handled the technical details and coordinated Zoom details. Attendance far exceeded expectations and attendee feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with some noting the ease of seeing the presentation details better than at an in-person lecture. And for those who could not attend in real time, we are posting the webinars on our YouTube channel (tinyurl.com/video-conservators) for viewing at leisure.

Our 59th annual meeting also took place virtually October 21st, having been postponed from last May. Thanks so much to our wonderful meeting sponsors: *Paddle Boston, Lucy Stair, Village Bank, Larry Burdick, Willis Wang, and the Crystal Lake Conservancy*. We are grateful again to our dedicated board members (this time ratified via Zoom based poll) and esteemed advisors for their continued service.

It was surprising how much we accomplished as an organization despite the Covid situation. After Webster Woods, we turned our attention to working on new trails along the Charles River with the Riverside Greenway Working Group. The Pony Truss Trail has recently been completed, and there is additional financial support for other Greenway sections from the Riverside project. Houghton Garden has a new accessible path section and is being hydro-raked to prevent flooding and eutrophication as it had become badly overgrown. Volunteer invasive teams continued working through the pandemic even in the face of our public sessions being shut down. Our Dexter Woods hillside park received a lot of attention with invasive removal and restoration native plantings. We continue monitoring conservation restrictions (CRs) at numerous properties, and others are in the process of being completed with the city for Webster and Kessler Woods.

We continue to provide open space outreach through our website (featuring a new section on invasives), this newsletter, our frequent e-Bulletin, and expanded social media via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and now even Tik-Tok! Our long-standing grants program is accepting applications for open space related projects in Newton. And we have recently formed a "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" team dedicated to the continuing goal of making our open spaces and organization welcoming to all.

At the annual meeting, we also were able to announce this year's awards: Directors' Awards (Bob DeRubeis, Alice Ingerson, Ouida Young), Charles Maynard Award (Alan Noguee), and Environmentalists of the Year (the large Webster Woods team). We regret very much not being able to do this in person and hope to be able to do so at our meeting next spring. Thanks especially to the Webster Woods team for this major open space accomplishment that will keep this land as open space in the city forever. And Sam Jaffe delighted the audience with his wonderful caterpillar tales of nature connectedness. Elsewhere in this issue, you can also see Sam's inspiring article, an account of awards, some early history of our newly monikered Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department, a Charles River birding guide, and an appreciation of AnnaMaria Abernathy's long term of service as a Newton Conservator.

Watch for our renewal letter in the mail with a more complete update on our activities this past year. A gift membership, trail guide, or our almanac, all make great gifts during this holiday season. We always welcome new volunteers to help with our mission of preserving and protecting our open spaces. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthful 2021 — it can only get better! Please go out and enjoy the wonderful open spaces of Newton.

All the best,

Ted Kuklinski

Ted Kuklinski

President, Newton Conservators

Birding Along the Charles River in the Winter of Covid-19

Editor's Note: This article will have a Conservator website version that will amplify descriptions in this article including maps and many e-bird references.

There are seven places along the Charles River in Newton (one is across the river in Needham) where you may walk on level, paved paths, and enjoy the river, birds, and whatever surprises turn up. Birding in the time of Covid-19, however, involves some planning ahead. Wear a mask; keep your distance; and do not share optics with people not in your “bubble.” Choose to look at birds in places and at times that are not filled with throngs of people near you on narrow paths.

Useful maps for the places described in this article can be found on the Newton Conservators' web site <https://newtonconservators.org/> and may be downloaded and printed. Google maps, in satellite mode, can also be helpful.

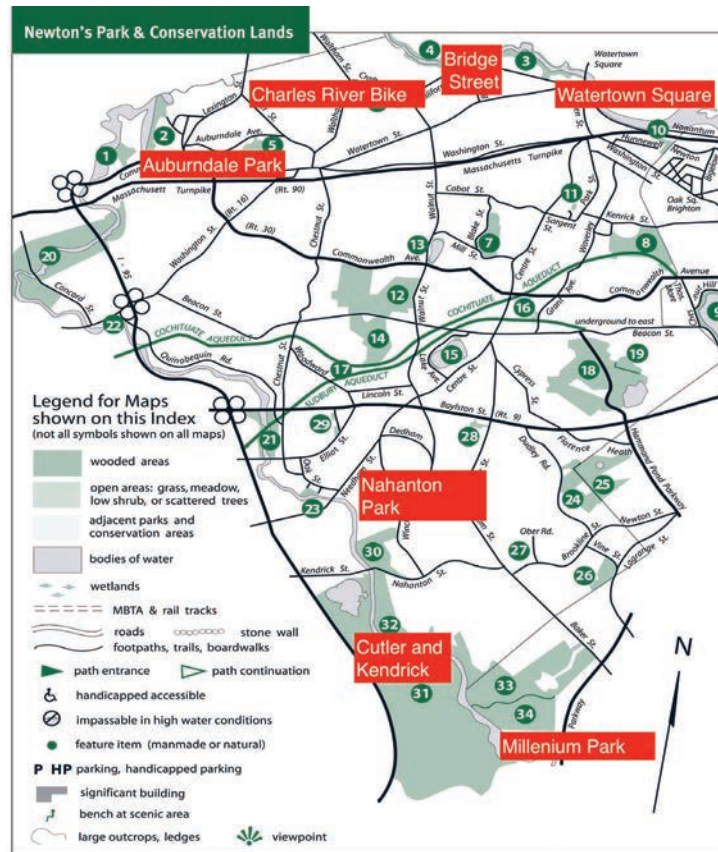
Watertown Square to Millennium Park: The span of locations in this article goes from Watertown Square along the Charles River to Millennium Park in West Roxbury. The images in this article give a sample of birds one can expect



Common Goldeneye

to see along the Charles River in the winter. The online version of this article will contain “hot web links” that will give additional background information.

Watertown Square to Bridge Street: One can walk both sides of the river from Galen Street at Watertown Square to Bridge Street. You might choose to walk one side for part of this distance, and return on the other side of the



river, eliminating parking two cars, and, more importantly, not boxing yourself into carpooling, another unwise action in Covid-19 time. There is parking along California Street in Newton or off Pleasant Street in Waltham.

The Watertown Dam usually attracts some Herring Gulls and perhaps a Ring-bill or Great Black-backed Gull. From the footbridge just upstream from the dam, one often sees mallards, cormorants, and herons. As you proceed upriver, there are two viewing platforms that jut out into the water, one on each side of this stretch of river.

Charles River Bike Path: You may access more such reports

by googling “eBird,” going to “explore” on the drop-down menu obtained by clicking on the little bars in the upper right of the screen and scrolling down to “explore Hotspots;” the correct name of this hotspot is “Charles River Bike Path, Waltham.” Click on “view details” and scroll down to see a report with an appropriate date. Then

click on that date to see the checklist of species seen.



Great Blue Heron

Bridge Street to Elm Street: A second stretch of the river goes from Bridge Street to Elm Street. You have to walk on one

side of the river for part of this distance, and switch sides of the river a few times to keep going as there are not duplicate paths here.



Hairy Woodpecker



Yellow-rumped Warbler

bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-rumped Warblers, hawks, and various small woodland birds of the Massachusetts' winter.

Abutting the Forest Grove area is the Flowed Meadow area of Auburndale. This fourth area is merely another option for walking and looking at what is around you with some care. Parking is available at the end of West Pine Street in Auburndale.

Nahanton Park: A fifth place for birding, and one of the best in Newton throughout the year, is Nahanton Park off Winchester Street. One can drive in from Winchester



White-throated Sparrow

Street and park or go around the right turn onto Nahanton Street and turn to the right, just before the bridge across the river and then park near the nature center. There are nice walking trails here. There are lower and upper

Auburndale Park: We now consider the area along the river at Forest Grove in the Auburndale village of Newton. One can park around the circle at the end of Forest Grove Road, a continuation of Woerd Avenue. In the Forest Grove and Purgatory Cove area, you are in a more wooded environment. You are more likely to see three species of woodpecker here, including Hairy, Downy and Red-

Cutler Park and Kendrick Pond: Across the river on Kendrick Street in Needham are Cutler Park and Kendrick Pond. There are longer trails here than in the previously described areas. A selection of birds you can expect to find here includes Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Gadwall, Mallards, American Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Mourning Dove, Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and the American Robin.

Millenium Park: The final area is Millennium Park, sometimes crowded with a lot of people and dogs, especially on weekends. There are various trails to walk here, one of which can be taken back downriver all the way to Nahanton Park. The grassy hillsides are good for sparrow species such as Savannah Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow. The lower trails by the river and out to the ponds are good for woodland



Golden-crowned Kinglet

species. One may encounter Wood Ducks and a Cooper's Hawk, in these locations. The Charles River may produce more duck species for you.

There are many other open places in Newton in which you may walk and look around at the birds and winter life. The Conservators' website and booklet mentioned above have trail maps which can be used in the same fashion in these spots. eBird reports are available for many of these, and you might like to submit an eBird report of your own. It is free and contributes to a growing accumulation of citizen science data, useful for tracking population changes and climate change. Such activities are also good for your physical and mental health.

As a help in identifying non-avian species, there is a free app for mobile phones, "iNaturalist." One can take photos with the app and then have them identified on the spot. One may also pull an old photo up into the app and get an ID. A good plant app is Picture This (<https://picturethisai.com/>), which has a free trial period. The premium subscription is \$29.99 for a year. There is a lot of fascinating life out there. Get out for a walk in the natural world; make some acquaintances; exercise, and refresh your spirit.

Note: Sources and tables for this article can be found on [Newton Conservators.org/newsletters](https://newtonconservators.org/newsletters). ♦

✿ Pete Gilmore



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

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Nashville Warbler
photo by Haynes Miller

Go Green! ...and all the other colors of the rainbow. You can view this newsletter at newtonconservators.org/newsletters. To elect not to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, update your membership profile at newtonconservators.org/membership