

# Presidents' Message at the Annual Meeting

*Co-President Bill Hagar presented the following report.*



We are finally breaking out of the changing patterns of winter-spring weather into a more consistent growing time of year. We are pleased to have the opportunity to honor our awardees and learn about both our region's history and its future from two representatives of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, whose ancestors lived here for thousands of years before European settlers gave Newton its current name.

This past year, Newton Conservators worked hard to keep our environmental goals intact while developing plans for the future. We thank our member volunteers, board of directors, and advisors for all the hours they invested in preserving and protecting our open spaces and educating people about them.

Our "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice" team has been dedicated to making our open spaces and organization open and welcoming to all and worked on updating our mission, values, and goals. They have been sharing experiences with like-minded organizations in the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.



*Barbara Bates shares nature with a young naturalist.*



*Children on a nature walk at Dolan Pond watch an approaching duck.*



*Children express excitement at something they see at a Dolan Pond nature walk.*

Despite the pandemic, Newton Conservators continued to encourage nature-oriented activities in Newton's open spaces. Our successful and well attended Fall Walk Series included weekend events at Dolan Pond, Houghton Garden, the Charles River, Webster Woods, Cold Spring Park, the Aqueducts, and Webster Woods. This spring, walk leaders Barbara Bates and Samantha Corbin designed walks with experiential games and activities to engage kids and their parents. Recent walks have explored the fauna and flora of Webster Woods, Dolan Pond, and Riverside Park. At Bare Pond, Newton's largest vernal pool, kids learned how animals use camouflage, saw and heard wood frogs, and examined pond creatures under field microscopes.



*Webinar presenter Pete Gilmore talked about warblers in Cold Spring Park in May.*

Our popular Spring and Fall Webinar Series on Wednesday evenings covered such topics as Cold Spring Park, vernal pools, birding, owls, salamanders, planting for pollinators, and "Nibbling on Native Plants." We continue making these webinars available at no charge and post them on our YouTube channel for those who cannot attend "live."

In addition to continuing support for the popular Environmental Science Program for teens, our Grants Committee also supported the pollinator garden at City Hall and an Eagle Scout in creating an orienteering course at Kennard Park.



PHOTO: TED KUKLINSKI

*An invasive plant team shows what they gathered around Dolan Pond.*

We continue to work to limit the spread of invasive species and encourage native ones. Bolstered by added trained volunteers, our invasives team managed an aggressive schedule of public invasives removal events for NewtonSERVES with other local scout and church groups and built a new reference section on our website for identifying invasive flora and fauna. As an active partner in a new city Pollinator Working



PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

*One of the Monarchs on display at the Monarch Fest.*

Group, we also added to our website a “Pollinator Toolkit” guide to native plants for gardens, installed a demonstration Pollinator Garden at City Hall, supported Story Walks on pollinators and “their” plants at parks throughout the city, held our first MonarchFest, and provided several newsletter articles and webinars on the benefits of native species.



Our expanded website, [newtonconservators.org](http://newtonconservators.org), has become the go-to resource for map, trail, and background information on our local open spaces, current nature-related events, historical information, and much more. Our published Trail Guide is widely used in search of new and interesting places to explore outdoors. The next edition of the Trail Guide, now in development, will include updated maps aligned with the City’s computerized Geographic Information System, add QR codes, and include new open spaces! Our printed quarterly newsletter continues to teem with informative articles by local experts.

We continue to support the owners of permanently protected conservation land by holding and monitoring Conservation Restrictions (CRs), to guard against problems such as encroachment and dumping. Newton Conservators currently holds CRs on eight city-owned properties and one private property. Additional CRs on Kessler Woods and Webster Woods are in process with the City Law Department, with another planned for Nahanton Park. Our volunteer teams visit these sites annually and report back to the landowners about current conditions and recommended maintenance or enforcement actions.



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*The Pony Truss Bridge at the Riverside Greenway.*

Pedestrian and bicycle paths help to knit Newton’s open spaces and parks into citywide and regional networks. We are proud to partner with the Riverside Greenway Working Group (RGWG), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and the City of Newton in developing new — and in some cases restoring old — trail connections along the Charles River.

In June, we celebrated the grand opening of the beautifully restored Pony Truss Bridge and Trail. As part of their special permit for a mixed-use development at the current Riverside MBTA station, Mark Development has agreed to provide

\$3 million towards portions of the Riverside Greenway. We have also supported many other DCR projects, including the proposed Commonwealth Ave roundabout and carriage lane proposals near the Marriott (on

*Continued on page 6*



the former site of Norumbega Park), a trail along Quinobequin Road, and the pedestrian- and bike-friendly redesign of Hammond Pond Parkway. (see lead article by Dan Green).



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*Dredging at Houghton Pond.*

We worked closely with the Chestnut Hill Association and Conservation Commission to support a major project at historic Houghton Garden in Chestnut Hill, which included hydro-raking, vegetation clearing along the stream, new accessible paths, and planting restoration. We continued planting to restore our Dexter Woods hillside property in Newtonville and have improved plant and trail maintenance in our lovely Ordway Park in Newton Centre.

Our finances are strong. Financial statements have been sent to all board members and show an impressive base for future endeavors. You can learn more on our website at <https://newtonconservators.org/financial-and-related-reports/>.

Hopefully, this brief discussion of Conservators' activities over the past year will set the stage for others to join us and help protect and enjoy our environmental blessings. As Rachel Carson reminded us: *"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."*

*Bill Hagar Chris Hepburn*

Bill Hagar and Chris Hepburn  
Co-Presidents, Newton Conservators

## 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 61 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](mailto:articles@newtonconservators.org). Digitized photographs, maps, and diagrams are also welcome.

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