

Presidents' Message at the Annual Meeting

We welcome you to our first outdoor annual meeting in the history of the Newton Conservators. It is inspiring to celebrate with all of you, both members and new supporters. We relish the fresh air and open-space tent environment provided for us by the Mount Ida Campus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. We thank Mayor Fuller and her staff for the opportunity to use this space protected from the rain. We acknowledge that this land was and is the homeland of the Massachusetts people and hope to live up to their example by sustaining healthy, resilient ecosystems into the future, with your support!

Preserving and maintaining open space is still our major priority in this, our 62nd year. As an all-volunteer organization, Newton Conservators relies on many individuals and on partnerships with other organizations to help protect the environment and allow all to enjoy nature's beauty. We work closely with the City of Newton by holding Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on many city-owned parcels of land. Our volunteer teams conduct yearly monitoring visits and report back to the relevant city department about current conditions and recommendations for maintenance or enforcement.



Left to right: Alice Ingerson, Jeff Rosenberg, Marcia Cooper, Peter Barrer, and Nicole Banks.

First Steps: What You Can Do

- Turn lights off when not needed
- Shield external lights
- Use dimmable bulbs
- Use "warm light" bulbs
- Use low-output bulbs
- Install timers and/or motion detectors

A photograph of a lantern-style light fixture, likely the one being discussed in the text. It has a glass globe and a metal frame.

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF J. KELLY BEATTY

We have a "jam-packed" schedule of nearly a hundred activities this year, including webinars, walks, invasive pulls, village days, and other activities. We hope to connect all people in Newton to nature and our open spaces and to welcome visitors from elsewhere.

From the fall of 2022 through the spring of 2023, we offered eight free webinars on wide range of topics, including light pollution, native plant ordinances, Newton's street trees and buried streams, identifying animals by their winter tracks, invasive "jumping worms," and Newton's geological history. We first began offering webinars in the fall of 2020 because of the

Covid crisis, but we have continued them because of the strong attendance and interest. Most of these special presentations are available on our YouTube channel for those who could not attend the original presentations.

Many of our walks attract participants of all ages, with six recent walks targeted specifically for children. The walks and birding activities cover most areas of Newton, including Dolan Pond, Houghton Garden, the Charles River, Nahanton Park, Cold Spring Park, the Aqueducts, and Webster Woods. As the Covid crisis recedes, we can now come together more often and enjoy all types of indoor and outdoor activities.

Our published *Guide to Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Areas* is widely used by people searching for new and interesting places to explore outdoors. We are in the planning stage of creating a new, updated version of this treasure, using maps aligned with Newton's computerized Geographic Information System.



Bird watching at Nahanton Park

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Our website, newtonconservators.org, has many of these updates along with background information on local open spaces, current nature-related events, and historical information. Other sections on our website include a handy reference tool for identifying invasive plants and a Pollinator Toolkit that suggests native plants to help our gardens support butterflies and bees. Other sections provide information on activities and copies of our newsletter.



Levingston Cove before being redesigned.



*The Smart Cart
contributed by a Newton
Conservator grant*

Our quarterly newsletter continues to provide quality informative articles by experts on environmental topics. Recent articles have covered gardening for biodiversity, the invasive spotted lanternfly, the changing forest of Webster Woods, spring ponds, diversity and social justice issues in land conservation, and important redesign and rehabilitation projects around Newton: Hammond Pond Parkway, Levingston Cove at Crystal Lake, and the Marty Sender Trail at Auburndale Cove.

Our Grants Committee supported several important projects this past year. The Conservators continued scholarship support for the popular Environmental Science Program for teens. We assisted the Newton Community Farm in purchasing a “smart cart” for moving plants and produce around the farm. Funds also were allocated to a “Spring Container Gardening” program at the Newton Housing Authority’s Horace Mann complex, with assistance from Newton Neighbors and the Newton Community Farm. This project will involve a diverse group of individuals and groups in growing both produce and flowers and includes gardening lectures by Community Farm personnel. Previous grant support was given to initiate development of environmentally friendly pollinator friendly gardens across many areas of Newton. This trend has continued as more and more native plantings are appearing on the Newton landscape.

We thank our volunteer board members and advisors for the many hours they put in towards our mission of educating individuals to preserve and protect our open spaces. This includes spending time in meetings, planning activities, reviewing grant proposals, and supporting trail improvement. Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) team continues its mission of making our open spaces and organization open and welcoming to all. The DEIJ team continues to learn from and share experiences with like-minded organizations such as the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

After serving as our co-presidents for the past two years, Chris Hepburn and Bill Hagar will be moving on to other activities in the coming year - a couple of older academics ready to turn over the leadership mantle. (We will, however, remain active members of the board.)

We end with quotes from Rachel Carson:

“Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth, are never alone or weary of life.”

“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