



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Blue Heron Bridge

with the DCR to control invasive plants in the vicinity of the Blue Heron Bridge. DCR and local community organizations could expand these efforts to reduce and control these nuisance plants over a larger area of the park.

The Charles River Greenway is already a gem in Newton. After 30 years, it is hard to imagine Newton without it. Opportunities for increasing volunteer participation, public education, and resource stewardship highlight ways that we can continue to strengthen the ties between the Greenway and our community over the next 30 years. ♦

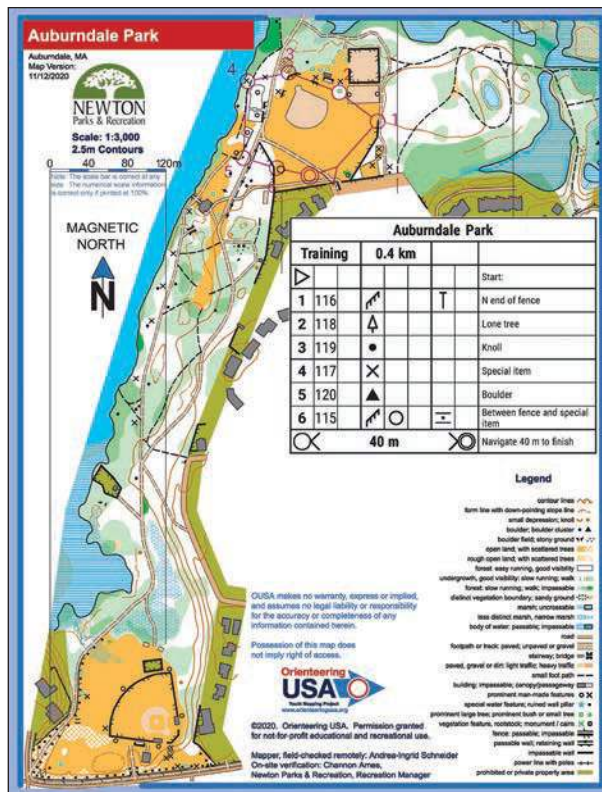
Find Yourself in Orienteering

By Channon Ames, Recreation Manager, Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department

Editor's note: The Conservators' directors believe it is important that those engaged in orienteering should be careful not to tramp through ecologically sensitive locations/habitats such as the "edges of ponds and streams" or into "deep woods," where it could (however unintentionally) transport the seeds or roots of invasive species into areas where those species have not already taken hold. See Jennifer Steel's article in the Fall 2023 Conservators' newsletter to learn about the need to stick to marked trails on Newton's public lands.

Orienteering began in the late 1800s in Sweden as a military exercise crossing unknown land with the aid of a map and compass. Since then, it has become a worldwide sport with national and international competitions. Participants use a detailed map to find their way from point to point, determining the best and fastest route through a pre-determined course. Being able to accurately read and follow the map aids the user in making decisions that will help to improve their overall finishing time. All maps follow an international standard, making orienteering easy to learn and participate in around the world.

While orienteering can be a competitive sport, there are also benefits for the non-competitive orienteer that help improve map reading skills while exploring the great outdoors. For the casual orienteer, orienteering is like a hike and scavenger



hunt mixed into one. Participants go at their own pace, use the map to make decisions, and plan a route to find orienteering controls. The controls are usually located on or near interesting landform features like knolls, boulders, cliffs, depressions, edges of ponds or streams, and special items, creating an exciting adventure in the woods. In more advanced courses, the controls are placed deeper in the woods making map reading and compass use a necessary skill.

Orienteering isn't just about maps, though; it can be a lifelong journey that you participate in by yourself or with family and friends. Children as young as five or six and adults well into their 80s have enjoyed the benefits of orienteering. Orienteering allows you to experience nature, exercise,

keep your mind sharp, challenge yourself, and become a better you. Learn to appreciate the natural world and all



PHOTO: CHANNON AMES

Interesting landform feature

its beauty. Gain confidence and be proud of yourself when you make a plan that successfully leads you to the next control. Realize that it is okay to make mistakes, learn from them and re-adjust to improve for next time. Develop coping skills if you make a wrong turn and lose your way. No matter at what age you start, orienteering will lead to a lifetime of fun.

There are five permanent orienteering courses in the City of Newton. In 2020 and 2021 Newton Parks and Recreation worked with Orienteering USA's Youth



PHOTO: CHANNON AMES

Learning about Orienteering

Mapping Program and local Eagle Scouts to create maps and install orienteering courses in several city parks. The courses in Newton are designed as beginner courses to help new orienteers develop their skills. QR codes at each control give park facts, history, and information about orienteering.

The five courses in Newton include:

1. **Auburndale Park** — A great place to start to become familiar with reading a map and following trails to find the control markers. Practice “thumbing” the map (following along with your finger) and associating its symbols with what you see in real life.
2. **Cold Spring Park** — Practice deciding which is the better route to take. To do so, you can also try pace “counting” (counting the number of paces it takes you to go a specific distance).
3. **Kennard Park** — Focus on landform features like streams, boulders, earth banks, etc., and start to learn what the control description symbol is for different features.
4. **Nahanton Park** — Use and develop compass skills to find the next control more accurately.
5. **Edmunds Park** — Plan the best route through more focused navigation and map reading.



PHOTO: CHANNON AMES

Orienteering QR Code

Maps for each course are available on the Newton Parks and Recreation website at <http://bit.ly/3Su4lgz>. This site also provides information about beginner training that is available through Newton Parks and Recreation to help develop orienteering skills.

If you like orienteering, there are many more adventures available in the New England area that will get you out and exploring city and state parks. Several local orienteering clubs run events throughout the year. New England Orienteering Club is based in Massachusetts

in the greater Boston area; Cambridge Sports Union is based in Boston; Up North Orienteers is based in southern New Hampshire; Western Connecticut Orienteering Club is based in southwestern Connecticut; and the state of



PHOTO: CHANNON AMES

Exploring the woods

New York has several clubs. Most of these clubs offer beginner through advanced level courses that have a competitive aspect, but they also welcome the non-competitive orienteers who like to participate for fun. You can find out more on the Orienteering USA website at <https://orienteeringusa.org/events/clubs/> ♦

See you in the woods!

**Saturday, April 6 at 10 am & 10:45 am
Introduction to Orienteering Clinics at Auburndale Park**

Join Newton Conservators and Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture for one of our two free family friendly introductory orienteering clinics. Orienteering is like a hike and scavenger hunt mixed into one. Participants will learn to use a detailed map to navigate through the trails at Auburndale Park looking for specific orienteering controls.

Details and Sign up: <https://bit.ly/42Ncznd>

Clinic leader: Channon Ames (comes@newtoma.gov)