

# Annual Meeting 2026

Newton Conservators' 65th annual meeting began with brief remarks from Mayor Marc Laredo.

## Mayor Marc Laredo



Mayor Marc Laredo

Mayor Laredo thanked the City of Newton staff and elected officials present, including former Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, and continued: "I just want to welcome everyone here this evening to the annual dinner of Newton Conservators. This is an absolutely wonderful organization. I don't have to tell anyone in this room that you do a terrific job day in and day out promoting conservation, open space, and environmental initiatives in the City of

Newton. We are very grateful for the partnerships that we have with organizations like the Conservators."

"I've been talking a lot, as I've been going around the city, about the importance of community, and one of the things about community is that when you bring people together to do good things, we not only improve our city, but we help one another, and that's exactly what this organization does. So, I'm extraordinarily grateful for the work that you all do."

## President's Message



Katherine Howard, President

Newton Conservators' President Katherine Howard continued the program by welcoming everyone, including the environmentally active high school and college students in attendance. She thanked the sponsors (listed on pg. 5), Nature Advocate ticket holders, and the JF&CS invitation-stuffing group. She read a quote from Aldo Leopold: "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Katherine Howard continued: "Newton Conservators is now 65 years old, thanks to members like you over all those years. I have been involved for more than half of those years. Its mission was, and still is, to preserve and conserve land for the benefit and recreational enjoyment of humans. We

now know so much more about the science behind humans needing nature and open space to thrive for physical and mental health. And we now know the critical importance of biodiverse habitats to support all species. That importance is not just in far-away national parks or up in Vermont and Maine — that importance is also here, in our urban open spaces, including our yards. Newton Conservators has taught and continues to teach me about this — for example, I learned recently from board member Pete Gilmore the importance of urban open spaces to migrating birds, which become diverted by the light pollution of urban areas, and come down into our parks looking for nutritious food to fuel their migration. Our open spaces need to provide that food.

"Newton Conservators continues to be an entry point for the public to enjoy, appreciate, and care for the open spaces we have; the open spaces that help make Newton such a great place to live. As ever, we provide the free guided walks, quarterly newsletter, the grants program, and now the webinar series, all of excellent quality, that people have come to know us for. We are always looking for more ways to draw people in and expand our reach. We are still involved in the occasional land acquisition; such opportunities in our developed city are less frequent and are critically important.

"But there is still so much to do — our land stewardship function has grown, often working in coordination with the city as landowner. We do invasives work in many of the city's open spaces, we fund and promote pollinator gardens, and we encourage homeowners to improve their own habitats, a la the Homegrown National Park model that Professor Doug Tallamy started. This is essential because open space that is turfgrass, exotic ornamentals, or is dominated by invasives has reduced biodiversity and does not provide the food and ecosystem services that pollinators and hungry birds need. Our invasives team is busy and always looking for more volunteer help!

"When I started with Newton Conservators, I began to notice plants and birds and see them as individual species, and it has taken me these many years to become more confident in plant identification. (Of course, that's easier now with iNaturalist and other apps.) It's been a more recent realization that there is more than plants going on in our open spaces and our yards, and now also in our waterways. I'm now learning about the insect world and pollinators (catching up to the 2nd graders who stop by our booth), and that "Bugging is the new birding." Also thanks to such incredible resources as the Caterpillar Lab of Newton native Sam Jaffe, and our own Ted Kuklinski. And I have the special close-up binoculars to help me see! Newton Conservators continues to help the public understand that

open space must have the plants that insects need to eat and reproduce on, as the start of the food web on which species depend. It has also been a recent pleasure to learn that there is life and important biodiversity in our overlooked brooks and streams. The Newton public is now learning from the Native Fish Coalition's programs, articles, and activities about that aquatic life (and yes, I now have the special polarized sunglasses to help me see it!).

"It is also great to see how our work is getting in synch with broader efforts such as regional pollinator networks, other nonprofits, the city's Climate Action Plan, and the state's new biodiversity goals. We had a terrific meeting with the mayor and John Rice last month, agreeing on basic premises, including, to quote board member Jon Regosin, that nature matters and that what's good for nature is good for people. We need to fund active management and stewardship, for which a little more funding would go a long way, and we can have a beneficial public-private partnership to accomplish this. The state's new biodiversity goals provide encouraging support and the possibility of grant funding for our initiatives. Newton Conservators will continue to conduct the local walks, programs, and stewardship for which it is known, while also participating in and advocating for broader initiatives. Thank you all for your support over the years, and for thinking globally and acting locally!"

### Election of Officers and Directors

Katherine Howard noted we have several new board members, Andreae Downs, Katharina Elbert, and Jacob Mihalak, and one new Advisor, Garry Miller. Another change is that Mike Clarke is moving from board member to an Advisor role.



*Pete Gilmore*

Pete Gilmore conducted the election by reading the Slate of Officers and Directors. The slate includes Katherine Howard, President, Nyssa Patten, Vice President, David Backer, Secretary, Jacob Mihalak, Treasurer, and board members Peter Barrer, Barbara Bates, Dan Brody, Andreae Downs, Katharina Elbert, Henry Finch, Maurice Gilmore, Daniel Green, Bill Hagar, Chris Hepburn, Howard, Susan Lyon, Ken Mallory, Larry Smith,

and Beth Wilkinson. He then took a voice vote of the Newton Conservators' members present, and the slate was unanimously approved.

### Certificate of Appreciation to Michael Clarke



*Katherine Howard and Michael Clarke*

Katherine Howard presented a certificate to Michael Clarke in recognition of "your 33+ years of service to Newton Conservators, including as Secretary, VP, and President, leading us through important land acquisitions. Also, for your dedicated chronicling of the history of Newton's Parks system for the benefit of future generations, and for your willingness to continue serving as an Advisor. Thank you, Mike!"

### Thank you to our generous sponsors.

- **Nahanton Park Paddler/Gold Sponsor:**  
Honda Village
- **Newton Community Farm Harvester/Bronze Sponsors:**  
Lalor and Patricia Burdick, Paddle Boston, The Village Bank
- **Crystal Lake Swimmer/Friends Sponsor:**  
Crystal Lake Conservancy
- **Newton Small Business Sponsor:**  
Fulfilled Goods, LLC; Newtonville Books

### Awards Presentations

#### *Environmentalist of the Year Award to Ruthanne Fuller*



*Beth Wilkinson*

Citing her for championing of open space and the environment during her two mayoral terms, board member Beth Wilkinson presented the Environmentalist of the Year award to former Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, observing that it was "an honor and a total delight to confer the honor upon her.

"Your eight years as Mayor began with your commitment to save the ecologically valuable Webster Woods, almost 15 acres that include the Bare Pond vernal pool. Many of us in this room joined in that fight with you, and for some of us, it became an almost all-consuming mission. At the end of 2019, under your leadership, the city acquired the land by

eminent domain, preserving the vernal pool, the habitat for animals, and the land's important connection to other open spaces, which helps preserve the biodiversity of the land.

“In the early 1970s, Newton had 40,000 street trees, which are critical for reducing heat and carbon in the environment and for processing stormwater. By 2017, that number had declined by over 35%, with virtually no new planting. Thanks to you, the Forestry Department budget increased by 35%, and four positions were added. For the first time, there was money for planting, much of which targeted heat islands in the city, and to do some pruning.

“You allocated funding for important improvements at Levingston Cove at Crystal Lake, the Marty Sender Path in Auburndale, and Spears Park in Nonantum, all of which increased the quality of people’s outdoor experience at those sites and the environmental status of those open spaces. You started the policy of adding pollinator gardens to all school building projects — and allowed (and encouraged) the pollinator garden at City Hall. I could list more — and go back to provide details about your time as a city councilor, when you (amongst other important projects) helped to launch the Stormwater Infrastructure Improvement Plan — but I will stop here and simply express our strong gratitude for all that you have done.”

**Ruthanne Fuller**



*Ruthanne Fuller*

Former Mayor Ruthanne Fuller thanked the Newton Conservators for honoring her work, especially in protecting Webster Woods. She made it clear that the work is not over yet, as the eminent domain legal battle continues. She reminded us that “It takes a village” and singled out city council members and others in the audience for their important work, including, in particular, Jennifer Steel and members of Newton Conservators.

As part of her acceptance speech, she noted, “Katherine mentioned all the amazing things that are done year in, year out, day after day by so many of you as part of Newton Conservators, from pulling invasives to taking care of pollinator gardens to creating field guides. It’s amazing, but what strikes me is the long-term perspective that all of you have and that we share, because I think all of us are dedicated to what this city of Newton is to be like 100 to 200 years from now.”

**Charles Johnson Maynard Award to Native Fish Coalition**

Conservators’ board member Alan Nogee presented this award with the following comments.



*Left to right: MA NFC board member Jeff Moore, MA NFC Vice Chair Ben Hienze, MA NFC Secretary Jason Reyes, MA NFC Chair Shane Johnson, MA board member Dominic Brown, National Chair Emily Bastian, Executive Director Bob Mallard, Alan Nogee*

“I’m honored tonight to present the Charles Johnson Maynard Award to Bob Mallard and Native Fish Coalition for their extraordinary work helping us to discover, understand the importance of, and care for the native fish in our Newton waters.

“A little over a year ago, their Mass board member, Jeff Moore, who grew up next to Cold Spring Park, happened to be walking over the entry bridge when he saw a small school of fish swimming in the brook.

“As far as I know, though it was originally named Smelt Brook, no one had seen or reported a fish in Cold Spring Brook for years. They returned with us and netted two native golden shiners, and later captured and quickly released two American eels, a native fish that had to swim hundreds of miles from the Sargasso Sea and overcome great obstacles to get here.

“NFC went on to painstakingly document temperature and dissolved oxygen conditions in the brook, take environmental DNA samples, explore its condition, and write a report with recommendations to improve habitat. They went on to hunt fish and document conditions in the Newton Cemetery, City Hall ponds, and Cheesecake Brook. And now they are helping improve habitat for native fish throughout Newton. Tomorrow, Bob will tour the cemetery ponds, and the next day restore fish from Bullough’s Pond to the city hall ponds.

“Their national President, Bob Mallard, who also grew up near Crystal Lake, oversees similar work of chapters in 21 states. He is a force of nature, writing lengthy responses to emails in only seconds. I’m only sorry we don’t have the capacity to move faster in implementing all his excellent recommendations.”

## Directors' Award to Newton Conservators' Trail Guide Committee



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Left to right: Doug Greenfield, Dan Brody and Katherine Howard

This year's Directors' Award was presented to Newton Conservators' Trail Guide Committee, comprised of Dan Brody, Doug Greenfield, and Todd Macalister. The award

recognized its years-long dedicated effort to bring Newton Conservators' popular Trail Guide to its next edition, expanded and with maps produced from the City of Newton Geographic Information System. Introduced by Katherine Howard, Newton Conservators' director Dan Brody took the podium with Doug Greenfield, manager of the city's geographic information system, noting the absence of a critical player in the guide production, Todd Macalister.

Citing Todd's work as co-editor on the project, spending six or seven years applying his encyclopedic knowledge of different works in open space, Dan noted: "This has been a years-long, huge effort to bring our trail guide to its next edition, and we are so incredibly grateful for all your years of hard work and happy that it has now paid off."

Credited as well was Doug Greenfield, manager of the city's geographic information system, for his dedication to the project, and Newton Conservators' board for its support.

## Keynote Speaker: Nick Dorian, Ph.D.

### The Secret Lives of Native Bees

Nick Dorian is a pollinator ecologist, consultant, and storyteller. He studies the ecology and conservation of insect pollinators. He has developed methods to study wild bees throughout their life cycles and co-authored a popular field guide to PB identification. Nick received his BS and Ph.D. in biology at Tufts University and did his postdoc research fellowship at the Chicago Botanic Garden. As of August, he will be an assistant professor at the City College of New York. As a consultant, Nick brings science-backed insights to improve the conservation outcomes of design projects. He works with landscape architects, urban planners, and



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Nick Dorian, Ph.D.

land managers to envision green spaces that benefit both people and nature, such as the award-winning Somerville pollinator action plan.

In his presentation, Dr. Dorian explained that over 4000 species of wild bees inhabit North America. They come in every size, shape, and color you can imagine, and they live all around us, hiding in plain sight. He introduced us to some of the fascinating wild bees of eastern North America and their varied lifestyles, habitat needs, and intricate relationships

with native flowering plants and other insects. He explained why they're important for our environment, showed us

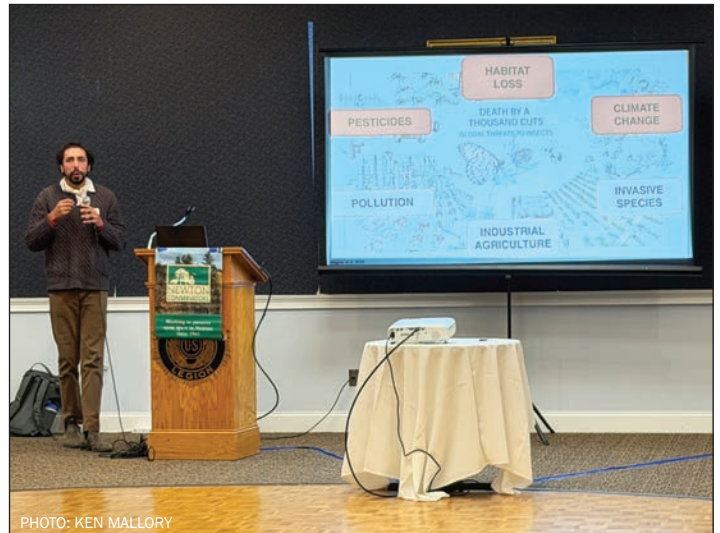


PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

Nick Dorian discussed the several challenges facing the native bee population.

how to notice and appreciate these important pollinators in our community, and how we can support them. His talk was inspiring and fascinating, and the audience seemed energized to improve their habitats to better support these native bees. ♦

🌿 Ken Mallory