

pavement — car exhaust, it turns out, deposits phosphorus on asphalt, which is washed into local water bodies (large swathes of asphalt also warm the water that swooshes off them).



Floating islands in Boston

And the Charles River Conservancy has launched a “floating wetland” of native plants that provide habitat for cyanobacteria-eating microorganisms — as have some communities in the Midwest.

Finally, each of us can use less fertilizer, particularly the soluble, inorganic kind, clear nearby catch basins of leaf litter, line our home sewer laterals^v (usually clay pipes that convey sewage from buildings to sewer lines), and remove pavement from our properties.

In time, with all these efforts, we can perhaps keep phosphorus where it’s needed — and not in the water. ♦

Editor’s note: Crystal Lake was closed three times this swim season, but only the first was for cyanobacteria. The last two were for high fecal bacteria concentrations, which would not necessarily be visible or smelly.

Author’s notes:

ⁱ Crockford PW, Bar On YM, Ward LM, Milo R, Halevy I (November 2023). “The geologic history of primary productivity”. *Current Biology*. 33 (21): 4741–4750. e5. Bibcode:2023CBio...33E4741C. doi:10.1016/j.cub.2023.09.040. PMID 37827153.

ⁱⁱ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11600067/>

ⁱⁱⁱ I am drawing from a wonderful *London Review of Books* article: ***Where the Power Is***, by James Vincent.

^{iv} Also, Russia and Israel

^v All but the newest sewer laterals are leaky. Rather than digging them up and replacing them, a process called **Trenchless Pipe Lining** uses Cured-In-Place Pipe (CIPP) process. A flexible, resin-saturated tube is pulled through the existing pipe and inflated, essentially creating a brand-new, seamless PVC pipe *inside* the old leaking structure. It cuts construction timelines and costs drastically.

Birding Nahanton Park

By Haynes Miller, 40 year Newton resident, emeritus professor at MIT and long-time birdwatcher, has records of more than 1,350 visits to Nahanton Park.

Nahanton Park has many personalities. For many, it’s known for the soccer field; for others, it hosts a kayak rental; for still others, it’s home to the Newton garden plots. For some of us, it’s famous as the “birdiest” spot in the city. Over the years, some 197 species of birds have been reported from the park on eBird, which lists Nahanton Park as a hotspot. More than 40 species breed in or adjacent to the park, and dozens more visit regularly in fall and spring.

Common breeders in the park include Song Sparrow (often nesting on the ground near garden plot fences), Tree



Map courtesy of Newton Conservators from their new trail guide

Swallow, House Wren, Ruby-throated Hummingbird (common around the garden plots), and, most years, Eastern Bluebird (using the many bird boxes around the garden plots and in Woodcock Meadow). Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, and Red-eyed Vireo nest in the woods. Gray Catbird, Baltimore Oriole, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Yellow Warbler are common in the forest margin (though in the past couple of years Yellow Warblers have been fewer). Pine Warbler breeds in pines near the

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Song Sparrow



Eastern Bluebird



Great-crested Flycatcher



Blackpoll Warbler

Warbler known to old-timers as Myrtle Warbler, sometimes shows up in substantial flocks in both spring and fall). It's exciting when one of the more unusual species shows up, as they do occasionally in the fall: Yellow-breasted Chat, and Orange-crowned, Mourning, or Connecticut Warbler. Other expected species include Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. All these birds are easiest to see in the forest margins around the garden plots or the soccer field.

Some 15 species of sparrows are regularly reported from the park in the fall. For them, and hence for bird watchers, the main attraction is the pair of garden plot areas. The fenced off plots provide excellent cover for these generally

Jewish Community Center, and Red-winged Blackbird and Warbling Vireo breed along the riverside.

Fall migration kicks off in August with an influx of wood warblers. They peak in September, as the sparrow migration builds up to a climax in October before tapering off in November. Fall birding tends to be more intensely bird-watching than bird-listening, since most species don't bother singing at that time of year.

Overall, some 33 wood warbler species have been reported in the park. Expected migrants — in both fall and spring — include American Redstart (also an occasional breeder), Northern Parula, and Blue-winged, Black-and-white, Nashville, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Palm, Black-throated Green, and Yellow-rumped Warbler (the Yellow-rumped



One of two garden plots in Nahanton Park

ground-loving birds, and the paths between the plots provide us humans excellent opportunities to observe them. Expected sparrow species include Chipping (sometime



Indigo Bunting

quite numerous), White-throated, White-crowned, Savannah, Fox, Field, and Swamp Sparrow, along with Indigo Bunting in its cryptic fall coloring. The beautiful Lincoln's Sparrow is something of a specialty of the

park. Clay-colored Sparrow is annual, and occasionally a Dickcissel or Grasshopper, Vesper, or Lark Sparrow shows up. Sometimes a Pileated Woodpecker visits in November.



Eastern Towhee

Some of these species continue through the winter — Song and White-throated especially — and are joined by winter residents such as American Tree Sparrow and Slate-colored Junco, joining resident woodpeckers,

Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Eastern Towhee is often present at any time of year, along with Red-tailed and occasionally Red-shouldered Hawk. American Robins seek residual fruit on trees in the woods. The Nature Center, just below Woodcock meadow, often stocks its feeder, attracting activity.

Springtime comes early at the park, with one of its most characteristic avian features. American Woodcock uses the field above the Nature Center for its mating display,



Aerial view of Woodcock Meadow, which is maintained by the city to encourage the Woodcock mating displays.



American Woodcock

usually starting in late February. On a still evening, this unique behavior typically commences at 15 minutes after sunset. It's convenient to park in the small lot off of Nahanton Street just east of the main entrance and

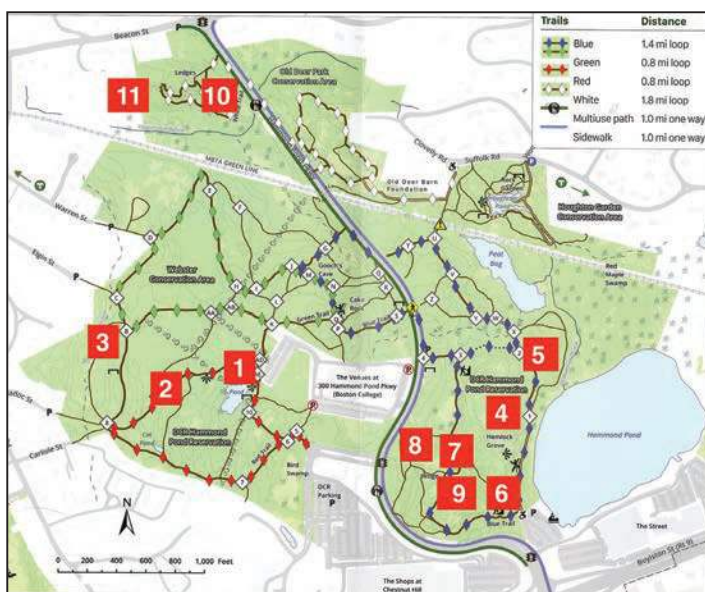
walk through a narrow-forested screen onto “Woodcock Meadow.” The males stand on the ground issuing a sequence of “peent” calls, then fly up in a large loop and return to the same spot. These birds breed in the woods in Nahanton Park, but they are nocturnal and almost never observed over the summer.

As the weather warms, waves of migrants move north, and some birds drop down in Newton to feed and rest on their way to their breeding grounds. Among the early arrivals, look for Blue-headed Vireo and Palm, Pine, and Myrtle Warbler. In addition to the warblers seen in the fall, one can expect Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, and Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, and Bay-breasted Warbler. Cape May and Hooded Warbler both seem to be increasing, and again the unexpected sometimes shows up, such as Worm-eating or Prothonotary Warbler, and, recently, Summer Tanager. Thrushes also come through — Hermit and Swainson's Thrush (that one often all the way from Argentina) and Veery, and occasionally the rarer Gray-cheeked Thrush. The peak of the spring migration occurs in the first two weeks of May.

Nahanton Park will always have a surprise for the observant bird watcher — at any time of year! ♦

The Wonderful Rocks of Webster Woods

*By Richard B. Primack, a lifelong Newton native and a Professor of Plant Ecology at Boston University.
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See the map for the locations indicated by the number in each specific area.

The most striking feature of the Webster Woods is its abundance of rocks, from sheer cliff faces and rocky slopes to isolated boulders and old stone walls. These are mostly puddingstone, a gray conglomerate rock in which pebble- to cobble-sized rounded stones are embedded in a muddy-sandy matrix, but there are also layers of brownish sandstone. This prevalence of rocky features is found nowhere else in Newton so abundantly and is likely why the area has remained undeveloped.

The woods can be a wonderful place to see leaves change into dazzling displays of colors in autumn, marvel at winter's snow-covered branches, and observe wildflowers and the arrival of migratory birds in spring. I would argue, however, that what makes the Webster Woods special are the unique and varied rock formations left behind when the glaciers melted 15,000 years ago.

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