

Conservators Awards

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact,” the late environmental activist Dame Anita Roddick once observed, “try going to sleep with a mosquito.”

The room was frankly buzzing when awards were handed out at the Newton Conservators annual dinner meeting on May 6. The three honorees — Alderwoman Alison Leary, Boston University professor and climate change expert Richard Primack, and Newton Community Farm manager Greg Maslowe — more than made up for what they lacked in numbers by their persistent entreaties in support of citizen education, advocacy and activism.

The Conservators recognized Alderwoman Leary for her years as a dedicated educator and advocate for environmental issues and for her successful leadership of the 2015 campaign to ban thin plastic bags in Newton by naming her the 33rd Environmentalist of the Year. As Board member Bill Hagar noted in presenting the award, Leary “is an environmental



Alison Leary, Environmentalist of the Year Award with Bill Hagar

educator... who has helped young and old people learn about biology and important conservation concepts.” Leary was the driving force behind the Newton Board of Aldermen’s unanimous decision to ban the single-use plastic bags. Through the long and oft-contentious fight, Leary kept her sense of humor. When *Village 14* made her the target of an April Fools Day joke, claiming the City Inspectional Services had been called to her Nonantum home to investigate reports of plastic bag hoarding, Leary good-naturedly responded that “I wish I could corner the market on them” — although not necessarily, as *Village 14* suggested, to finance her children’s college educations by selling the bags to dog walkers. Leary often used calm and reason as an alternative to the less eco-friendly technique of pouring oil on troubled waters. “Plastic bags have only been around since 1977,” she is fond of reminding people. “So we have managed without them before, and the sky did not fall.”

Prof. Richard Primack was presented with the Charles Johnson Maynard Award for “his innovative work on the real and current effects of climate change (and conservation biology in general) and his tireless efforts to educate the

public and to encourage them to become involved in citizen science.” Conservators President Beth Wilkinson recalled how back in 2001 Primack learned that, unbeknownst to most biologists, Thoreau kept detailed records of the plants he found, including their bloom times, during his walks in the Concord Woods in the mid 1800s. Primack discovered that a quarter of the same plants still grow near Walden Pond. He decided to observe them to compare the bloom dates noted by Thoreau to those growing today. “The results led him — and then his readers — to the inescapable conclusion that climate change is here and is having a strongly negative impact on our local environment,” Wilkinson explained.

“As if his academic teaching and writing were not enough,” Wilkinson continued, “Professor Primack also seems to be willing to go almost anywhere and talk to anyone to help people understand the extent of current global warming and the dangers that are in store if we don’t find a way to stop it. Over the past ten years, he has given more than 100 lectures on the impact of climate change. In spite of his busy schedule, he was willing to take the time to write a great article for our newsletter — about the local effects of climate change.”

Newton Community Farm manager Greg Maslowe admitted that after his appearance as featured speaker at the Conservators 2007 dinner (www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxfsKstevVs) where he urged Garden City



Greg Maslowe, Directors’ Award with Margaret Doris



Professor Primack, Charles Johnson Maynard Award with Beth Wilkinson

residents to plant fewer trees and more vegetables, he thought he would never be invited back. But the Conservators chose instead to honor him with this year’s Directors’ Award for “expanding our view of what it

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means to be a suburban farmer, and sharing his knowledge of the sustainable use of a small plot of land (and the farm's delicious crops) with the Newton community”

“In conveying this Directors’ Award,” Director Margaret Doris explained, “the Conservators wish to recognize Greg as Newton’s farmer/scholar. Carrying on in the fine tradition first established by farmer/scholar/environmentalist Liberty Hyde Bailey more than a century ago, Greg not only applies his scholarship to the work of farming but teaches and even evangelizes. Maslowe expands his vision beyond the farm’s two-plus acres of field and greenhouses to involve and inspire others locally and, increasingly, on the state and national scene. ‘I am convinced,’ Liberty Hyde Bailey wrote

in 1911, “that the size of an acre of land varies directly with the size of the man who manages it. The larger the man, the larger the acre. I once asked an old gardener how much land he had, and he said with pride that he owned one acre; and he added, ‘it is a wonderful acre: it reaches to the center of the earth in one direction, and it takes in the stars in the other’.”

“It is with deep appreciation then,” Doris continued, “that we recognize Greg Maslowe: a man possessed of such vision that he has enlarged a few small acres to take in not only the earth and the stars, but also the future.” ■

Margaret Doris



PHOTO: TROOP 205

Boy Scouts, Parents & Volunteers Ready for Clearing

Thank you, Richard Gallo and Troop 205, Boy Scouts of Newton, MA, and their parents

On May 2, a huge turnout of Boy Scouts, parents and volunteers turned out for Richard Gallo’s Eagle Scout Project to restore more than a quarter mile of long-overgrown and impassable trail, on the north side of the lower gardens. Armed with their own tools and wheelbarrows as well as woodchips provided by the City of Newton (thanks to Judy Dore!), they did the impossible and cleared the trail in one power-packed day. The Friends of Nahanton Park and all interested groups are very thankful for their efforts.

**If you haven’t renewed your membership already, now is the time.
And consider a gift for a conservation-minded friend.**



2015 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

YES! Please renew my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

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- \$35 Family Member
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Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.
Visit our website at www.newtonconservators.org if you wish to renew your membership online.



Cedar Waxwing
Photo by Pete Gilmore