

President's Message

Dear Conservators,

It's a hard time to be a small creature in today's world.

Researchers at Radboud University in the Netherlands who studied records from German nature preserves discovered a seasonal decline of 76% and mid-summer decline of 82% in flying insect biomass over 27 years. Another study by the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union showed that there are 15% fewer birds than just 12 years ago.



A year-old study by the organization Partners in Flight indicated that North America has 1.5 billion fewer birds now than it did 40 years ago. Observations in more than 25 other countries indicate that this is a global phenomenon.

What are the most likely causes of the loss of these populations and others around the world? Loss of habitat. Climate change. The overuse of pesticides and fertilizers. The increase in agricultural monocultures.

In a *Conservation Biology* article, EO Wilson tells us to, "Pay attention to the little things that run the world." He continues:

The truth is that we need invertebrates but they don't need us. If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change... But if invertebrates were to disappear, it is unlikely that the human species could last more than a few months. Most of the fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time. Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and with them the physical structure of the majority of the forests and other terrestrial habitats of the world.

How can those of us living in Newton help to preserve those little things? By thinking globally and acting locally. We need to work to preserve the bugs and the birds in our local environment by conserving their habitat in Newton — both by protecting critical open spaces and by taking care of those that already are protected, by protecting or increasing the biodiversity within them.

That is the mission of the Newton Conservators. We fulfill that mission in many ways.

Here are a few examples:

- We have been working for two years to protect the land now owned by Boston College in Webster Woods. (Mayor-Elect Ruthanne Fuller has pledged to make that happen.)
- We are removing invasive plants from many of the city's open spaces. Invasive plants outcompete and push out the native plants that provide food for our native insects and birds. (For more information, see <http://bit.ly/2elu069>)
- We are restoring Woodcock Meadow at Nahanton Park by removing invasive plants and planting native plants.
- We have started two experimental plots to try to restore the understory of the red maple wetland in the rear of Cold Spring Park (see the lead article by Eric Olson earlier in this newsletter).
- We are working with the City to put conservation restrictions on city-owned conservation areas and parks — and then to monitor them.

All of those projects are funded by membership dollars. It is our membership renewal time, and we hope that you will renew your membership — or join for the first time. If you're already a member, you have received a renewal notice in the mail. If not, you can join online: <http://bit.ly/2jDeU2P>.

Thanks for your support!

Beth Wilkinson

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