



*Working to preserve open space in Newton for 42 years!*

## *the Newton Conservators*

# NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue

[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

September/October 2002

## Conservators Open Exhibit at City Museum

*Reception for Members to be Held Sunday, September 29, 2-4 PM at Jackson Homestead*

In July, an exhibit chronicling the accomplishments of the Newton Conservators over the past 40 years was mounted at the Jackson Homestead, Newton's history museum. The display includes maps, photographs, brief histories and key features of conservation areas acquired over that period.

By showing the acquisitions on a chronological chart and cross-referencing them to a map of the city and of individual parcels, the exhibit provides viewers with an appreciation of the scope and breadth of the work done by the organization. Most properties were acquired in the late 1960s and 1970s, before Proposition 2½ and increasing property values altered the context for city purchase of conservation land.

The display, mounted in the reception room of the Jackson Homestead, complements a current exhibit on Charles Johnson Maynard, a nationally-known 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalist who lived and worked in West Newton.

Elements of the exhibit were prepared by Judy Hepburn, Lucy Caldwell-Stair, Burton Elliott and Doug Dickson. It was hung by Burton Elliott and Doug Dickson in July and will continue in place through November of this year.

A reception will be held on Sunday, September 29 from 2-4 PM to give Newton Conservators members a chance to see the exhibit and share an afternoon of celebration, memories and refreshment with like-minded friends and neighbors. Don't miss this chance to visit Newton's history museum.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*By Lucy Caldwell-Stair*

What is our most critical task for the year? Getting open space projects funded through the new Community Preservation Committee is this year's essential task.

We Conservators worked very hard to get CPA passed in Newton last fall. Now the Community Preservation Committee has been formed and is about to finalize its project review guidelines. It is setting itself up as a grant-making agency, asking community groups like ours to submit detailed project proposals.

This fall, the CPC will begin to decide how to allocate the first \$3 million in CPA funds among projects for open space, recreation, community housing, and historic preservation. Naturally, we want to see funds spent on acquiring the open space we care most about. For this to happen, we need to develop projects we can submit to the CPC and for that we need more volunteers, like YOU!

Specifically, we need members to join in work-groups that will:

- **Inventory available open space** in all parts of the city. We will work from assessor's data and aerial maps on the city's website.
- **Evaluate parcels.** Are they suitable for small

*(Continued on page 2)*

*President's Letter, continued from page 1*

pocket parks? Can they be adjoined to existing conservation areas? Are they suitable for conservation restrictions or for land purchase?

- **Contact landowners.** In developing projects, we need to first get in touch with landowners to learn what their interests might be and creatively work with them.

Please contact me if you are interested in doing this important work with us. You can reach me at longwood@attbi.com or 617-928-3375.

*Lucy Caldwell-Stair, President*

***Don't Miss the New Jackson Homestead Exhibit***  
**WALKS AND TALKS WITH NATURE:**  
**CHARLES MAYNARD**

Newton's Naturalist  
*Through Spring 2003*

**The Newton Conservators Newsletter**© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in February, April, June, September and November. Deadlines for these issues are the fifth of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles by email in MS Word or rich text format to dgDickson@rcn.com. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

Editor: Doug Dickson 617-969-8661  
Production: Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Rep. Ruth Balser, Lucy Caldwell-Stair, Doug Dickson, Martha Aherin Horn, Ted Kuklinski, Beth Purcell, and Eric Reenstierna. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading services.

***Join Other Members of the***  
**NEWTON CONSERVATORS**

***View Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibit***  
***On Sunday, Sept 29, 2-4 PM***  
***At the JACKSON HOMESTEAD***

***Exhibit Continues Through November 2002***

## **GEOLOGIST ROBERT THORSON TO SPEAK AT LIBRARY NOVEMBER 19**

Although there are old stone walls located across the United States, only in New England do they rise to the status of landforms. Laid end-to-end, these walls, built mostly between 1750 and 1850, would have encircled the globe ten times and New England's landscape, then and now, would simply not be the same without them. According to Robert M. Thorson, professor of geology and geophysics at the University of Connecticut, the stone wall is the key that links the natural history and the human history of New England. "Although most of these stone walls are crumbling, they connect a magnificent scientific and cultural story about the forces that formed their stones, the movements that brought them to the surface, the glacial tide that broke them apart, and about the humans that built them," Thorson notes. "The archetypal stone walls of New England—primitive, mortar-free, and 'tossed' rather than carefully laid—give us a clock by which we can judge the passage of almost unimaginable time."

In his new book, *STONE BY STONE: The Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls* (Walker & Company; September 2002; \$26.00; ISBN: 0-8027-1394-7), Thorson begins with an exploration of rock formation and transportation and moves to cultural factors, such as deforestation and farming, that allowed for the harvesting of heavy stones. Like Russian dolls, Thorson notes, stones layer time, with their smallest elements reflecting the longest spans. "Each stone has its own story," he says, "that links geological history to the early American experience."

First and foremost, Thorson notes, walls were not fences that separated neighbors nor were they a monument to thriftiness and hard work. "Stone walls were a necessary response to the environmental change from forest to farm." The ecological catastrophe of colonial farming, he says, caused frost heaving on compacted soils, brought stones to the surface, and created rain-washed refuse that could not biodegrade. These fieldstones were carted away by hand or with the assistance of oxen and draft horses, and seldom further than necessary. Stacked upward, the elongated piles of stones created permanent reminders and enduring symbols.

*(Continued on page 3)*

*Library Lecture, continued from page 2*

The walls, Thorson says, draw our attention to the edge of what the farmer really cared about—the fields we can no longer see. "By studying stone walls, you'll see the unending struggle of Yankee farmers," he says. "You'll find signs of the melting and carving that have shaped the earth. You'll see what underlies all life."

A lively examination of stone wall types, their function and structure, their construction, and their collapse, *STONE BY STONE* is nothing less than the story of how New England was formed and is a fascinating picture of the land the Pilgrims settled.

Robert M. Thorson is a Professor of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Connecticut, where he holds a joint appointment in the Department of Anthropology. Dr. Thorson received a PhD in Geology from the University of Washington in Seattle for his research on glaciation and earthquake hazards of the Pacific Northwest. He holds an MS degree in Geology from the University of Alaska, granted for his work on Paleolithic archaeological sites in the Alaska Range. His BS degree is in Earth Science Teaching from Bemidji State College in Minnesota.

Dr. Thorson began his career as a field assistant with the US Geological Survey, where he participated in projects involving geologic hazards, glaciology, and paleontology in Alaska. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he worked as a Research Associate for the archaeological projects funded by the National Geographic Society and the National Park Service. In 1984, he directed the first detailed excavation of a frozen mammoth in Alaska, and has since dissected New England's largest sand dune, built by ice-age winds, and most of the wetlands in the colonial town of Lebanon, Connecticut.

As a visiting faculty fellow in the Department of History at Yale University, Thorson participated in an interdisciplinary environmental seminar that helped forge the ideas in *STONE BY STONE*. Later, he spent a year-long sabbatical leave at Dartmouth College where he had access to the archives of early New England agricultural history and to the US Army's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory. During his leave, he led an Earthwatch expedition to examine the walls of a pioneering homestead in New Hampshire and since then, he has spent many years studying walls in the forests of New England and observing them from

his kitchen window in Connecticut. His latest sabbatical was to Chile, where he worked on seismic hazards mapping, and when free, explored stone walls.

*Beth Purcell*

## ***Cold Spring Park Featured at Ecology Symposium in Korea***

Our very own Cold Spring Park was highlighted at an ecology conference in a session presented by Newton conservation biologist Daniel Perlman at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Ecology held this summer in Seoul, Korea.

Many of us value Cold Spring Park for its jogging trails, exercise course, dog walking paths, Farmer's Market and tennis courts—all good reasons to have urban parks. But to ecologists, woodland areas in the city are something more. In their eyes, Cold Spring Park is a "small reserve" with an important role to play.

In his talk, called "A Plea for Small Reserves," Perlman showed aerial and close-up slides of Cold Spring Park to illustrate his points about the importance of exposing city children to nature. Over 300 ecologists along with a few residents of Seoul attended the session.

Little nature areas like Cold Spring Park cannot support complex or rare ecosystems, he explains. What these parks can do is to keep urban children connected to the natural environment with the hopes that as adults they will support larger-scale preservation.

"Not many people live next to reserves like Yellowstone or the DMZ (demilitarized zone) in Korea," he says. But to a child, a park within bicycling distance can be as vast and splendid as a great national preserve. "We need these small pieces in every city," he says.

A biology professor at Brandeis University, Perlman is a Newton Conservators director who played in Cold Spring Park as a boy.

*Lucy Caldwell-Stair*

***See the Fall Walk Schedule in this Issue***

**JOIN GUIDED WALKING TOURS OF  
NEWTON'S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

***Weekends from now through November***

## ***NC BOARD COMMITS TO LAND ACQUISITION ROLE TO GO FOR CPA FUNDS***

The city has a new Draft Recreation and Open Space Plan, and now, because of the Community Preservation Act, it has funding to make land acquisitions a reality. The Newton Conservators have an important role to play as a sponsor for acquisitions by approaching landowners, arranging purchases, and bringing requests for funding for those purchases to the Community Preservation Committee.

In July, the Conservators' Board of Directors took an important step in voting that, if legal documentation is approved, the Conservators will sponsor the acquisition of a parcel off Elgin Street and the Hammond Pond Parkway. The parcel contains an intermittent stream, wetlands, and an area of wooded upland that, if developed, would intrude on the larger conservation area it borders. Alex Wilmerding made a gift of part of his development rights in the parcel to the city several months ago. He has made the balance of his land available in a proposed bargain sale. If the proposal is approved, the city will become the owner of the land, and the Conservators will hold a Conservation Restriction. The multiple layers of restriction assure that the parcel will remain open space and will not be converted to other use.

The Conservators' Land Acquisition Group has explored other acquisitions as well. These include a parcel adjacent to Dolan Pond, with a mature growth of evergreens that provide a visual buffer and wildlife habitat. The Conservators have teamed with the Conservation Commission in the Elgin Street proposal and will do so in others, where the Commission has the ability to make acquisitions in a manner not available to a private land trust.

Some of the important acquisition targets on the horizon are the city's last remaining small farm, a parcel adjacent to the Webster Conservation Area, and the largest remaining open space holding in the city still in private hands, a 45-acre tract on the Saw Mill Brook.

*Eric Reenstierna*

## ***Dolan Pond Improvement Project Underway***

The long awaited Dolan Pond improvement project got underway in late August and is expected to be completed in late October. Dolan Pond is a small, eight-acre, biologically diverse conservation area in West Newton located between Auburndale Avenue and Webster Street (access from Webster Park) originally acquired by the city in 1979. The project consists of the installation of stabilized stone pathways and a handicapped accessible boardwalk between Auburndale Avenue and Webster Park including an observation deck over Quinn Pond. In addition, there will be an observation deck overlooking Dolan Pond between the north and south sections of Cumberland Road. New stairways will be created at the ends of Stratford Road and Cumberland Road (south). Information kiosks and signage will guide visitors within the area and handicapped parking will be available at the Webster Park entrance.

The project is funded by a federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) recommended by the West Newton CDBG Advisory Committee. Margo Young, a Radcliffe graduate landscape design student, performed a study and an initial design for improvements as her thesis project. These were presented at a number of public meetings before the Newton Conservation Commission and the West Newton Advisory Committee. Feedback resulted in a number of modifications and the City of Newton prepared a revised detailed engineering plan, which was put out to bid. The contract was awarded last spring to Liberty Siteworks of Brookline. Work was originally scheduled to be started this past spring but a number of paperwork glitches ensued. With all contracts in place, work finally commenced around August 20th.

The contractor is completing the work on the Cumberland end of the property first so that pathway can be opened as soon as possible. The Auburndale Avenue to Webster Park pathway will remain closed until completion. Safety tape has been used to close off the pathways as necessary for safety reasons. The late summer period is a good time for the work

*(Continued on page 5)*

*Dolan Pond, continued from page 4*

to be done. It avoids disruption of nesting birds and is an easier work environment due to the drier nature of the paths.

Dolan and Quinn Ponds in reality are vernal pools. In many years, they dry up in the late summer and refill in the later autumn from rains and stormwater. This is the nature of vernal pools and one of the factors that contributes to the area's biodiversity. The lack of fish in vernal pools leads to an abundance of frogs, toads, salamanders, and turtles.

From Webster Park to Banana Pond, a handicapped accessible surface of stabilized soil is being used. It appears like a natural path while providing support much like concrete. Such a surface was used on the new path at Crystal Lake's Levingston Cove. From Banana Pond to Quinn Pond, the new edged boardwalk surface will be made of recycled plastic lumber in natural colors, which should be virtually maintenance free.

The boardwalk and wildlife observation decks are built upon a foundation of helical piers which have a very small footprint. These are essentially long narrow rods with a circular ramped end which is slowly screwed into the ground to a point where it is determined to be able to support the weight needed. Due to the boggy nature of Dolan Pond, additional extension rods were needed to go far enough into the ground (an average of about 17 feet). Prior to the new boardwalk, the paths had to be renewed with wood chips every year (thanks to students, teachers, and parents from Burr and Franklin schools) because of the swampy nature of the path.

Please respect the temporarily closed areas and call any problems to the attention of the City's Planning Department at 617-796-1120. Dee Spiro (Community Development Planner) and Martha J. Aherin Horn (Senior Environmental Planner) have done a terrific job in shepherding this project for the city. When completed we will have a terrific new conservation resource for Newton which will be handicapped accessible. If you would like updates on the area via the Friends of Dolan Pond email newsletter, please send a request to [dolanpond@aol.com](mailto:dolanpond@aol.com) or visit [www.dolanpond.org](http://www.dolanpond.org).

*Ted Kuklinski*

## ***Funding Obtained for Hammond Pond Clean-up***

In July, the city received word that a grant of \$149,500 in federal funds has been awarded through the state Department of Environmental Planning for structural improvements and increased maintenance in and adjacent to Hammond Pond. This work will occur on property owned by the Chestnut Hill Shopping Center.

This represents the culmination of several years of effort by a large number of people and organizations who have banded together to achieve this goal (see box on next page). This task force was led with great dedication by Rep. Ruth Balser, who received the 2001 Environmentalist of the Year Award from the Newton Conservators recognizing her work on this project.

The grant application was largely written by Stephanie Bacon (Friends of Hammond Pond and Newton Conservators board member) and Martha Aherin Horn (the city's Environmental Planner). Their hard work and expertise in guiding this effort cannot be overstated.

The base plan was prepared by Rich Claytor, an environmental engineer with the firm of Horsley & Witten. The cost of preparing the base plan was funded by the Charles River Neighborhood Foundation, of which Ald. Amy Sangiolo is trustee. This seed money came at a critical time, enabling the development of the engineering proposal that helped win the grant.

C&R Management of the Chestnut Hill Shopping Center and their new management company, S.R. Weiner, also played a crucial role. A vice president from S.R. Weiner spoke at the press conference announcing the grant, indicating that his company is in charge of the planned upgrade of the mall and that they feel a special interest in balancing environmental and development issues.

The next step is to meet with the shopping center management company to negotiate a legal agreement as to the work, its timing and the ongoing maintenance plan. Once that legal agreement has been reached and documented, the city will sign a contract with DEP and move

*(Continued on page 6)*

forward in the process. This will include going out to bid for engineering design services to secure the final design, bidding the construction work, doing the quality control plan and then the actual construction.

The project has been divided into three phases. Phase 1 will include a sand filter, bioretention area, planting, fencing and an educational component. Phase 2 includes a sedimentation forebay: an area at the end of the Mass Highway Route 9 stormwater pipe that will be enclosed to capture sand and debris, which is easily cleaned out.

Rep. Ruth Balsler, with the support of the entire Newton legislative delegation, was successful in acquiring \$37,500 to fund Phase 2 through the Environmental Bond Bill, passed by the legislature and signed by the governor this summer. Phase 3 involves the installation of a Vortecnic unit to capture sediments from Hammond Pond Parkway and the roof of the Chestnut Hill Mall. Funding is not yet available for Phase 3.

Hammond Pond is one of two “great ponds” in Newton (the other is Crystal Lake) and it has suffered in recent years from a process of eutrophication (overly abundant growth of plants) and slow but steady filling in of the lake from sediments. Much this material comes from sources like the mall parking lot, Route 9 and the roofs of nearby buildings. The goal of this plan is to reverse that process by cleaning the runoff of damaging materials before water enters the pond. With this new level of protection, the pond can begin to heal itself, avoiding dredging and other much more expensive interventions.

When completed, this project will be a terrific achievement, one that we can all feel proud to have been a part of. We will provide regular updates as work proceeds over the coming months.

*Martha Aherin Horn, Rep. Ruth Balsler, Doug Dickson*

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## SAVE THE DATE

### **Symposium: *Inventing the Charles River***

Consider joining the Charles River Conservancy on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM for a panel discussion and recognition event celebrating the release of *Inventing the Charles River* by Karl Haglund.

## HAMMOND POND TASK FORCE

### **Neighborhood Associations**

Friends of Hammond Pond  
Chestnut Hill Garden Club  
Chestnut Hill Association  
Chestnut Hill Village Alliance  
The Woman’s Club of Newton Highlands

### **Local Advocacy Organizations**

Newton Conservators  
Brookline Green Space Alliance  
Green Decade Coalition  
Charles River Watershed Association  
Charles River Neighborhood Foundation  
Charles River Conservancy  
League of Women Voters of Newton

### **Local Businesses**

Cohen & Rothenberg, owners of Chestnut Hill  
Shopping Center  
Bloomingdales

### **City Officials**

Environmental Planner  
Commissioner of Public Works  
Newton Conservation Commission

**State Agencies** (No representative of a state agency participated in the grant application process)  
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection,  
Northeast Regional Office  
Massachusetts Highway Department, District 4  
Metropolitan District Commission

### **Elected Officials**

State Representatives  
Newton Aldermen

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## **Green Decade Environmental Seminar** *“Easy Composting—Turning Garbage into Gold”*

**Ann McGovern, Mass. DEP**

Monday, October 21, 7 PM, Newton Free Library

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The morning program will take place in MIT’s Walker Memorial/Morse Hall. After an awards ceremony and luncheon, guests will cruise along the parklands to view the restoration work below the Science Museum. Reservations will be required. For more information, contact the CRC at 617-641-9131 or at [crc@charlesriverconservancy.org](mailto:crc@charlesriverconservancy.org).

**MISSION**  
**Newton Conservators, Inc.**

The Newton Conservators promote the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

*The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization over 40 years ago in June 1961.*

## Brief Updates

*News of interest from various sources*

### **Community Preservation Committee Releases Draft Plan; Seeks Comment**

Newton's Community Preservation Committee released a draft of its first annual plan, outlining the needs, resources and possibilities for funding of community preservation projects. The plan was released in late August and comments are sought by September 27<sup>th</sup>. It can be viewed on the city website ([www.ci.newton.ma.us](http://www.ci.newton.ma.us)) or a copy can be obtained by calling the Newton Planning Department.

The plan includes goals for selection of CPA projects and a description of the process by which proposals can be made to the CPC for consideration. A copy of the CPA Application Form is also included.

Proposals will be accepted in two rounds each year, with due dates falling on November 1 and May 1. Projects that cannot conform to these rounds because of urgent need to respond to opportunities will be considered off cycle.

Regular meetings of the CPC are held the third Wednesday of every month at City Hall. These as well as special meetings are posted in the City Clerk's office well in advance. All are welcome.

*Doug Dickson*

## Houghton Garden Work Begins

We are very fortunate to have Emanouil Brothers of Chelmsford as our site contractors. They have a lot of good, solid experience with the renovation of historic gardens and received high praise from the landscape architects and municipal and state agencies that I called when checking their references. The contract is in process and I anticipate giving them the notice to proceed later this month.

We have had a dry year so far and that's good in terms of the work in the pond and the pathways. The garden will be closed during the renovation as passage will be dangerous. The bids came in substantially higher than anticipated and, as a result, we will not be able to complete all of the work on the fence and a few other items. We will be working with the Chestnut Hill Garden Club toward private subscriptions to fund these missing pieces.

*Martha Aherin Horn*

## Flowed Meadow Improvements

As part of its approval for the new office building on the site of the former incinerator at Rumford Avenue, Capasso Realty was required to restore a degraded wetland elsewhere in the city. The gravel driveway known as Wabasso Street runs immediately adjacent to Purgatory Cove of the Charles River. The Capassos have agreed to relocate the driveway farther inland, pull the bank back and plant the area with trees, shrubs and herbaceous material to improve the quality of the stormwater runoff from Wabasso Street.

The license allowing private work on city land has been prepared and is now in the final approval process. I anticipate that the contractor will be able to begin work in mid-September. This improvement was recommended by the Flowed Meadow Planning Group and will be the first work accomplished on the property, and at no expense to the city.

*Martha Aherin Horn*

## Conservation Enforcement Actions

The Conservation Commission has been busy dealing with a spike in the number of violations of conservation orders. Look for an article on this in the next Newton Conservators Newsletter.

# EVENTS CALENDAR

Thursday, September 12, 7:30 PM  
 Room 222, Newton City Hall  
**Community Preservation Committee Meeting**

Monday, September 16, 7:30 PM  
 Room 209, Newton City Hall  
**Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, September 25, 7:30 PM  
 Room 202, Newton City Hall  
**Newton Conservators Board Meeting**

Thursday, September 26, 7:30 PM  
 Room 209, Newton City Hall  
**Conservation Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, October 16, 7:30 PM  
 Cafeteria, Newton City Hall  
**Community Preservation Committee Meeting**

Monday, October 21, 7:30 PM  
 Room 209, Newton City Hall  
**Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, October 23, 7:30 PM  
 Room 202, Newton City Hall  
**Newton Conservators Board Meeting**

Thursday, October 24, 7:30 PM  
 Room 209, Newton City Hall  
**Conservation Commission Meeting**

**Do We Have Your Correct Email Address?**  
 If your email address has changed recently or if you would like to be added to our Email Alert list, please send your address to Jason Glasgow, Membership Chair, at [glasgow@world.std.com](mailto:glasgow@world.std.com).

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**If your mailing label is marked in pink, your membership has expired. Please renew today!**



*Celebrating 42 years  
of open space advocacy  
in Newton*

***Newton Conservators Membership Form***  
 PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • 617-969-8661 • [www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

- YES, I'd like to start/renew my one-year membership with the Newton Conservators to help preserve open space in Newton. I'll receive informative newsletters and emails and be invited to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities.
- I'd like to make an additional tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Newton Conservators: \$\_\_\_\_\_

<b>MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Individual member	\$25
<input type="radio"/> Family member	\$35
<input type="radio"/> Sustaining member	\$50
<input type="radio"/> Donor	\$75
<input type="radio"/> Patron	\$100

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

STREET \_\_\_\_\_ VILLAGE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ Make checks payable to **Newton Conservators, Inc.**



# *the Newton Conservators* **NEWSLETTER**

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*Printed on recycled paper with minimum 20% post-consumer waste*

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.  
P.O. Box 590011  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

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US Postage Paid  
Newton, MA 02459  
Permit No. 55629

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