

# Friends of Hall's Pond

Fall/Winter 2007

## Frost, Bare Trees, Snow Allow for Exciting Birding

By Fred Bouchard

**W**INTER BIRD-WATCHING in New England is exceptionally exciting, my favorite season, after Spring. Birds come right to your feeders, show themselves easily in bare woods. Ocean and lake ducks fly down from Canada in vast numbers; you can scope or binoc them, or eyeball some (Mergansers, Canvasbacks, Scaup, Ring-necks, Ruddies) at Hall's Pond or Fresh Pond in Cambridge.



Rather than regurgitate columns from winters past, I chatted with Bob Martel, a fellow local amateur, part-time naturalist who's keen on birds. This winter Bob will lead his tenth annual Christmas Count in Brookline for Greater Boston's piece of the National Audubon effort.

Naturally, we talked about owls first. They're mysterious because you seldom get to see one by day. Yet on Christmases Past, we've seen scores of Screech and a few Great Horned Owls. We share favorite Screech Owl spots that are often (not always) reliable – and then only if you play taped whinny calls and try after midnight! Hall's Pond is one, Warren Pond (Cypress and Pond St. circle) is another; woods circling Jamaica Pond may prove fruitful. Bob's heard them in his yard on Wellington Circle; they're probably in your neighborhood, too, but they're about 98% nocturnal.

I've spent many a Hall's Pond visit (by day) scouring the newly planted long-leaf pines along

the upland trail for Screechies and the scarcer Saw-whet Owls. In ten years, I've found three and one.

Winter's nice for getting better looks at our year round residents, like Woodpeckers – Downies, Flickers, the odd Hairy, and increasingly, the jazzy, noisy red-headed Red-bellied. (Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers may seek a high-sap evergreen to winter over.) Chickadees and

Titmice usually announce themselves. White-breasted Nuthatches give their little henk-henk, and this year there's a run on their usually scarcer Red-breasted cousins (listen for their higher-pitched nyeh-nyeh.)

One more hot item: this winter looms as one rich in 'winter' finches; they make periodic (once every 5 or 6 years) forays from Canada's boreal forests when pine-cone crops crash. Check your Peterson and Sibley guides to learn the look and calls of these rarities at your feeders or when walking in the woods: Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, White-winged and Red Crossbills, Pine Siskin. Good luck!

Bob suggests a few local spots he favors for winter birding: Lost Pond (enter through Brookline recycling center off Hammond Pond Parkway), Hoar Estates (behind Runkle School), Larz Anderson Park, Jamaica Pond.





*Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth  
are never alone or weary of life.*

— *Rachel Carson*



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*All photographs, unless  
noted otherwise, courtesy  
of Bruce Wolff*

**Volunteer, Board Member, President**

Our good friend and advocate, **Barbara Mackey**, retired from our board in Spring, 2006 after years of loyal service. The Friends honored Barbara at our Annual Meeting on June 11, 2007, and presented her with a book on shorelines as a thank you token for her many years of hard work and steadfast support of Hall's Pond.



Barbara's leadership of the Friends from 1996 to 2006 was most notable for the development of a master plan and the restoration of Hall's Pond and Amory Woods. This undertaking was supported by a foundation grant from the Stoneman family in conjunction with the Town of Brookline. Now as we all enter the gardens and the sanctuary, with the birds and the boardwalks and lush vegetation, we can well appreciate the results of years of effort and planning which, under Barbara's inspiration, came together so beautifully.

Barbara has since relocated from Brookline to the Charlestown waterfront, where she now enjoys boating in her spare time.

The meeting also featured a presentation on global warming by **Matthew Alvarado**, research assistant at the MIT Center for Global Change Science. The audience appreciated Matthew's thoughtful and concise talk on what global warming might mean to our community. Following a question and answer session, resource information was distributed. One particular reference that might be of interest is from the Union of Concerned Scientists, "Climate Change and U.S. Northeast" ([www.ucsusa.org/news/press\\_release/global-warming-will-alter.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/global-warming-will-alter.html)). Matt is also a Town Meeting Member in Precinct 3, a board member of Brookline Greenspace Alliance and a past volunteer of Hall's Pond Community Work Days.



Reports on the maintenance of the sanctuary, membership activity, newsletter, and finances of the Friends of Hall's Pond were also given during the meeting. Board nominations and re-elections were held and three new board members were elected. Mary Harris joined as board member and secretary; and two students, Amy Harmsworth-Morrissey and Saba Mostafavi joined as Brookline High School representatives. A reception followed the conclusion of the meeting.

The Board welcomes your suggestions for award recipients, topics for future annual meetings, and content ideas for future newsletters.

***In and Around the Garden***

By this time of year, the gardens have been put to rest and the highlights of winter will be upon us. Some of these highlights are to be found in the structure of trees and shrubs not hidden by lush summer growth, colorful fruits left on the vine and the beauty in the bark of trees. Take a look around, what else do you see?

***News and updates around the sanctuary***

The aeration system did quite a good job this summer. Hall's Pond did not have the algae blooms that have been seen in the past. Good circulation and air make for a healthier aquatic environment. The solar panel for the aeration system has also

been a success. The 5'x3' panel sitting atop the shed has offset the electricity use for the aeration system by 60%. This solar panel was a cooperative venture between the Town of Brookline, Friends of Hall's Pond and supportive neighbors of the sanctuary. There has been more contracted work done on invasive species around the pond and there will be maintenance and upkeep done on the storm water gabion.

The weather has been difficult on plants over the last few years. Hot dry summers and low snowfall has led to a lack of water in some areas that plants need for continued good health. The town and the friends will be watching the health of the trees and continue with the maintenance needed for safety of park users.



*Nature does not hurry,  
yet everything is accomplished.*

— Lao Tzu

## ***Historic Families and Names Associated with Hall's Pond and Environs***

by Ferris Hall



### **Mission Statement**

*The Friends of Hall's Pond is dedicated to the preservation and protection of Hall's Pond Sanctuary in Brookline, Massachusetts.*

*Through the encouragement and coordination of volunteers in education, conservation and maintenance, the Friends seek to ensure a healthy future for this valuable urban resource.*



For information about membership, volunteering, or to contact the Friends

Write:  
Friends of Hall's Pond  
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HALL'S Pond is what remains of what was known as Cedar Swamp (1700s), and Swallow Pond (1800s). It took the name of its owner, Minna Hall, about 1900. Minna was born at 156 Ivy Street in 1859 and still lived there upon her death in 1951. One of the early homes in the 'Cottage Farm Neighborhood', it lies immediately north of the Pond and was built in 1850-51 by Minna's grandfather, George Dexter, on land purchased from his friend Amos Lawrence. Dexter was superintendent of Trinity Church during its construction and he and E. C. Cabot, designed the Boston Atheneum.

Amos Lawrence (1814-1886) was the son of the textile merchant for whom is named the city of Lawrence, MA. Also named for, or built by, this philanthropic family is Lawrence College in Appleton, WI, the town of Lawrence, KA, Groton Academy, Harvard Episcopal Divinity School, and both the Lawrence School and Church of our Savior in Brookline. It was the Lawrence family who purchased Hall's Pond and a large area around this in 1850-51 from David Sears Jr. This area was called the Cottage Farm because it contained the so-called Sewall farm house. The Sewall family had owned this land and this cottage for many years, including Samuel Sewall, chief of the MA Supreme Court & presiding judge at the Salem witch trials in 1692.

Amos Lawrence had purchased 200 acres of this land in 1850-51 from David Sears Jr. (1816-1871) whose father was a prominent Boston clipper-ship merchant. From 1818-30 Sears had purchased from various individuals, land which extended from the Charles River to what is now the Longwood Medical Area. He built the Sears Chapel in 1860 (next to Longwood Towers) and

laid out the Longwood Mall on which he planted, from 1836-1840, the now historic stand of European Beech trees. He also laid out small neighborhood parks/squares and streets, many of which were named for his family members or their spouses: Amory, Powell, Crowninshield, Mason, Winthrop and Knyvet.



Deb Raptopoulos

In 1903 Brookline purchased 8.2 acres of what is now Amory Park from the Anna Powell Sears Amory estate for \$62,000. Until her death in 1895 Anna had lived in her 1846 home, situated on what is now 20 Amory St, on the 25 acre estate given to her by her father David Sears Jr. About this same time, Minna Hall offered to give Hall's Pond to the Town. This offer was refused! In 1910 Charles

Newhall purchased the Hall's Pond land and built the Beacon Street apartment buildings. In January 1975 the Newhall estate sold the 3.5 acres of Hall's Pond and adjacent wetland to the Town. This purchase, for only \$65,000, was made possible because of the recently passed Massachusetts Wetlands Act, which rendered the land as unbuildable.

In the late 1890s Minna Hall, with her cousin Harriet Lawrence Hemenway (grand-daughter of Amos Lawrence), cofounded a bird protection society. By 1897 this group numbered 900 members & successfully lobbied the Massachusetts legislature for a law against "possessing or wearing bodies or plumage of any Massachusetts song bird." This forerunner of the State Audubon Society was the inspiration and model for all other state/local Audubon Societies, and much of America's conservation movement. In fact, Minna's Brookline legacy of the Hall's Pond Sanctuary is dwarfed, in the eyes of many, by her contributions to the national conservation movement.

Previous owners of Hall's Pond: Sewell > Sears > Lawrence > Dexter > Hall > Newhall > Town of Brookline



## Amory Park Renovations

**A**MORY Park, a town park with sports fields and tennis courts, is directly adjacent to Hall's Pond Sanctuary. The Town has been planning a renovation of Amory Park, and the Friends have followed the project's development with interest.

The goal of the renovation is to improve the grass playing fields and the pedestrian entrances and paths through the park. Renovation of the playing fields will include amended soils, new irrigation, new drainage, plus a slight realignment of the fields to accommodate a continuous walking path around them. This walking path will be fully accessible and will also connect the fields with the upper level/restrooms of the comfort station. The grade change will be handled in part with a rustic native stone wall. There will be a new pedestrian entrance to the park from Amory Street with a seating area that overlooks the park, and a new pedestrian path along Freeman Street Extension.

There were three well-attended public design review meetings from October 2006 to February 2007, and presentations to the Conservation and Preservation Commissions. Construction documents were issued for competitive bids; however the bids received in June exceeded the Town's construction cost budget. With some modifications to the base bid and alternate bids to be solicited, but without redesign of the renovation, the Town intends to issue the documents for bids again in winter 2007-08, in preparation for a construction start in summer 2008.

## Save-the-Dates

*Friends of Hall's Pond  
Community Work Days*

Rain or Shine

**Sunday, April 27, 2008** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Sunday, November 23, 2008** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Ellen Forrester

*Amy Harmsworth-Morrissey and Saba Mostafavi, Brookline High School representatives on the Board of the Friends of Hall's Pond, led BHS freshmen students in the caretaking of Hall's Pond and Amory Woods at the Community Fall Work Day on November 18, 2007.*

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**Friends of Hall's Pond**

