



Friends of Hall's Pond

December 2020

SANCTUARY NEWS

A Uniquely Challenging Time



Sharon Gray

The Parade of Seasons, October 15, 2020.

by Tom Brady, Brookline Conservation Administrator, Town Arborist, and Tree Warden

AS WE WIND DOWN the fall season and begin our transition into winter, it is a good time to reflect on 2020.

This year has been a uniquely challenging time for the Hall's Pond Sanctuary. COVID-19 has significantly altered the routine and daily lives of our community, and Brookline residents have turned to the sanctuary for restorative passive recreation and respite. Increased foot traffic has unfortunately resulted in some wear and damage to the pathway and boardwalks.

While it gives us pleasure to know that the sanctuary has served to improve the health and wellbeing of our community during this difficult time, the peace and tranquility we have come to enjoy in Hall's Pond has, at times, been slightly challenging to locate.

Once again, the *Friends of Hall's Pond* took to action and partnered with the Town to increase the level of maintenance and oversight at the sanctuary to ensure the flora and fauna were protected and visitors able to enjoy the sanctuary in a safe and respectful manner. We are incredibly grateful for the efforts of the *Friends* during this unprecedented crisis. It is due to their energy and dedication that this cherished space has been protected and maintained to such a high standard during such a strenuous time.

Over the years, the Town has partnered with the *Friends* on numerous projects and maintenance commitments. We look forward to these workdays, where we have become accustomed to the sounds of laughter, friendly banter, and, more recently, the sounds of music. Bruce Wolff captured these special moments and the beauty of Hall's Pond Sanctuary on film for many years. Bruce passed away not so long ago. We will miss Bruce and think of him as we stroll through the Sanctuary and spy the

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From the Co-Presidents

Bob Schram and John Shreffler

THIS YEAR at Hall's Pond was, to say the least, unusual. The growing season started off well but, as it progressed, turned dry and ended in drought. For that, the vegetation largely held its own and the plantings in the Formal Garden, being selected for resilience, remained beautiful throughout. The wildflowers followed their normal sequence from snowdrops to asters. The birds, squirrels, chipmunks, turtles and other wildlife went about their business.

For the users of Hall's Pond, the onset of the pandemic created unprecedented turmoil. After

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John Shreffler



From the Co-Presidents, from page 1

mid-March, normal activities stopped due to lockdown. The Sanctuary remained open to the public throughout but visitors were required to mask and practice social distancing. Use was at first fairly sparse but steadily increased and over the summer became unprecedentedly high. Nature in its Hall's Pond jewel box provided solace and comfort in a time of distress.

Our normal sequence of Hall's Pond activities altered. Spring Community Day had to be cancelled. At first, our volunteer sessions went on hold. In mid-June, the Town began a phased reopening and volunteer sessions resumed, at first limited to groups of 5, masked and socially distancing, and gradually increasing in number, as restrictions eased. The volunteers continued their excellent stewardship under Frank Caro's expert direction and by season's end, the Sanctuary was in shape for winter. Our Fall Community Day also had to be cancelled due to ongoing pandemic related restrictions. We held our Annual Meeting virtually on Zoom in late May and Tom Brady, Town Conservation Administrator, gave a talk on the challenges of keeping Hall's Pond open during pandemic. Our website *friendsofballspnd.org* continues to excel, with steady new additions to the "See and Share Sightings."

During the course of the year, our team suffered losses. In June, our Co-President Ellen Forrester stepped down after suffering a personal loss. In late September, longtime Board Member Bruce Wolff died from complications due to Parkinson's Disease. On October 2nd, our President Frank Caro died unexpectedly after a brief illness. Losses notwithstanding, the *Friends of Hall's Pond* is carrying on. Our Board has elected Bob Schram and John Shreffler to serve as Interim Co-Pres-



Harry Breger

Early April at the sanctuary, on one of the last "normal" days.

idents to fill out the remainder of the unexpired terms. Our other Officers, Jim Franco (Treasurer), Diane Ryan (Recording Secretary), and Helen Herman (Corresponding Secretary) continue to serve. Harry Breger continues to design and produce the newsletters. A special thanks to all our volunteers, too numerous to name here. Volunteers are an essential part of our team and we always welcome and need more.

Your membership payments and generous gifts remain essential. We use them to keep up Hall's Pond with plantings and to help the Town with its projects. At present, the pandemic-induced economic downturn has severely affected the Town's budget, so your gifts and contributions are more important than ever. Nature has its price.

We encourage you to keep visiting the Sanctuary during the impending offseason. The long slanting light of winter has its own magic and nature continues to heal even when dormant.



Michael Sandman

Frank helping restore Atlantic white cedars to Hall's Pond for the first time in generations, at the Spring 2009 Community Day.

A Uniquely Challenging Time, from page 1

turtles and the blue herons he so beautifully photographed over the years.

Very recently we also lost our friend, and President of the *Friends of Hall's Pond*, Frank Caro. Frank was a passionate advocate for Hall's Pond Sanctuary and its many users. Frank's maintenance teams have done tremendous work at the sanctuary over the past several years. Also of significant note is Frank's work championing the need for age-friendly parks and open spaces in Brookline and amplifying the needs of the elder community. I have spent many years working with Frank on a number of issues. He was smart, compassionate, caring, and a thoughtful member of our Hall's Pond community. He will be dearly missed; my thoughts and prayers of comfort go to his wife, Carol, and their family.

Frank Caro



John Shreffler

Frank overseeing the opening maintenance session in 2019.

Frank Caro, our beloved President of the *Friends of Hall's Pond*, died suddenly last month and Brookline lost one of our local saints. When word of Frank's passing spread throughout the town, waves of sympathy, wonderful memories and tributes to his many contributions flooded in from all sides. It seems

Frank had a hand in so many community and civic endeavors that we were all amazed that Frank's activism and involvement affected so many lives in so many different ways. From decades of service to Brookline's Town Meeting and Advisory Committee, to the Brookline Senior Center, to advocacy for local parks and amenities for the elderly, to countless acts of personal kindness, Frank touched more lives and accomplished more good than any one of us could have imagined.

What was his secret? Frank simply did everything he could. He never stopped trying to make our world a better place, step by step by step. Our world would be a paradise if all of us simply did all we are capable of doing, if we simply never stop trying to do good things, if we could follow Frank's selfless example. The Hall's Pond Sanctuary had a special place in Frank's heart, even if it was just one of the many projects where he applied his energy. This is where he really got his hands dirty, literally and figuratively. For years and years it was Frank who organized and led the volunteer maintenance crews who lovingly tend to the Sanctuary. It was Frank who energized us all to publish our newsletter, organize our many Community Days, keep our website relevant, lobby the town for support and funding, and to help make all of Brookline aware of our hidden gem. Frank continues to inspire us.

— Bob Schram



Harry Bregger

Bruce at one of his favorite activities – removing invasives.

Bruce Wolff

The community at Hall's Pond suffered a loss at the end of September when Bruce Wolff died after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Bruce was a fierce advocate for and defender of green-space in general and of Hall's Pond in particular. He was a long-standing Board member of our *Friends Group* and an even more enthusiastic presence at our volunteers sessions, initiating generations of volunteers in the mysteries of invasive plants and their removal. In addition, he was a nature photographer of the highest order. His photos have been in most of our newsletters and provided a splendid backdrop for our most recent live Annual Meeting in 2019. Bruce was an amazingly open and warm hearted soul and inspired others with his encouragement and love of nature. Bruce will surely be missed.

— John Shreffler



A small sampling of Bruce's photos at Hall's Pond over the years.

Re-engage With Nature Through a Long Winter

by Fred Bouchard

*A winter Eden in an alder swamp
Where conies now come out to sun and romp,
Is near a paradise as it can be
And not melt snow or start a dormant tree.*

— Robert Frost



WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

The world crumbling beneath our feet. Yes, folks, the sixth extinction is well underway, no thanks to you and me. Mother Nature

doesn't care a hoot about COVID-19 or man's self-centered, consuming fears. We're just the noisier peas rattling in her pod. Mama has rolled along nicely until lately, as human greed and interference strain her patience and boundaries.

Upsides of pandemia are the slowing of life's manic pace and affording closer glimpses of nature. "Winter woods," writes Helen Macdonald in her intuitive essays *Vesper Flights*, "teach us about the last five hours, the last five days, the last five centuries, all at once." Snowprints may reveal a dove's wingtips before take-off, a cottontail's amble pondside for a drink. Bared trees expose woodpecker nest-holes, oriole pendants, wasp cocoons, gnarly lumpen rusts or subtly undulating rows of turkey-tail fungi. A dark slick of oil seeps thru snow to bear witness to a prehistoric cedar swamp. During a sunny thaw, black carapaces of painted turtles may line up on a sunken log.

These still moments, we find, need not equate stagnation. Reflection nudges expansion, a tilt toward TLC over GNP. We slip comfortably into reduced animation, find solace in healing silence, and slide gently toward zero growth, not grind to a halt.

Setting up a bird feeder may pique these benign effects, a small token to expiate our transgressions. Hang a wooden platform from your kitchen or bay window, or for a wider view, install a column feeder (perhaps with squirrel shield) in your yard. Your steady gifts of sunflower seeds, nuts, millet, suet, cut citrus and apples, will not go unnoticed by chickadees, nuthatches, blue



A golden winter sun. December, 2017

jays, titmice, doves, woodpeckers and cadres of sparrows (song, white-throated, juncos) and house "sparrows." Starlings, pigeons, and grackles may also noisily converge. To attract house finches, goldfinches (and, in this irruptive year, pine siskins), stuff thistle or nyger seed in a dedicated feeder.

Take leisurely walks: Hall's Pond is a worthwhile destination. You might come upon a shimmering cloud of winter moths or spot a saffron spray of witch hazel.

On the boardwalk, spy a song sparrow flitting among cattail floss or chase robins from their feast of red holly berry or yellow bittersweet. Scan trees in the upland pines and Ivy St. yards for a screech or barred owl. You might run across other scampering critters besides ubiquitous gray squirrels, cute chipmunks, and speedy cottontails, like seldom seen raccoons, opossums, skunks, mice and voles.

On or by the water, besides familiar Mallards and Great Blue Herons, watch for snazzy but shy Wood Ducks. A few may winter over on suburban ponds where ducks are fed. They're early migrants, some showing up in early March. Hall's Pond has a box set up to encourage a nesting pair, but so far no takers.

Sit for a moment or two on the bench in the formal garden. Breathe deep, cherish the urban hush. Open a book, nibble an apple, maybe share an observation with a fellow masked communer. The winter shall pass all the faster when we immerse ourselves in it with joy and appreciation.

Oh, one more thing: If you see / hear / snap something, share it on our website's See and Share Sightings at: friendsofhallspnd.org/featured-items/see-and-share-sightings/

Turkey tails, forest floor fungi commonly found on stumps and logs, are known for their curative properties.



Hall's Pond Birding 2020



Geoff Kronik

Double-crested Cormorant drying off, September 2020.

by Neil Gore

IN THIS YEAR of COVID-19, birding was different. Social distancing prohibited group trips. Birders were free of course to go out into nature, but on their own.

I usually spend Spring (March through May) going on a variety of trips throughout Eastern Massachusetts, including my home base, Hall's Pond. This year I stuck almost entirely to Hall's Pond. So I increased my frequency of visits to 4 or 5 times a week, which is about 4 times my normal.

Lots of people were at Amory Playground throughout the spring, and many of them discovered the Sanctuary for the first time. This generated much new interest from more people, both for the outdoors in general and for Hall's Pond in particular. Also many experienced birders showed up here more often, and it was possible to have some safe communication, which was very enriching and supportive for us all.

The patterns of birds seen was rather different from the usual. Mainly, many birds which I see rarely or infrequently turn out to be more regular than I thought. Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, and Blue-headed Vireo were among several migrating species which I typically see here just briefly, but this year they were more observable. Often, leaders in the birding field encourage birders to spend more time in their own local "patch," to help with environmental protection, such as driving less and thereby using less fossil fuel. So that happened naturally this year.

My favorite bird of this spring was the Brown Thrasher. A member of the Mimid family, along with the Mockingbird and the Gray Catbird, it mimics other birds' songs. Larger and browner than the Mockingbird, with a little less musical ability, it sings a musical phrase twice, while the Mockingbird repeats three times. I usually see it only once every year or two, but this year I had half a dozen sightings at or near Hall's Pond. The difference? First, timing; be up at the crack of dawn to hear its distinctive "sun salutation." Second, look up at the top of the tallest tree; that's where it's likely to be.

I am hopeful that the Pandemic, in its disruption of our everyday lives, may have attracted a new cadre of nature lovers and new birders to our Sanctuary.



Bruce Wolff

Past presidents Janice Provencher, Ellen Forrester, Betsy Shure Gross, and Barbara Mackey.

Ellen Forrester: A Tribute and Appreciation

by Betsy Shure Gross

The *Friends of Hall's Pond* have been, over time, the beneficiaries of the talent, dedication, devotion and expertise of many – none more so than Ellen Forrester who served as our Co-President for fourteen years before her recent retirement from the Board. We are more than grateful for her participation since 2002 and for her many contributions to the enhancement of Hall's Pond Nature Sanctuary. Ellen accepted the responsibility of Co-President and joint leadership with Janice Provencher following the model established by Barbara Mackey and Dan Doherty. From her commitment to leading the Friends in developing a Management Plan with the Town of Brookline approved by the Conservation Commission in 2010, her generous provision of planting materials for Community Days, her vision for the garden and creation of Nan's Meadow, Ellen's experience and knowledge have modeled the best of skilled volunteerism for residents and users of Hall's Pond and Amory Woods. She has provided frequent and informed liaison with Tom Brady in his role as Conservation Administrator and Town Arborist and she has served as the Friends' Representative to the Brookline Green Space Alliance. From all of us:

thank you Ellen!! The absence of your presence in all of the activities and initiatives of the Friends will be felt by all. We will miss you and wish you well. And, of course, we look forward to seeing you when you can join us for Community Days and Annual Meetings.



Bruce Wolff

Volunteer Maintenance Team — and the Pandemic

by Sharon Gray

LONG BEFORE COVID-19, Hall’s Pond was already a special place. The beauty and the solace of the trees and birds, turtles and blooms, and the light reflecting on the water led me to join the Volunteer Maintenance Team.



John Shreffler

Volunteers at the 2019 Fall Community Day, hard at work.

During this season of pandemic, there were added dimensions (beyond gloves and masks and distancing) to being part of this crew and spending time at Hall’s Pond. Every other Thursday during the spring, summer, and fall under the steady and knowledgeable leadership of Frank Caro, this work and the people doing it have:

- Offered heartening entertainment. While the drama has been limited, the natural landscape was a stage and individuals, animals, flowers, and activities created narratives and plots that distracted and amused as other diversions vanished.

- Delivered endless opportunities to learn. Where the St. John’s wort thrives and the wild ginger hides, how to uproot invasive species, how the pond was formed, the links between watershed and geology, the history of Brookline’s concern for green space, bird calls and behavior: volunteers and the Sanctuary taught lessons every visit.

- Supplied a strenuous and rewarding work out. With gyms closed for most of the spring and summer, maintenance activities – pulling weeds, lopping way-

ward branches, dragging tarps full of organic debris, carting wagons of fallen tree limbs, hoisting watering hoses, and just walking around the pond and woods – augmented online exercise routines.

- Created a stronger awareness of the environment. Observing the wind and rainfall, witnessing the shifting bird migrations, and seeing that weather alterations affect what and how things grow took on a more potent meaning when life itself was so fragile.

- Provided a much-needed community. With many daily anchors – work, family, friends, events – disrupted, there was hope and inspiration in a joint commitment to making our neighborhood better, dirtying hands for our collective space, and enjoying the camaraderie of shared effort. Our core group this summer included Priscilla Smith, John Shreffler, Janet Wynn, Fran Perler, Fran Givelber, and me with lots of new people, including Hayden Perkin, Jennie Chan, Roz Moore, Ellen & Jim Perrin and Alexander Pissios and Daphne Pissios. Others who joined from time to time included Diane Ryan, Ann Frechette, and Deborah Stone. If we missed your name in the current confusion, our apologies and thanks.

We will miss Frank’s organization, guidance, and patience. In so many ways, he was the Volunteer Maintenance Team; he taught us so much and cared so selflessly. So, pandemic or not, I’ll be back at Hall’s Pond next season ready to weed and dig, water and prune, observe, learn, and appreciate in honor and memory of Frank.



Sharon Gray

Thank you to Faith Michaels, faithfulflowers.net, for donating fall plants for the Hall’s Pond formal garden, and to her crew members Lorena and Thor for their expert planting.

Membership Form

The *Friends of Hall's Pond* was founded in 1976 by Josephine Albrecht and others who established a public-private partnership, making a commitment to partner with the Brookline Conservation Commission as stewards of the newly acquired Hall's Pond Nature Sanctuary. The *Friends* are committed to the maintenance, preservation, and protection of this unique urban resource. Our initiatives include running Community Days, tending the Formal Garden, and raising funds for the Horticulture Fund.

NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

Extra donation is in memory of:

Renewing Members — to save funds, and trees, the *Friends of Hall's Pond* does not send separate renewal forms by mail as in the past. Please check if your membership is due, and use this form and the enclosed envelope to make your generous donations.

Name (please print)

Address

City

State

Zip

Email

ANNUAL DUES: \$25 INDIVIDUAL \$35 FAMILY

I would like to make an additional contribution to support the work of the *Friends* at the sanctuary \$ _____
Total enclosed \$ _____

I am interested in:

- Assisting at Community Days
- Volunteer Maintenance Team
- Investing in the Horticulture Fund
- Working in the Formal Garden
- Taking guided walks in the Sanctuary
- Newsletter and/or Website

Please make checks payable to *Friends of Hall's Pond, Inc.*

Send to: *Friends of Hall's Pond*

PO Box 1844

Brookline MA 02446

Or join at friendsofhallspond.org, via credit card or PayPal

We are ALWAYS grateful for your continued support.

For further information about membership, volunteering, or to contact the *Friends*, please go to friendsofhallspond.org, or write us at friendsofhallspond@gmail.com. Our organization is interested in your communication and encourages your involvement.

Friends of Hall's Pond is a 501(c)3 organization. (Most taxpayers who do not itemize may now deduct up to \$300 for charitable contributions.)

My or my spouse's place of employment will match my contribution. (Please send matching gift information from your place of employment to the *Friends of Hall's Pond*.)

The Friends of Hall's Pond BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Friends of Hall's Pond
PO Box 1844
Brookline MA 02446

To learn more about Brookline's hidden treasure,
Please visit our website at friendsofhallspond.org

A walking tour conceived and photographed by Bruce Wolff for our newsletter in 2010:

Booksmith: Latitude, North 42° 20.557'
Longitude, West 71° 07.307'

Hall's Pond: Latitude, North, 42° 20.737'
Longitude, West 71° 06.739'



Starting at the Booksmith, walk left...



... and the intersection of Harvard and Beacon is only 31 steps away, left again,



heading inbound, the corner of Beacon and St. Paul takes 227 steps,



to Powell Street is another 149,

Walk this way to Hall's Pond Nature Sanctuary

How many steps are there between Brookline Booksmith and Hall's Pond ???



and you're just 53 steps from Hall's Pond! Bingo!



123 more to the alley before 1120 Beacon,



total = 583 steps

There is no better place to read a book than Hall's Pond Nature Sanctuary!

For further information please go to friendsofhallspond.org