



# Friends of Hall's Pond

December 2022

SANCTUARY NEWS

## Respect and Enjoy Our Leviathans

by Fred Bouchard

*The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky. —W.B. Yeats*

I'M perched variously around the pond, admiring the resplendent variety of trees, with which I share our biome and photosynthesize — that is, silently and fruitfully exchange their life-giving O<sup>2</sup> for my CO<sup>2</sup>.

From Sanctuary founder Jo Albrecht's stone throne, surrounded by rhododendrons, I peer into crabapples, where dappled branches may hide flitting shadows of fall warblers.

On the bench in the formal garden, I take in the breathtaking claret leaf-fall of the Japanese Maple and the stone urn filled with the latest autumn posies.

Along the fence atop the 30-foot rise of the Upland woods stands a mix of pines and deciduous hardwood oaks and maples; in the middle stands a huge White Pine that has sporadically been home to a wintering Barred Owl, nicknamed "Barry."

### From the Co-Presidents

Bob Schram and John Shreffler

OVER the years, the seasons at Hall's Pond are similar, yet each year has its own signa-



Female and male Wood Ducks at the Sanctuary this past May.



John Shreffler

Weeping Willows hug the boardwalk and provide both bug-fest for migrating warblers and shade for pond-perusers and warbler-watchers.

On the pond's boardwalk, a young couple with a baby carriage and I pay homage to the Weeping Willows, surrounded by their yellow leaves. I peer at the kaleidoscopic rainbow of oily waters, marking the grave of Eastern White Cedars that lie beneath our millenia-old pond. Here Nature's half-submerged branches serve as lookouts for sunbathing turtles and hangouts for dragonflies to snipe, lurk, and mate.

On the playing field bench, I turn to take in the expanse of century old Red and Pin Oaks on Amory Street by the Ivy School driveway. I recall that Sapsuckers once drilled nests in

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ture. If 2021 was wet, 2022 was marked by a drought that deepened over the summer and only let go with the autumn rains. Even so, the Sanctuary held up fairly well, confirming the wisdom of planting with an eye towards drought resistance. Our avian visitors cycled through the seasons unfazed and the other animals hardly noticed. We were blessed with wood ducks, weasels and coyotes, all unusual guests.

The tremendous increase in foot traffic through the Sanctuary that we observed during the first year of Covid continued unabated in 2022. More people than ever have discovered and are deriving delight from our jewel box of nature. Although Hall's Pond is the smallest Conservation Sanctuary in Massachusetts, it is by far the most "intensively enjoyed" — the number of visitors has actually quadrupled

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**Leviathans** from page 1

them each spring; today they're boisterously frequented by once-southerly now year-round Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

Seated by a reading teenager at the picnic table, I admire a clutch of brown-tinged Birches, where White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos forage in winter and Gray Squirrels and Eastern Chipmunks patrol.

In the woods, the wide sepia stump of the massive "champion" Red Oak crumbles, gnawed by termites, yet still extending its intricate subterranean network with mycorrhizal fungi, topped off with brilliant jack-o-lantern mushrooms — psst, don't eat 'em!

To flesh out the majestic canopy, past-President of the *Friends of Hall's Pond*, Ellen Forrester, has planted



Red-bellied Woodpecker at Hall's Pond last May (the name Red-headed had been taken before these got named).

modest vernal fall-blooming bushes and shrubs in the eye-level (4–8 foot) mid-range. "The funds we collect through our donations allow us to choose suitable and beautiful native plants," she explains. "I try to find a nice mix in collaboration with the Town's DPW." Among the latest lovelies: *cornus sericea* (red-twig dogwood), *ilex verticillata* (winterberry), *lindera* (spicebush), *hamamelis virginiana* (witch hazel). Bone up on your Latin, ye budding botanists!

Ellen is especially enchanted with three young Pawpaw trees (*asimina triloba*, aka Custard Apple), showing large oval leaves and thin gray smooth bark. See if you can spot them as you prowl the trails. Come spring, their pale brown twigs will sport purple bell-like flowers.

**Co-Presidents** from page 1

over the last two years! This increase has placed a strain on the Boardwalk which is nearing the end of its service life and is scheduled for replacement in a few years. The Town continues to repair as needed.

Our *Friends* Group was able to resume its normal pre-pandemic sequence of activities. Fred Bouchard and Neil Gore led a series of very well attended guided bird walks during the Spring Migration in late April and through most of May. We held our first full Community Day since 2019 in late May. The Volunteer Maintenance Team, led by Priscilla Smith, began working in late April and kept up steadily until the end of September. Their efforts are an essential component of the Sanctuary's upkeep and they were successful in beating back the constant challenge of invasive species. Our website continues to flourish and is constantly updated with reports and photo "Sightings" contributed by visitors, and is well worth visiting: *Friends of HallsPond.org*.



A spring morning birdwalk, last May.

Our Annual Meeting was held virtually on Zoom at the end of June and featured guest speaker Arlene Mattison, the President of *Brookline Greenspace Alliance*, who outlined issues facing Brookline's

threatened green space and tree canopy and BGSA's advocacy role in helping the Town meet these challenges.

At season's end, we had another very successful Community Planting and Cleanup Day. Co-President Emerita and expert horticulturalist Ellen Forrester brought a whole truckload of new plants funded by the FoHP, which were successfully planted by our team.

The year saw several additions to the Sanctuary. In March, our *Friends* Group replaced the wooden benches in the Formal Garden. The original benches had been our gift and were nearing the end of their service life but were vandalized beyond repair in February. As they had borne memorial inscriptions, the Town allowed us to place our own plaques on them and we installed plaques honoring past presidents Frank Caro and Ellen Forrester as Hall's Pond's Friends. We initiated a project to fund the replacement of the user-unfriendly cast iron gates with lighter self-closing replacements. Out of an estimated cost of \$30,000, our Board authorized a commitment of \$10,000 and we successfully applied for and received a matching funds grant of \$10,000 from Brookline Greenspace Alliance from its Parks Initiative Program. In addition, one of our members donated \$500 for the project. Installation is projected for late autumn. Finally, we have received approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission for a dedicated enclosed and curated bulletin board to be located outside the north gate by the Amory Playground picnic area. The bulletin board will allow us to better inform the public about our Sanctuary.

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## Beauty and Joy

by Neil Gore



Peter Lowy

A very rare sighting of an elusive American Bittern in an early morning this past May. Related to herons, this is the first one recorded at Hall's Pond since 2003 — we must be doing something right!

2022 has been a good year for birding at Hall's Pond. Increasing numbers of people interested in birding are actively involved, and this has led to more sightings of species which are unusual or rare at the Sanctuary. Notably, the Louisiana Waterthrush, American Bittern, Great Egret, and Pied-billed Grebe have all been listed on Cornell University's eBird.

But let's consider the word "good." That implies that there are also bad, disappointing, boring, and inadequate birding days. Wouldn't it be nice to move beyond such evaluation, and to seek the beauty and the joy which may be within each moment, each day. Of course, we cannot receive "joy on demand"; it is a byproduct of our whole experience. But maybe we can approach beauty as possibly available whenever we go, by allowing our perceptions and reactions to resonate within us.

Hall's Pond is an excellent place to practice such an intention, because in itself it is beautiful. We also see the contribution it makes to a strong sense of community, to our ability to give and receive nurture, and to lifting our spirits. Birds, in addition to their inherent beauty and grace, are part of an ever-changing pattern in nature.

How to practice these intentions? Fond memories of notable experiences here in the past can lead to appreciation, perhaps even joy to have had such experiences. Being in the moment: awareness of what one is thinking, feeling, reacting to. Eager anticipation of



Nate Dow

Besides our often-seen Great Blue Herons, we occasionally also spot Black-crowned Night Herons, and Green Herons — this one on the pond, May 27, 2022.

possibilities, combined with realistic judgment about the likelihood. Willingness to be surprised, delighted, appreciative of the unexpected moment. Appreciating common experiences: Canada geese on the pond, Robins in the woods or on the lawn. Looking at the sky, the clouds, the trees. Awareness of one's mood of the moment, and how one might shift an unfavorable mood. Moving deliberately, so as to allow enough time to absorb each experience.

In recent years, I have had to adjust my expectations. It used to be that I could expect, in spring migration, a steady and predictable stream of reasonably abundant birds, beginning in late February and lasting until Memorial Day, with peak numbers and species in the first two weeks of May. But those predictable patterns have been disrupted in many ways, most visibly in recent years. What remains constant is, what is present. This year, for example, I observed an abundance of both the Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the Golden-crowned Kinglet, species which might be easy to overlook during a large migration of many species. They are beautiful birds, and when contemplated as they are, they can bring joy.



Colorful warblers migrate through the area each year, being especially visible in April and May. Many, such as these tiny Kinglets, often visit Hall's Pond — a green oasis in our urban environment.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, last April (above) and a Golden-crowned Kinglet, in November, 2018 (right), both at the Sanctuary.

At least 127 bird species have been identified at Hall's Pond over the years!



Photos by Jason Weinberg

## Hall's Pond Volunteer Maintenance Team

by Ann Frechette and Priscilla Smith



Fran Perler

**D**UE TO the extended drought this past growing season, water was a fundamental concern for the volunteer crew. We drenched the plants at our biweekly maintenance sessions. Thank you to everyone who watered the plants in between sessions. Unfortunately, some of the plants we put into the ground at our Spring Community Day did not thrive in the dry weather. We look forward to seeing what emerges in the spring.

Aside from watering plants, our hearty crew of regular volunteers fought back invasives, weeded the formal gardens, pulled plants off the fencing, pruned the shrubs, and picked up trash throughout the sanctuary. Priscilla Smith kept everyone organized. Fran Perler led the effort to dig out invasive yellow iris plants from the edge of the pond and succeeded in freeing up the highland blueberry bushes that had become overwhelmed. Janet Wynn was instrumental in keeping the formal gardens free of weeds and looking gorgeous

even in dry weather. Andrea Ignatoff and Mia Szymkowicz were diligent in finding and removing trash. Ann Frechette pulled invasive vines out of the trees. John Shreffler oversaw trash removal in between sessions. Many thanks also to Sharon Hessey, Jim and Ellen Perrin, Neil Gore and Jennie Chan who volunteered their time and energy to keeping the sanctuary looking its best.



John Shreffler

Fran Perler at work by a new willow tree near the pond.

We are grateful to Ellen Forrester who provided plants at both our Spring and Fall Community Days and then again at two of our volunteer sessions in May and June. We are continuing to work on cultivating a meadow to the right of the south entrance and to restoring native plants throughout the sanctuary. What a treat it was to see the trilliums emerge in the spring and the cardinal flowers bloom in the fall!

This past year, we organized two additional maintenance sessions at the start of the season to remove lesser celandine. Thank you to Priscilla Smith, Ann Frechette, Jennie Chan, Ellen Perrin, Neil Gore, John



Deborah Stone

A trillium blossom in late April. They're only about 6–8 inches tall, so look at the understory to find them.

Shreffler, Barbara Westley and Lai-Bing “Clara” Chin, who worked on those sessions.

The maintenance team welcomes any and all newcomers who want to join our crew and help sustain our beautiful sanctuary.

### Co-Presidents from page 2

We carry on and are grateful for our other Officers: Jim Franco (Treasurer), Ann Frechette (Recording Secretary), and Priscilla Smith (Vice-President for Information Technology). Special thanks to Helen Herman, who has stepped down from her post as Corresponding Secretary after long and dedicated service. Harry Breger continues to provide an artist’s touch in producing our newsletter. A special thanks to all our volunteers, too numerous to name here. Volunteers are an essential part of our team and we always need and welcome more.

Your membership payments and generous gifts remain essential. We use them to keep up Hall’s Pond with new plantings and to help the Town with its projects. The Town’s budget remains tight, so your gifts and contributions are more important than ever. Nature has its price.

We encourage you to keep visiting the Sanctuary during the colder months ahead. The long slanting light of winter has its own magic and nature continues to heal us even when the Sanctuary is dormant.

## Building Legacy in Neighborhood Parks

by Alex Cassie,  
Visitor Services Supervisor,  
Brookline Parks and Open Space Division

**I**N Autumn and Spring of every year, Brookline Parks and Open Space Division is fortunate to be approached by organizations, schools, *Friends* groups, and individuals looking for volunteer opportunities in their neighborhood parks, nature sanctuaries and playgrounds. While we strive to reach out to potentially interested parties, Brookline community members are typically the ones that reach out to *us* to say “how can we help?!”

Projects such as the bi-annual Hall’s Pond Community Days serve as a tentpole opportunity for folks to give back to their community and put their stamp of the legacy of their neighborhood green spaces. And the *Friends of Hall’s Pond* serves as a great template for what Parks-adjacent *Friends* groups can be. They have literally dozens of annual volunteer maintenance sessions to keep the Sanctuary looking sharp for all interested visitors (human and otherwise) and keep the invasive species, which threaten so many public spaces in New England, at bay. It is a model organization



John Shreffler



John Shreffler

Many new plants were added at our Spring Community Day, May 15, 2022.



Fran Perler

Ann Frechette leads a storytime at the Fall Community Day.



John Shreffler

Fall cleanup at the October 30, 2022 Community Day.

and we’d like to do what we can to spread their gospel around all of Brookline.

The fact is, there are dedicated, talented, engaged *Friends* groups *all over Brookline!* From community gardens to sanctuaries to pocket playgrounds and historic parks. And all of them are committed to promoting and preserving these cherished spaces. By becoming involved in a Parks’ *Friends* group, you can take the step toward building your own legacy in one of these spaces — Parks where all ages can enjoy the outdoors for years and years to come. You can help foster the trees, water the flowers, guide the conversation, and shape the future of these spaces, and Brookline Parks and Open Space Division is eager to work with you! We want to hear your thoughts and vision and want you to get as involved as possible. The more you put in, the more you get out, and help find your own role and path in that particular beloved place in Town.

So attend an event, go to a Community Day, find a park cleanup near you and join the dedicated folks that take time out of their weeks and weekends to make these parks that much more welcoming for the countless others that visit them every day!



The Public Library of Brookline traditionally holds a stuffed animal sleepover as the culmination of our summer reading program. Due to COVID, this was our first summer since 2019 that we were able to offer this program. Kids drop their “stuffedies” off at the library, the children’s librarians take them on an adventure, and the stuffed animals are picked up by their kiddos with a small surprise (this year a make-your-own s’mores kit). We then compile our numerous pictures and write a story from the

point-of-view of the stuffed animals to post on our website. This summer, we had a great time at Hall’s Pond Sanctuary and Amory Playground and appreciate that the *Friends of Hall’s Pond* were supportive of us bringing 65 stuffed animals over for an afternoon. We hope that this event also inspired more Brookline families to visit Hall’s Pond together! Below is a very short excerpt of our story as well as a few pictures! Read fully at: <https://brklib.com/pondsleepover>

## Stuffed Animal Sleepover at Hall’s Pond

by Macy Davis

**T**HIS SUMMER, the Library celebrated adventuring, so a trip to Hall’s Pond Sanctuary and Amory Playground was just what we needed! We were nervous to be away from home for a **WHOLE** night, but the librarians took good care of us.

As soon as we got to the park, the librarians set up the tent. All of us fit inside just perfectly. It wouldn’t be a library adventure without a storytime and, luckily, Pooh Bear was willing to read to us.

Our friends were eager to start exploring. Moosey taught us that Hall’s Pond is a Wildlife Sanctuary, which means that it’s a safe place for animals. Did you know that Brookline actually has three wildlife sanctuaries? It was really cool to visit one of them!

While exploring Hall’s Pond, we had to be quiet and walk slowly so that we didn’t scare any animals. Our friends Froggy, Bobby the Sea Lion, Dolphin, Fish Fish, and Lob Chan saw a turtle and a cormorant at the pond! They wanted to swim out to say hello to these new friends, but the librarians reminded us that we shouldn’t disturb these animals, which was too bad — it would have been nice to take a swim on such a hot day.



Photos courtesy of Coolidge Corner Library

We begged the librarians to let us sleep in the park in the tent, but they were afraid it might rain on us, so we hurried back to the Library where we were all tucked into our sleeping bags for the night after the librarian read us another story.

It was so much fun to have an adventure right here in Brookline! Although we had fun meeting new animal friends at the sanctuary, we were ready to see our humans again!

## 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 honor of    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    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 [friendsofballspnd.org](http://friendsofballspnd.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 [friendsofballspnd.org](http://friendsofballspnd.org), or write us at [friendsofballspnd@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofballspnd@gmail.com). Our organization is interested in your communication and encourages your involvement.

*Friends of Hall's Pond* is a 501(c)(3) organization.

We do not share personal information with other organizations or with anyone outside the *Friends*.

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

**Founder:**  
Jo Albrecht

**Co-Presidents:**  
Bob Schram  
John Shreffler

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Jim Franco

**Recording Secretary:**  
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*Sanctuary News* is produced by *Friends* volunteers, edited by John Shreffler, designed by Harry Breger, and printed with support from Century Type. All photos are used by permission and were taken at Hall's Pond Sanctuary unless noted otherwise.

## Hall's Pond I-Spy for Fall

Below are nature sights to be seen in the fall at Hall's Pond. As you walk around the sanctuary, can you see us? What else can you find?



Cottontail Rabbit



Turtles



Grey Squirrel



Cattail Reed



Hydrangea



Great Blue Heron



Maple Leaves



Crab Apples



Yellow Birch Leaf



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

*To learn more about Brookline's hidden treasure,  
Please visit our website at [friendsofhallspnd.org](http://friendsofhallspnd.org)*

## **A Note from Brookline's Conservation Administrator**

by Tom Brady,  
Brookline Conservation Administrator



As I sit in my office and look out the window at the leaves changing colors and we begin our transition into winter, it is a good time to reflect on 2022.

The *Friends of Hall's Pond* has a strong leadership team in place. Remarkably COVID-19 continues to be a part of our daily routine. Brookline residents continue to find solace and peace in our sanctuary. Increased foot traffic continues to inflict a significant level of wear and tear to the infrastructure within the Hall's Pond Sanctuary. To that end I am pleased to report a cooperative effort of the *Friends of Hall's Pond*, the *Brookline GreenSpace Alliance*, and the Town will result in new set of gates for the two main entrances to the Sanctuary. The look and dimensions of the new gates are intended to be almost identical to what we have in place at the current time.

Throughout 2022 the *Friends of Hall's Pond* maintenance team has continued their partnership with the Town. This partnership is critical to ensure the level of maintenance and oversight needed to ensure the sanctuary remains in good condition and visitors are able to enjoy the Sanctuary in a safe and respectful manner.

Over the years, the Town has partnered with the *Friends* on workdays. We look forward to these workdays, where we have become accustomed to the sounds of laughter and friendly banter as new plants are installed, pathways are cleared, and trees and shrubs are pruned. As I write this I think back to just a couple of days ago when we all gathered for the Fall workday. It was nice to see everyone in person and give the Sanctuary some much needed support.

As we all work our ways through what seems to be an extraordinarily busy time, I thank you for your support of the Sanctuary. Now more than ever we need these types of natural, quiet, and passive spaces to sit and ponder and decompress. As I pass you on the pathways of the Sanctuary I will look forward to sharing a friendly nod, a simple wave, and a pleasant greeting.