



Friends of Hall's Pond

December 2024

SANCTUARY NEWS

Meet Alex Cassie

HAVING SPENT the better part of my career as a park ranger, I have always felt a connection to natural spaces, be they beaches, forests, mountains, or bogs, and have found myself wearing many hats (Smokey hat included) over the years. But the call has always been one of public service. I find myself presented with a new opportunity to engage with community in Brookline's parks, sanctuaries, and wetlands as the Department of Public Works' new Conservation & Natural Resources Manager.

We are currently underway on the 2025 Brookline Open Space & Recreation Plan, a document which will guide many of our Division initiatives and actions in the years to come. I have been blessed with an enthusiastic, experienced, and dedicated Committee to help Brookline create an ambitious roadmap for the future and am eager to work with other Committees, Departments, organizations, and individuals to meet our goals for the community.



Fran Perler

Alex planting new trees during the Fall Community Day, near the pond in the Wooded Wetland.

The Sustainability & Natural Resources Division, while very new (and currently very small), will work to support *Friends* groups and community engagement, promote equitable access to Brookline sanctuaries, and continue the Town's proud legacy of wetland and open space protection. We'll work to not only preserve Brookline's wild spaces, but also to

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From the Co-Presidents

Ann Frechette and John Shreffler

HALL'S POND continues to amaze, amuse and entertain us with its cycle of seasonal changes. If 2023 was marked by abundant summer rains, 2024 was drier and ended in a mild drought. The Sanctuary remained nonetheless exuberantly green. Our flora and



Fran Perler

BU student volunteer hard at work at our Fall Community Day.

fauna cycled through the seasons, and we had regular visits from blue herons and cormorants. The ducks and geese took a break from the Sanctuary this year after a coyote made a meal of a nesting Canada goose in the spring.

The tremendous increase in foot traffic through the Sanctuary that we observed during the first year of Covid continues unabated. 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 quadrupled over the last several years! The increase has placed a strain on the Boardwalk which is nearing the end of its service life and has been approved for replacement next year. Senior DPW Landscape Architect Jesse Waisnor has provided a detailed look at the project for this newsletter on page 3.

Our *Friends* group continued its activities. Neil Gore led a series of very well attended guided bird walks during the Spring Migration from late-April through mid-May. We held our Spring

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Alex Cassie from page 1



educate folks on how to introduce more “wild” into their own neighborhoods and backyards.

Having worked with the Parks & Open Space Division for many years, I’ve seen firsthand the commitment and pride Brookline residents have in their parks and playgrounds. Through banner volunteer organizations such as the *Friends of*

Hall’s Pond, I’ve seen the willingness of folks to roll up their sleeves and put in the time and effort to make their neighborhoods cleaner and greener. And as we look at the threat that climate change presents, I’ve seen the grit and determination of neighbors and citizens to lend their time and energy and voice to working toward solutions. And I’m oh so happy to be a part of it.

Alex Cassie
Conservation & Natural Resources Manager
Town of Brookline

Co-Presidents from page 1

Community Day in early May, which was very well attended and was a very joyful event.

Controlling invasive plants is one of our group’s prime responsibilities. Co-President Ann Frechette organized an on-site invasives workshop in early April led by Alex Cassie in his capacity as DPW Parks and Open Space Outreach Coordinator, which was very well received and attracted media interest. The Volunteer Maintenance Team, led by Priscilla Smith, began work in May 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 most invasive species.

Some invasives require a more sustained effort and we have successfully obtained Community Preservation Act funding for lesser celandine control in Amory Woods and are participating in a DPW application for Community Preservation Act funding to control the invasive yellow irises along the meadow shoreline. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance has approved our Parks Initiative Program grant application for \$5,000 to supplement the DPW application.

Our Annual Meeting was held in person in mid-June and featured guest speaker Ken Liss. His talk was entitled “Public Squares and Parks Reserved: A History of Brookline’s Open Space, Parks, and Playgrounds”



A guided bird walk on a spring morning last May.

John Shreffler



Fran Perlier

DPW’s own Marc Parent hauling away some invasive vines, during this year’s Fall Community Day.

and it described the history of Brookline’s engagement with parks and open space. Ken spoke to a full house and held the audience’s attention throughout.

At season’s end, we had another very successful Community Planting and Cleanup Day. Co-President Emerita and expert horticulturalist Ellen Forrester brought several truckloads of new plants funded by our *Friends* group, which were successfully planted by our team, with the invaluable assistance of a team of Brookline DPW staff. Special thanks to Board Member Kimberly Santo, who recruited and led an enthusiastic group of students from Boston University. A summary of the vast array of plantings successfully planted is included on page 5 of this newsletter.

The year saw changes in Brookline DPW which have a direct impact on our Sanctuary. DPW Commissioner Erin Chute has created a new Division of Sustainability and Natural Resources, and current Parks and Open Space Director Alexandra Vecchio has been appointed to head it. The new Department includes Conservation and as part of the restructuring Tom Brady has chosen to take on the position of Urban Forest Manager and

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John Shreffler

On the Boardwalk

IN THE SPRING of 2025, construction on the Amory Playground Renovation project will begin, including the renovation of the Hall's Pond Sanctuary and Amory Woods boardwalks. Throughout the spring and summer of 2024, the Parks and Open Space Division arranged a series of public design review meetings, led by the project's Design Review Committee (DRC) for the public to weigh in on various design considerations including:

- Redesign of the parking lot and Amory Playground entry pathway
- Renovation of the clay tennis courts
- Renovation of the comfort station/restrooms, including accessible upgrades
- Improvement of the surrounding landscape and pathways
- Replacement of the boardwalks and railings in Hall's Pond Sanctuary and Amory Woods
- The Hall's Pond Sanctuary boardwalk renovation will include the replacement of all the decking, bumper rails, and handrails within the Sanctuary. The new boardwalk decking will be made of thermally-modified wood that is factory-oiled, with a hidden fastener system. This new decking system comes with a 25-year warranty and was preferred by the DRC and residents over recycled plastic decking (commonly used in wetland settings). Fortunately, aside from a few footings, the underlying structure of the boardwalk is in good condition and will not require a full replacement.

The Amory Woods boardwalk will, however, undergo a complete renovation, as a formal assessment found the structure of this boardwalk to be in poor condition due to ongoing exposure to and submergence in water. This boardwalk will be raised out of the water, extended, and situated on helical piles similar to the materials and design of the boardwalk that traverses Hall's Pond Sanctuary. This updated boardwalk will also feature new handrails to improve access and meet ADA guidelines.

The design team is currently working on construction drawings and specifications. The Town of Brookline anticipates the project being put out for public bid this winter, with construction ideally beginning in the spring of 2025. While an exact schedule will not be available until a contractor is selected, the Town anticipates that Amory Playground, Amory Woods, and Hall's Pond Sanctuary will be closed to the public during the renovations. Partial areas of the park may be opened in phases as the work is completed. The Parks and Open Space Division will share an updated schedule with the community once a construction contract is in place in 2025.

For more information on the project, please contact the project manager in the Parks and Open Space Division, Jessie Waisnor, at jwaisnor@brooklinema.gov, or visit the project website at: brooklinema.gov/3715/Amory-Playground.

Jessie Waisnor | PLA | CPSI
Senior Landscape Architect
Brookline Department of Public Works |
Parks and Open Space Division

Quiet Moments



John Shreffler

Taking in the sun are a Great Blue Heron, a Double-crested cormorant, and at least one turtle.

by Neil Gore

USUALLY I think of birding as very active: Being up early at the crack of dawn, or even before. Planning where to go and what to look for. Researching what's been seen recently. The weather report. The overnight bird radar level of activity. Leading trips; joining other people's trips; changing plans, or reports of more favorable locations.



Jasper Weinberg

Wilson's Warbler on a rainy May morning at Hall's Pond Sanctuary.

And there are big rewards for such preparation. This spring we had three successful *Friends* birding walks: good weather, good turnout, good variety and numbers of birds. I was able to find several birds which, although not rare, are not frequently or easily seen at Hall's Pond: Hooded

Merganser, Least Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wilson's Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Veery, Black-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. It was gratifying to see Nashville Warblers in abundance over a long stretch of time; some years I fail to see them at all.

Certainly I like exciting, dramatic, meaningful events while birding. But I also appreciate relaxing in quiet moments at Hall's Pond. Nothing much happening, nothing to do, nowhere else to be, just enjoying the tranquility. One such moment happened for me at the Pond on April 22, at the north overlook. A Great Blue Heron was stalking prey a few feet away, and had just caught a tiny fish about the size of a worm. Barely an appetizer for the Heron. He waded up to a likely-looking perch, a small log, and stepping on, proceeded to slip right off. The log was a floater, not a stable fixture. The Heron apparently thought the problem was that he had tried to stabilize with his left leg instead of his right. Trying this variation, he again slid right off. Then, figuring he'd have success with both feet, he accordingly clambered up, and slipped off awkwardly. He gave up and moved on.



Jasper Weinberg

Least Flycatcher at Hall's Pond, May, 2019.

Then two turtles swam up, spotted the same likely log. Log perches are very important spots for their daily dozing, so I predicted they would be trying hard to make this log work for them. The same process occurred, successively for each of the two — but at a much slower speed than for the Heron. Ultimately they found a more stable log nearby. This event probably lasted 15 or 20 minutes, but it felt timeless. It was a small window into the daily existence of wildlife.

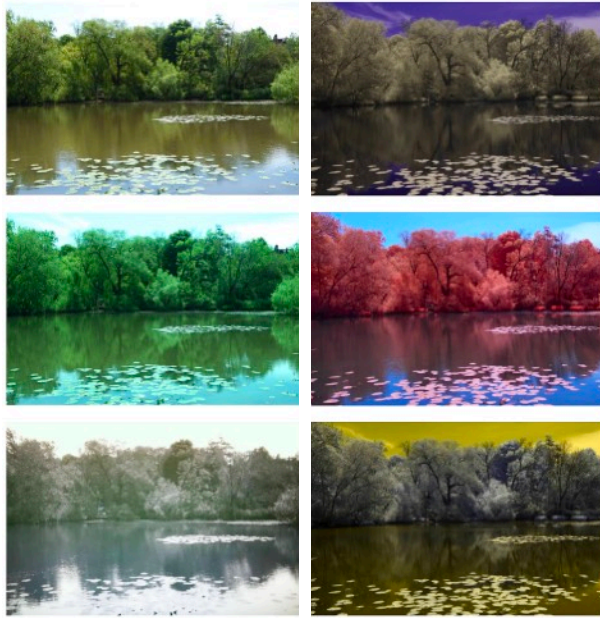
I'm not quite sure why this struck me as such a memorable event, but it stayed with me throughout the year. I'm not even sure I want to analyze the meaning, if any. Best to just let it be.



Amelia Szymkowitz

Black-crowned night heron stalking a meal.

SIX SPECTRAL VIEWS, each a separately acquired photograph, of Hall's Pond: Upper left is visible light only (i.e. wavelength range from 400 to 700 nm); upper right is NDVI, used in agriculture, consisting of blue/purple and infrared wavelengths only; middle left is a green-enhanced modification of visible light; middle right is a variation



on the digital version of Aerochrome slide film, rendering infrared light orange-red in hue; lower left is Ultraviolet only (wavelength range 320-400 nm); and lower right is a type of color infrared employing a 550 nm long bandpass filter, which renders infrared light a shade of blue and has a wavelength range 550-1200 nm.

Fall Community Day Plantings

On our Fall Community Day on October 6, we had more than 50 volunteers as well as a team from Brookline DPW, led by Alex Cassie, carefully placing 516 plants in the ground. Our team was able to plant:

- 200 *Carex appalachia*, grasses
- 70 *Iris versicolor*, blue flag iris
- 125 *Tiarella cordifolia* and *Tiarella cordifolia*, running tapestry, foamflower
- 50 *Thalictrum pubescens* and *Thalictrum dioicum*, meadow rue
- 25 *Antennaria neglecta*, pussytoes
- 25 *Dicentra exima*, bleeding heart
- 6 *Vaccinium*, blueberry
- 3 *Hamamelis vernalis*, witch hazel
- 9 *Cephalanthus*, buttonbush
- 3 *Cornus florida*, native dogwood

Volunteer Maintenance Team Surpasses Expectations



John Shreffler
Fran Perler removing invasives.

CONGRATULATIONS to our volunteer maintenance team for exceptional work in the 2024 season. Special thanks to Karin Weaver, William Jones, and Ann Frechette (our co-President) for their work on removing invasive multiflora rose, purple loosestrife and burdock from the banks of the

pond. Mia Szymkowicz and Andrea Ignatoff kept the sanctuary free of trash. Jenette Restivo and her amazing high schooler Zane, as well as Jim Perrin, Sharon Hessey, and John Shreffler (our other co-President) helped with projects throughout the sanctuary. Janet Wynn, Catherine Saines, and Sharon Gray did great work keeping the formal gardens tidy and beautiful. Thanks also to Faith Michaels for her gorgeous centerpieces! We had some newcomers for a couple of our sessions — Janet Stotsky and Anthony Venturi, who were a great help in keeping our gem looking great.

As we prepare for the 2025 season, we will be installing and monitoring tarps to smother the *Lesser celandine* that has infiltrated Amory Woods. High school or college students looking for a year-long environmental project are invited to join us for the implementation and documentation of the project.

We always welcome new members! Our twice-monthly work sessions are scheduled on mornings that are most



Kimberly Santo
Students from Boston University helped to dig and fill hundreds of plantings during the Fall Community Day, here near the Beacon St. gate.

convenient for members of the team. Work sessions are announced a week or more in advance. Members come only as often as their schedules permit. All of the work is done as a group under permit by the Conservation Administrator. For more information, contact volunteer coordinator, Priscilla Smith. The e-mail address is pjs00002000@yahoo.com or call 617-571-4792.



Fran Perler
And here near the pond by the boardwalk.

What price nature?

by Bob Schram

NO ONE DOUBTS for a second that Hall's Pond Sanctuary is a priceless resource, an amazing treasure in the midst of our community. Having this natural haven tucked within a mile of downtown Boston is a gift we should never take for granted, a legacy which demands constant attention and ongoing investment. And sometimes we do have to take a hard look at the numbers — what does it cost to maintain the Sanctuary and what will it actually cost to realize our vision for the future of Hall's Pond?

It takes money just to preserve and maintain the status quo at Hall's Pond. The Town of Brookline can only do so much to maintain our parks and open space so the *Friends of Hall's Pond* are called upon to help make up the difference. Over the last ten years the *Friends* have purchased thousands of native plants and devoted tens of thousands of volunteer hours to improving and protecting the Sanctuary by gradually eliminating invasive species and then planting native grasses, ferns, trees and bushes, in our decades-long quest to return the sanctuary to its original pristine state.

Friends of Hall's Pond has been spending roughly \$10,000 a year, above and beyond the Town of



Plants ready for planting.

Kimberly Santo

Brookline's support, in order to keep up the progress. And at this rate, we still have at least thirty years to go to complete the master horticultural restoration plan. Sadly, our fund-raising has not been keeping up with this pace of spending for quite a while, and so our financial resources are gradually dwindling since we have refused to halt the steady progress towards our vision.

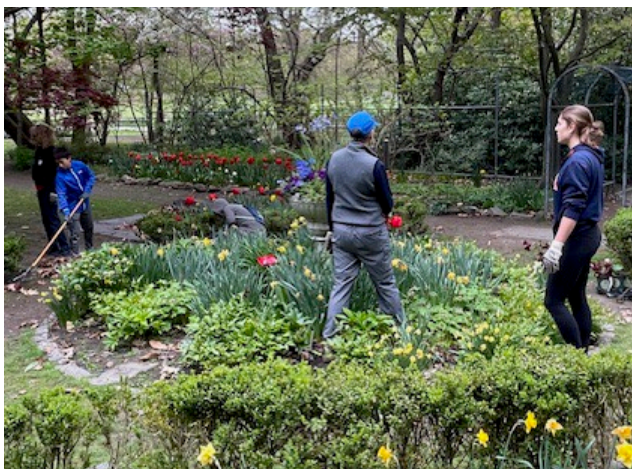
If everyone who enjoys Hall's Pond were to become a member of the the *Friends* for just \$35 per year, we would be able to keep up our current pace of improvements. If you can help us to raise more than this, we can do more to accelerate the long term planting and habitat recuperation program.

Of course we must preserve and protect Hall's Pond for future generations. Of course we must continue improving the habitat for birds and wildlife. So we do need your contributions in order to maintain our progress. We hope you can become a member/supporter. Any contribution you make will be a blessing and a gift to our wider community. Please use the enclosed envelope to send us your contribution or log onto the Hall's Pond website at friendsofballspend.org to make an on-line contribution. Please do this right now!

All of your donations are fully tax deductible. *Friends of Hall's Pond* is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Co-Presidents from page 2

Alex Cassie has been chosen to serve as Conservation & Natural Resources Manager. Our group is profoundly indebted to Tom for his longstanding commitment to our Sanctuary and is happy to welcome Alex, who has an equally deep commitment. Alex introduces himself in this newsletter.



John Shreffler

Sprucing up the Formal Garden on our Spring Community Day, 2024

We carry on and are grateful for our other Officers: Jim Franco (Treasurer), Andrea Ignatoff (Recording Secretary), and Priscilla Smith (Vice-President for Information Technology). Harry Breger continues to provide an artist's touch in designing our newsletter. Our website continues to flourish and is well worth visiting: FriendsofHallsPond.org.

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.

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.

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
- Website Newsletter

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.

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

<i>Founder</i> Jo Albrecht	<i>Co-Presidents</i> Ann Frechette John Shreffler	<i>Treasurer</i> Jim Franco
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<i>Recording Secretary</i> Andrea Ignatoff	<i>Information Technology</i> Priscilla Smith
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Board Members

Fred Bouchard	John Harris	Michael Sandman
Harry Breger	Helen Herman	Kimberly Santo
Neil Gore	Fran Perler	Bob Schram
Sharon Gray	Deborah Raptopoulos	Patricia Schram
Betsy Shure Gross	Jenette Restivo	Janet Wynn
	Diane Ryan	

Sanctuary News is produced by *Friends* volunteers, edited by John Shreffler, produced 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.

About the Friends

After Brookline acquired Hall's Pond in 1975 as a Conservation Sanctuary, *Friends of Hall's Pond* was formed in 1976 to serve as a partner to the Town in the Sanctuary's upkeep, improvement, and outreach. Over the years, the *Friends* have kept the Sanctuary free from trash, have waged a constant struggle against invasive plants, have planted lots of new plants at its own expense, and have served as a voice for the Sanctuary by putting on Community Days and Birdwalks, by constant advocacy, and by publishing an annual newsletter and maintaining a website. In addition, the Group has often invested in Sanctuary infrastructure, most recently by suggesting and partially funding new more user-friendly wrought iron gates. As the Sanctuary is by far the the smallest Conservation Sanctuary in the Commonwealth and by far the most heavily visited, its upkeep is an essential element of its improbable survival in a dense urban environment.



to our website !



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*



A Hall's Pond Wildlife Gallery by Amelia Szymkowicz.

