

Newsletter

Spring 2018

HPWA is a 501(c)3 Charitable Organization

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Committee

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Krogman, Members-at-
Large

Website

www.TheHerringPondsWatershed.org

Upcoming Events

**March 17, 2pm HPWA
General Meeting**
Wildlands Trust Barn,
675 Long Pond Rd.
Learn all about Herring
from Dr. Joel Llopiz.

**June 25, 7pm HPWA
General Meeting**
Wildlands Trust Barn.
Invasive Plant control
for your backyard with
Michael Talbot

President's Message

Brian Harrington, President

Roughly a year ago our Association held a workshop focused on building nest boxes for owls, bluebirds, and even bats. In preparation for this, a group of our volunteer Directors and friends spent several weeks collecting inexpensive lumber, hauling it to Plymouth, cutting and drilling it into appropriate shapes, and planning for the workshop. With help from friends at Tidmarsh Farm, roughly 40 of us gathered in a barely heated equipment building and soon were drilling and hammering away. Good muffins and lots of chattering too. By the end of our morning some 60 boxes were ready to put out for wildlife. Some new friendships and threads of community spirit were also born.

Our success as an Association is measured by our ability to protect and nurture the fragile watershed that we share and enjoy together. One picture is to watch carefully and shake fingers at "other people" who violate our visions for a healthy watershed. Another is to work to build an appreciation for the place we live, to persuade "other people" to join in our mission to help keep our watershed a beautiful and pristine place to live. Call that education.

At the level of an entire watershed, advocacy to unsympathetic ears is doomed to fail. And so our challenge as an Association is to build a Membership which shares our organizational vision of protecting our watershed. Enlistment though education and involvement is key.

Back to the workshop. We built bird boxes together. In so doing we made some new friends. Meanwhile bluebirds and owls found and used many of the boxes.

Yes, it is a slow process, but if our Herring Ponds Watershed Association is to achieve its goals, we need to continue promoting enlistment in and understanding of our mission. You can help us do that. Read our soon-to-appear "Stewardship and Volunteer Guide" for living in and caring for our watershed, and introduce your neighbors and friends to it. And why not bring your friends and neighbors to our public programs (see announcements in this newsletter)?

My term as President of our Association will be coming to a close in a few more months, so this is a good time to mention our "State of the Association". My succinct "report" is that we are in GREAT, GREAT shape. But then I need to quickly move on to say that this is because we have a fantastic and hard-working Board of Directors, and a supportive membership. Thanks to all!

Help us count river herring in the Herring Ponds Watershed

Read how YOU can help on page 2



Learn about Herring

The upcoming meeting of HPWA sponsored in partnership with the Wildlands Trust will be a presentation by Dr. Joel Llopiz of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) on his **Research on the early life stages of river herring in Great Herring Pond.** The program will be on Saturday, **March 17 at 2pm** in the Wildlands Trust Conservation Barn, 675 Long Pond Rd. in Plymouth. This will be a family friendly program and is free for all to attend. To register for the program go to www.TheHerringPondsWatershed.org and press the Register now button.

Recently there has been great concern about the declining population of river herring. Volunteers from HPWA have been monitoring the numbers of adult herring returning to spawn in Great Herring Pond the last 3 springs. We have also supported efforts to reduce the allowable herring by-catch in Plymouth and Cape Cod Bays. River herring are a 'forage fish,' a critical connection between plankton production and the large fish so important to commercial fishing in New England. This is an opportunity to learn more about the factors affecting the juvenile herring life cycle. Dr. Joel Llopiz will share results from three WHOI research projects related to the feeding and growth of juvenile river herring in Great Herring Pond. "We're filling in a critical gap in our knowledge of the life history of these fish."

Help us count river herring in the Herring Ponds Watershed

by Ramona Krogman, Herring Count Chair

HPWA needs 20-30 volunteers willing to count river herring one or more times weekly for 8 weeks between April 1 and May 31. It's easy, it's fun, and it is a critical citizen science effort to monitor herring population numbers, now at a fraction of their former abundance. The counts require ten minutes of your time for each time-block that you agree

to cover. The time blocks are during daytime hours 7 days a week, with at least one 10-minute count made by a volunteer between 8-12, 12-4, and 4-8 each day.

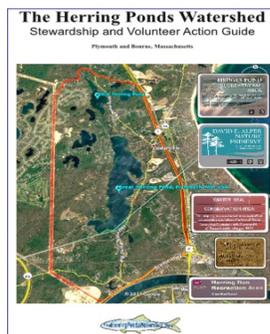


The location for making counts will be on Sandy Pond Rd Bridge, at the South end of Great Herring Pond. Two dates have been set for training with Dr. Sara Grady at the nearby boat launch site: Saturday, March 10th and Sunday, the 18th, both at 2PM.

If you can help, please send Ramona Krogman at ramick99@hotmail.com an email providing: your name, email address, and the days of the week and one or more time-block(s) (8am-noon, 12-4, and 4-8pm) in which you would be willing to make your 10-minute count(s) each week.

Education Committee News

by Lee Pulis, Education Committee Chair



Coming soon: HPWA's updated and expanded *Stewardship and Volunteer Action Guide*

Thanks to a generous donor, 4000 copies of our new 40-page photo-rich guide are now being printed, ready for distribution beginning in mid-March.

Four mail routes covering most of the ACEC have been selected for quick low-cost distribution of the first 2400. Due to postal route quirks, some neighborhoods will require hand delivery by volunteers. If you don't receive your guide by month's end, would like to help with follow-up hand deliveries, you live outside the watershed, or need additional copies for family (cost-recovery donation appreciated), just let us know via our website contact form: <http://www.theherringpondswatershed.org/contact-us.html>. Be sure to provide your address.



Brian Harrington and John Foye present donation to Selectman Betty Cavacco to support Hedges Pond hall renovation.

Hedges Pond Park Assembly Hall Renovation

HPWA is supporting fellow non-profit Plymouth Youth Foundation's current \$100,000 fund drive to renovate and re-open the Town of Plymouth's Hedges Pond Park assembly hall. Our \$5000 donation was presented to Selectman Betty Cavacco in November 2017. The planned all-season interior renovations are projected for completion in 2018. The potential 200-person capacity of this educational programming facility in the ACEC is attractive for future HPWA activities.

Register Now for April 12 Watershed Action Alliance of Southeastern Massachusetts Legislative Breakfast, cosponsored by HPWA and State Senator Vinny deMacedo:

<http://watershedaction.org/index.php/2017-conference/2018-legislative-breakfast>



HPWA Spring 2018 High School Social Media/Webmaster Assistant Internship Tess Goldman

Attend our Saturday, March 17 public program on larval herring in Great Herring Pond, presented by Woods Hole scientist Joel Llopiz, and welcome our Spring semester high school intern, Tess Ann Goldman. As HPWA Social Media/Webmaster Assistant, Tess's initial project taps her talents to create a brief volunteer recruitment and training video for our 2018 herring count. Tess has filmed Dr. Sara Grady discussing why and how we count river herring, and plans to screen the video March 17 at our first public meeting of the year in the Wildlands Trust Community Conservation Barn.

Tess is a senior at Rising Tide Charter Public School, and an active member of their Junior Classical League, the National Honor Society, and theater crew. As a member of Wildlands Trust's 2017 Green Team, Tess helped HPWA with water quality sampling on Great Herring Pond. She grew up hiking in Myles Standish State Forest, is familiar with Pine Barrens ecology, and looks forward to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) studies in college.

Save the Date: Join HPWA at **Plimoth Plantation Herring Run Festival** at the Grist Mill, Saturday, April 21, 10-4. HPWA will be distributing our updated and expanded 2018 Stewardship and Volunteer Action Guide. We will also have copies of our two superhero comics of the mighty river herring for distribution at our table.

We will provide outreach and education concerning current pressures on herring populations, such as off-coast trawling and unintended by-catch at sea. Such activities contribute to the continuing decline of existing healthy river herring stocks even as dam removal and bog restorations increase spawning habitats and open new runs elsewhere in town. We will have a children's activity, which this time may involve mixing washable colored "runoff potions" as well as our previous "decorate-a-herring" on stick fishing poles. To volunteer to help at this fun event contact Lee at lee@theherringpondswatershed.org.

Visit HPWA's Website and Join our 130 Followers on Facebook



Invasive Plant Control

by Jerry Levine, Chair of Invasive Committee

HPWA and Wildlands Trust will be co-sponsoring an Invasive Plant Management Education Program presented by Michael Talbot on **June 25, 2018 at 7:00 PM**. He is one of the

principles of Environmental Landscape Consultants, LLC. The presentation will be at the Wildlands Trust Barn.

The goal of the program is to provide information on what to do after you discover invasive plants on your property.

The discussion will include: the invasive plant management planning process; why is planning so important; invasive versus merely aggressive or weedy plant species; management techniques for specific invasive plant species found with in our area and much more.

Owl Nest Box Update

by Brian Harrington

Martha and I made an owl nest box at our HPWA workshop, and to our excitement a screech owl took up residence in early spring last year. We discovered the occupancy because chickadees and titmice were nervously flying to the entrance hole, peering into the box, and then dashing away. For reasons only they know, these tiny birds will often mob a screech owl.

We expected an owl family in our new box, but alas, for some reason the owl left last April, and we have not seen one since, though we have occasionally heard one.

On a recent morning early in February, Martha went outside and played a recording of a screech owl call. Chickadees and titmice quickly mobilized from the woods to find the invader, twitching excitedly as they looked for the source of the call. Two of them, first a chickadee and then a titmouse, landed on the roof of the empty owl house and nervously looked into the hole; it appeared that they had remembered that a screech owl had been there almost a year earlier!

Not possible with a bird brain, you might say, but researchers have found that birds like chickadees actually remember through the winter the precise locations where they have stashed thousands of individual seeds! And their brain gets bigger in the autumn to enable this. Wish we could do that!

Watershed Water Quality

by Don Williams, Water Quality Co-Chair

The Herring Ponds watershed sits atop the large, 500 billion gallon, sole source Plymouth-Carver aquifer in southeast Massachusetts; the water for our ponds and wells comes directly from this aquifer. It is important that we protect the health of that water now for future generations. Preliminary data indicates that nitrate levels are increasing in the Plymouth town wells located in medium density population areas. Nitrate is an excellent indicator of adverse human impact on water quality. While nitrate levels are not dangerous, the upward trend is disturbing.

Since 90% of the water in Great Herring Pond comes from Little Herring Pond springs, increased emphasis has been placed on monitoring the health of the latter. Jim Smith has taken water samples every month at a Little Herring Pond spring site. Thus far, nitrate levels are very low suggesting that the aquifer water beneath the Herring Ponds watershed is quite healthy. Jim will take samples each month for a year to complete this data set.

Jim has also taken monthly water samples at Little Herring Pond that will be analyzed for e. coli. The first three samples have very low e. coli levels, despite the presence of swans. Jim will continue sampling for a year to provide a database sufficient to understand the effect of Little Herring Pond's swan population on Great Herring Pond's e. coli levels. Next summer, we will again monitor 10 swimming locations for e.coli during the summer months and report any dangerous levels promptly by email to our members.

A long-range goal of the Water Quality Committee is to work with Plymouth to re-write wetlands bylaws to ensure a healthy aquifer for future generations. We welcome any help you might offer to this end.

To get involved with this active committee contact Don Williams at Donald_r_williams2003@yahoo.com

Membership Appeal

by Martha Sheldon, Membership Chair

Do you enjoy reading this newsletter? Join the nearly 200 current members and learn more about preserving our precious watershed. Ask your neighbors to join too. Thanks!

Martha Sheldon, Membership chair at martha.sheldon205@gmail.com.

HPWA Membership Form 2017-2018

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

___ \$15 Individual Membership.

___ \$25 Family Membership

___ \$55 Contributing Membership

___ \$100 Sustaining Membership

Make checks payable to: **HPWA, Ltd.**

Mail to: HPWA

P O Box 522

Sagamore Beach, MA 02562

Oriental Bittersweet - A Local Problem

by Geri Williams



Oriental bittersweet plants are invasive, nonnative vines that grow up to 60 feet long and can get four inches in diameter. They are fast growing, with light green, finely toothed leaves. The round yellow fruits split to reveal red berries that birds happily devour all winter long. They

disperse the seeds far and wide. The seeds remain viable for a long time and spout well in low light, so anywhere they fall, they are likely to grow.

The vines pose an ecological threat since their vigor and size threatens native vegetation at all levels, from the ground to the canopy. When thick masses of oriental bittersweet plants sprawl over shrubs and plants, the dense shade can kill the plants beneath. Oriental bittersweet information suggests that an even greater threat is girdling. Even the tallest trees can be killed by the vines when they girdle the tree, cutting off its own growth. The weight of the dense vines can even uproot a tree.

Killing oriental bittersweet or even just controlling its spread is difficult, a task of many seasons.

Mechanical control can be used to remove light infestations of oriental bittersweet. The vine can be pulled by hand and removed from the site. Pull the plants before fruiting. If fruits are present, bag the vines to make sure the seeds do not contaminate the site. Also take care to remove all of the roots because the bittersweet will resprout if roots are left. Frequent mowing will exclude oriental bittersweet, but infrequent mowing—mowing, two to three times a year, stimulates root suckering.

For climbing vines, first cut the vines near the ground at a comfortable height to kill upper portions and relieve the tree canopy. Try to minimize damage to the bark of the host tree. Rooted portions will remain alive and should be pulled, repeatedly cut to the ground or treated with herbicide. Systemic herbicides like triclopyr (i.e., Garlon 3A and Garlon 4) and glyphosate (i.e., Accord, Glypro, Rodeo) are absorbed into plant tissues and carried to the roots, killing the entire plant within about a week. Garlon 4 is highly volatile and can be extremely toxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates. It should not be used in or near water sources or wetlands and should only be applied under cool, calm conditions. Chemical control is most effective if the stems are first cut by hand and herbicide is applied immediately to cut stem tissue.