

Activities in, at and around Waltham's "Great Pond"

Sally Wetzler, WLT member, Hardy Pond Association co-chair

Hardy Ponders have had little time for pondering the Pond – we've swung into action with a number of projects to protect and improve this wonderful natural resource.

PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION

Early last spring, we focused our energies on decreasing the phosphorus that enters the Pond from stormwater runoff. Our years-long collaboration with UMass Boston, assessing Hardy Pond's water quality, has identified phosphorus as a leading cause of the pond's gradual deterioration. Excess phosphorus can result in nutrient overload, causing explosive weed growth in the pond. EPA regulations require Waltham to meet new guidelines for discharging stormwater into waterways, with phosphorus reduction being one goal of this effort.

Surprisingly, one available fix for reducing phosphorus loading is increased street sweeping around the pond. Thanks to the city's Consolidated Public Works Department, this has been implemented recently. What is harder to address is the inappropriate application of phosphorus-rich lawn fertilizer, which has a major impact on water quality. On this front, the Hardy Pond Association (HPA) reached out to area retailers, asking for cooperation in educating their customers.

Under Massachusetts law, ONLY newly-seeded lawns on raw earth can be fertilized with products containing phosphorus. (Phosphorus is the middle digit of the three-number formula on fertilizer packaging; it reads nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium, 3-2-2 for example). These phosphorus-rich fertilizers must be segregated from approved lawn fertilizers -- those with "0" as the middle digit. Retailers are required to post signage explaining the law. HPA contacted the management of each area store selling these products, discussed the problem with them directly, and provided them with large laminated signs to encourage compliance with the law.

We would like to thank Agway, Russell's, and Home Depot for their wholehearted cooperation. Surprisingly, other area retailers declined to post the sign despite return visits from HPA members. We will try to reach out again to encourage their cooperation. We hope concerned consumers do likewise.



DON'T FEED THE WATERFOWL

With the huge increase in access to Hardy Pond created by the renovation of Lazazzero Playground, feeding ducks and geese has become a pastime – and a major problem. Large flocks gather at the fishing pier and on the shore, waiting for handouts. Well-meaning residents often spread blankets of food on the waterfront, thinking this is good for the birds. Most human food is not appropriate for birds, and can actually harm them by filling them up with food lacking in proper nutrition. Feeding them often increases aggressive behavior and can lead to the overpopulation of the birds, as well as delaying or stopping their migration. As they identify the park as a food source, their increased excrement covers the shore and boat ramp, and their burgeoning population adds harmful nutrients to the already-stressed Hardy Pond. As if those were not enough reasons, rats and other vermin are attracted to areas with easy food access, particularly troubling in a neighborhood park.

The City responded quickly to HPA's request for better signage at Lazazzero Playground, and at the waterfront end of Shore Road. Jim Lockett and Sally Wetzler met with Kim Scott and Nick Abruzzi of the Waltham Recreation Department to review the locations and general guidelines. Jim and Sally designed a large sign that was approved, and was fabricated and recently installed by the Recreation Department.

WATERSHED MAP

A \$7,000 grant from the Foundation for MetroWest was received by the WLT and the Hardy Pond Association last summer. This money, along with additional funds from the Land Trust created a definitive map of the Hardy Pond watershed. An accurate map is the first important step toward making a thorough plan to improve the pond's health and the environment around it.

Bob Hartzell, of Comprehensive Environmental Inc., completed the map over the winter, and unveiled it at a community meeting held in March that informed area residents of the map's findings and the implications for

the watershed. Interestingly, it was revealed that the majority of the watershed is in Lexington. Now this map can be integrated into the MA Watershed Based Plan, which will collect data and do some initial calculations of the biggest issues needing to be addressed. Additionally, the map is a crucial requirement to securing any further funding for projects that will improve the watershed's health, such as planting native shrubs to filter nutrients from storm water runoff, rebuilding areas to minimize erosion, etc.

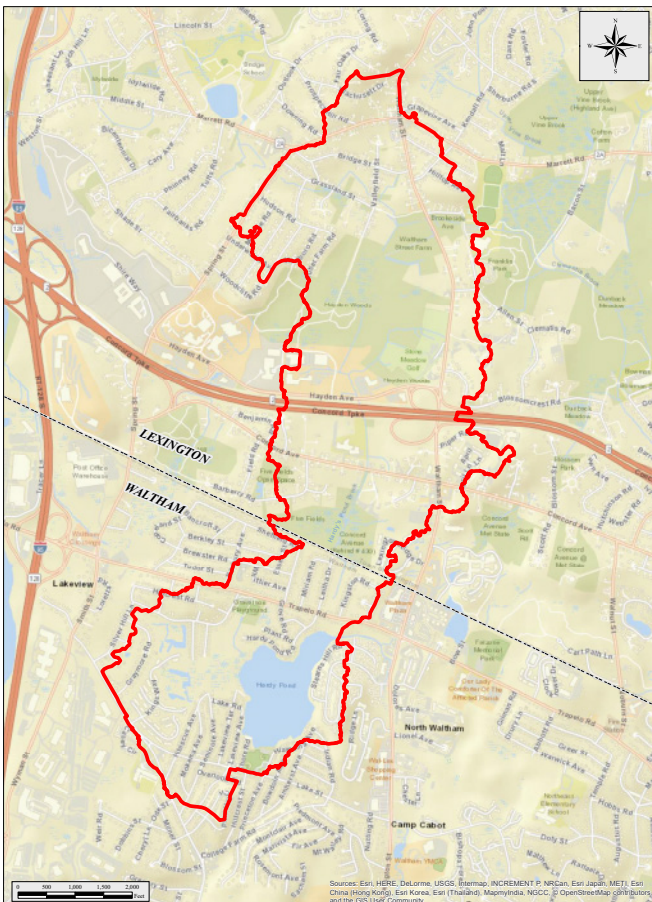
In the future we'll need engineers and scientists to continue to inform us about the changing conditions of the watershed and the pond, and to design and prioritize solutions to our watershed issues. Subsequently, we'll need our local governments to commit to tackling these challenges, by implementing the improvements that the experts recommend, and working in partnership together across our shared municipal boundary. And of course, we need residents who will do what they can to advocate for good watershed management, and will make any small personal contributions toward better watershed health.

A *special thanks* for this important effort goes out to Betty MacKenzie, Phil Moser, and the Development

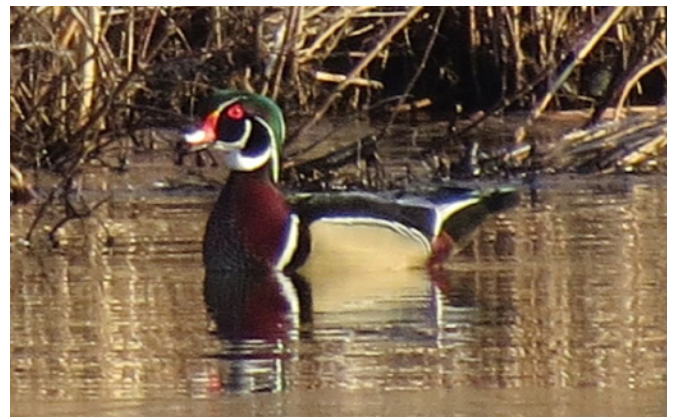
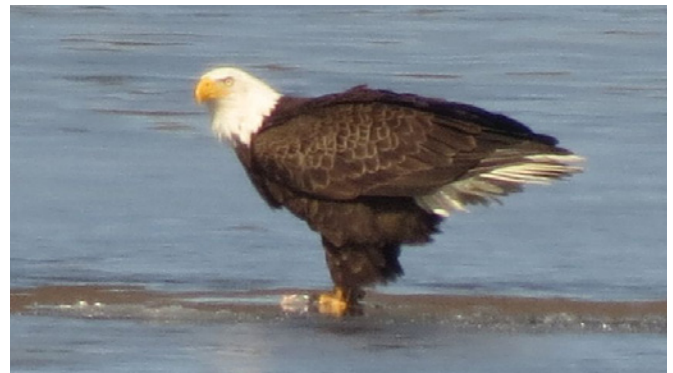
Team of the Waltham Land Trust, who shepherded this from the grant application to completion.

BIRDS AROUND

Each season, WLT Board member and Hardy Pond neighbor Phil Moser amazes those on the Hardy Pond Coordinating Committee's e-list with stunning photos of various flying beauties enjoying Waltham's only Great Pond (larger than 10 acres). Here are a few of Phil's gems. See all of Phil's pictures, plus those of other Land Trust photographers, in the *Waltham Wildlife* album at the bottom of WLT's home page (walthamlandtrust.org) and on the Pics page (our flickr site). Have gorgeous photos of wildlife enjoying our city's open space? Send them to Sonja at swadman@walthamlandtrust.org. Maybe yours will be included in the next *Journal*!



Hardy Pond Watershed (905 acres). The red line shows the watershed boundary.



Bald eagle, wood duck, bufflehead ducks on Hardy Pond.

ALL BY PHIL MOSER