

The first of 4 seasonal newsletters funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Five Star & Urban Waters Program

@ MAGAZINE BEACH PARK
CAMBRIDGE | MASSACHUSETTS

Fall Equinox

Be sure to take in fall at Magazine Beach. The air is pleasantly cool and the light finds a thousand ways to shimmer off the many varieties of plants living there. The park's orientation provides great views of astronomical events.

Perhaps you made it down to see the solar eclipse. If not, the sunset and sunrise are on display every day. As the days grow shorter, the sunset comes earlier and can best be viewed from the granite terrace behind the powder magazine—at 6:42pm Sept. 21. Sunrise also comes later and can be taken in from the BU bridge, where its rise illumines Boston—at 6:30am Sept. 21.

Don't miss the great blue herons that fly over the bridge shortly after sunrise and choose spots along the river to fish. The fall equinox, Sept. 22, is just ahead, when the earth's rotational axis is neither tilted away from the sun nor towards it. This causes the sunshine directly on the equator, making the length of day and night nearly equal.

Nature in Action: The East Swale

One consolation for the shortening days of fall is the bands of dark and lighter green cast by the lengthening shadows of the trees on the lawns. This year's bumper crop of young white tail rabbits is often on view nibbling at the grass around the hedge and swales, especially at dusk. Milkweed pods are splitting open to reveal their cottony contents. Spiky purple thistles are going wild this year and attracting gold finches hungry for their favorite seeds.

The east swale is getting some attention this fall from the Charles River Watershed Association, which has teams of volunteers removing the phragmites. Those tall reeds that sparkle silver in the fall sun grow so densely that they have driven out the plants that have fed the birds in past years. Nature is pushing back with the thistles and is getting some help from the CRWA's volunteers, who installed the black plastic sheeting at the end of the swale after cutting back the reeds and removing the phragmites rhizomes. The black plastic will prevent any remaining fragments of rhizomes from starting new plants in the spring.



August 21 solar eclipse viewing at the park.



Phragmites are beautiful, but they take over.

For more info, go to:
magazinebeach.org

A publication of Magazine Beach Partners, in partnership with the CRWA, both 501c3s. Writer: Jeanne Strahan, Designer: Callum Griffith, Project Director: Cathie Zusy

Fall Migration

Songbirds migrating from northern places travel down the Atlantic coast on their way to Central America and Mexico. Magazine Beach is close enough to the coast to host a few migrants stopping for rest and a meal. Among them are some of the warblers we see during the spring migration: common yellow throats, chestnut sided warblers, Nashville warblers, blackpoll warblers, pine warblers, palm warblers and yellow warblers.

Ruby crowned kinglets show up in the hedge. Every few years, redpolls from the North Pole come in search of food when the polar supply is inadequate. Keep an eye out for hooded mergansers, ducks with large crests that look like sails. These ducks don't migrate but they do change location for winter from small ponds and rivers to larger bodies of water and can be seen swimming past.

Featured Bird: Belted Kingfisher

Belted kingfishers nest upstream from MB in places along the river that have steeper riverbanks than MB offers. However, migratory kingfishers coming down from Canada stay for a week or two in fall before heading for warmer spots.

The kingfisher is a medium-sized bird with a large head featuring a shaggy dark blue crest and a large, heavy black bill. The males have a single blue band across a white breast, while the females feature both a blue and a rusty red band across a white breast. At MB, they perch in the trees along the river's edge between the giant willow and the terrace and hang out with the cormorants on the floating orange stanchions on the BU side of the river. If you see a top-heavy bird making a piercing rattle as it plunges head first into the water to emerge with a fish in its bill, you have seen a kingfisher in action.

Who We Are

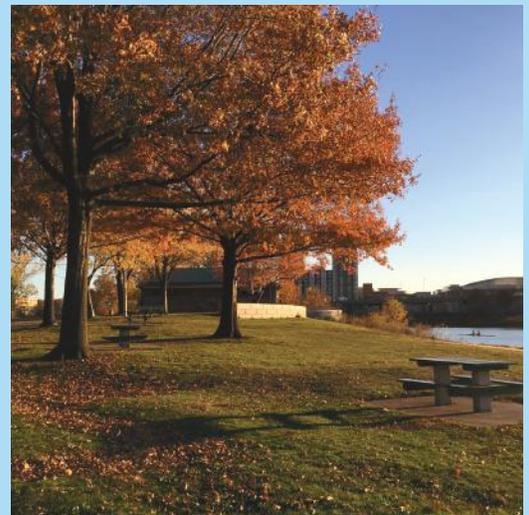
Magazine Beach Partners, a newly created 501c3, is dedicated to working with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and the City of Cambridge to revitalize Magazine Beach Park—the City's second largest park. We support the preservation of this wonderful green open space. To learn more, go to: magazinebeach.org.



Look for ruby crowned kinglets in the hedges.



Migrating kingfishers perch in trees along the river's edge.



Fall at Magazine Beach Park—the City's second largest park.