

Year *in* Review

Mass Audubon Boston Nature Center

2022





Dear BNC Community,

Thank you for being a part of Boston Nature Center (BNC) for another important and inclusive year. It has been transformative for Boston Nature Center as we continue to rebound from the impacts of the pandemic. BNC educators returned to schools teaching environmental science and supporting exploration of the outdoors. Public programs engaged audiences of all ages both at the sanctuary and at green spaces across Boston, including free art and nature programs in city parks and Bald Eagle walks along the Neponset River. With the successful installation of 260 solar panels, the BNC evolved from Boston's first green building to its first net zero /carbon neutral municipal building. The Pathways to Nature Preschool and BNC Camps continued to flourish, providing high quality child care and science learning to children. BNC's Farmers Market expanded with the support of the City of Boston's Office of Food Justice to host stands at two new markets in Nubian and Egelston Squares. The Willow Tree Youth Leaders continued to be an invaluable asset to the BNC with the seven teens leading programs, outreach, and stewardship projects.



With the tremendous support of volunteers, BNC resumed the vital work of habitat restoration, ensuring it is accessible to the many visitors of the Mattapan wildlife sanctuary. Through invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, and the planting of a new pollinator-friendly solar meadow, the team continues to improve the ecological impact of the site.

Another milestone this year, Julie Brandlen, the Anne and Peter Brooke Director retired after 21 years of innovative and compassionate leadership. Through her direction, BNC has led the way in building a welcoming, community nature center that provides a wide range of accessible programming across the city, a vibrant green space for the benefit of both wildlife and people, and a community of people who care deeply about the health of Boston's environment. We wish her the best of luck in her retirement.

Thank you for the role you play in building and supporting this work. Your involvement makes BNC a strong, thriving, and impactful community resource.

With our heartfelt thanks to each of you,

Jim & Erin

Jim McGuinness, Chair
Boston Nature Center Sanctuary Committee

Erin Kelly, Acting Director
Mass Audubon Boston



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2022

By the Numbers



6,940

Adults and children participated in public programs, educational school programs, summer camps, vacation week programs, nature preschool, and special events.

BNC Becomes Net Zero

Ever since the opening of Boston Nature Center in 2001, it has always been an aspiration to make the sanctuary as green as it could be. And on Earth Day 2022, we achieved that goal. Supporters, civic leaders, Mass Audubon staff, and members of the Boston community gathered for a ribbon-cutting to celebrate the 67-acre property's accomplishment of reaching a net-zero energy status.

The \$600,000 project was generously funded with lead gifts from Boston's George Robert White Fund, Tern Foundation's TernSOLAR challenge grant program, and several individual donors. This funding allowed BNC to undertake a multi-faceted program that combined new solar energy infrastructure and retrofitting of buildings.

Rooftop solar panels were installed onto the sanctuary's George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center, along with a new ground-mounted array erected nearby. In addition to the solar arrays, three cottages used by BNC's state-licensed nature preschool were converted from natural gas to highly efficient electrical mini-split heat pumps, including heat pump hot water systems.

These efforts are projected to save money and eliminate the emissions of more than 136,000 pounds of heat-trapping carbon dioxide annually and will produce the same amount, or more, energy than it consumes annually. The money saved will provide further investment in land protection and educational opportunities about climate change in the surrounding Environmental Justice communities.

\$149,959

Dollars provided in scholarship to children attending summer camp and school vacation week programs.



4,272

Hours volunteered by corporations, community organizations, schools, and individuals to support the operation of the nature center, maintain trails, remove invasive plants, and plant native trees and shrubs.



Farmers Markets

Boston Nature Center collaborated with the City of Boston's Office of Food Justice to meet the city's increased need for fresh produce by expanding to two new farmers markets in Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. In partnership with Mass Audubon's The Farm at Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, Mass Audubon participated in four markets in 2022: BNC's Farm Stand (Mattapan), Mattapan Farmers Market (Mattapan), Nubian Square Farmers Market (Roxbury), and Egleston Farmers Market (Jamaica Plain).

The Farm at Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary operates a 17-acre certified organic farm in Sharon, MA to provide a variety of fresh organic, seasonal, and local produce. Moose Hill Farm supplied their own maple syrup alongside local honey provided by the Boston Area Beekeepers Association.

Throughout the 22 weeks of operation, BNC continued to address food insecurity and promoted food justice by expanding its reach and providing more opportunities for Boston communities to reliably access fresh, locally grown produce. A team of dedicated staff members engaged with community members in positive, culturally responsive ways. For example, Cleifton Jean worked in Mattapan, which has a high Haitian population. Cleifton played a critical role by utilizing his knowledge of Haitian Creole to better communicate with customers, making the shopping experience accessible to more people in the neighborhood. BNC reached over 3,500 neighbors in the surrounding Environmental Justice communities!

Climate Cafés

Fostering climate literacy amongst Boston youth and young adults through Climate Cafés was a major focus at Boston Nature Center this year. A Climate Café is an accessible, non-academic space where folks can learn from their peers about the various facets of climate change through sharing and reflecting on their lived experiences. Providing a space for people to reflect on the ways that climate change has impacted their lives builds a welcoming space to draw motivation and knowledge from their community.

This past year, participants discussed a variety of crucial topics including individual versus collective action, fast fashion, environmental racism and justice, conservation ethics, slow food, and more. The Climate Café program, which was held at colleges, libraries, and a community center, allowed for accessible guided conversations where any level of knowledge or experience was valued. Each café culminated in shared resources and opportunities for climate literacy and activism. The resources included petitions to sign, websites with accessible climate resources, browser extensions, and youth-centered activist groups active in the Boston area.

Each person on the planet has a different role to play in the fight against climate change—because of the distribution of easy-to-use, varied, and accessible resources, Climate Café participants continued to engage with climate activism and education on their own terms. Over the course of the year, Boston Nature Center offered six Climate Cafés engaging more than 40 individuals in conversations about the issues surrounding climate change and its impact on their communities.

Interested in advocating on behalf of the climate? Become a Mass Audubon Climate Champion and help achieve the state's goal to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and reverse the negative health impacts of climate change for Environmental Justice communities.



Emerson students participate in BNC-led Climate Café

Getting Back to Nature

After a year of teaching virtually, Boston Nature Center returned to in-person partnerships with Boston Public Schools (BPS). Teacher Naturalists enthusiastically brought back hands-on interactive environmental education programs to classrooms and schoolyards around the city through the Growing with STEM program, which reached 1,092 students and 87 teachers in 10 schools. Teacher Naturalists partnered with teachers in grades K through 8 to connect science with other fields in new units such as Weather and Creative Writing, Changing the World with Trees and Poetry, and Mapping Weather and Communities. Students practiced fundamental science skills such as making observations and asking questions, while learning how science impacts and intersects with their everyday life.

BNC also continued decade-long partnerships with Chittick Elementary School in Hyde Park, Haley Pilot School in Roslindale, and Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School in Mattapan, developing new curriculum and strengthening relationships with those school communities. Through new partnerships, educators provided students and teachers across Boston with unique nature exploration opportunities. For example, weekly neighborhood bird walks at the Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 School in Dorchester, demonstrated the use of a nearby green space as an extension of the classroom. Teachers learned to utilize their schools' outdoor classrooms for science and other units through the coaching and mentoring model. Through a yearlong unit, Influencing Environmental Justice, middle school students at the Boston Green Academy in Brighton researched activists and harnessed social media to inspire action and raise awareness about environmental justice and climate change. They also harvested microgreens from Boston Green Academy's very own freight farm for the benefit of the school.

In June, BNC hosted the first annual BPS STEAM-a-Palooza, celebrating science, technology, engineering, arts, and math for the entire BPS community. The event featured robotics competitions as well as exhibitions in which students presented their own STEAM projects. Teacher Naturalists developed bird-themed science project templates for elementary to high school teachers introducing topics of sustainability, conservation, and climate change. Through a wide variety of engaging programs and experiences, Boston Public Schools students reconnected with nature, exploring the world beyond their classroom and their place in it.





Pathways to Nature Preschool

The Pathways to Nature Preschool (PTN) completed its ninth year, with 52 students in three classrooms: the Busy Bees, the Curious Crickets, and the Daring Dragonflies. This unique nature preschool served a diverse community of students, ages 3-6, with a year-round program of age-appropriate, experiential outdoor curriculum. With a full day schedule, extended care options and a sliding-scale fee structure based on family income, this program continued to meet the needs of working families and offered priority seating to Mattapan neighbors and families who received state subsidies.

With COVID-19 still presenting challenges, the teaching teams worked diligently to offer the children a world where they could explore safely and make meaningful connections with both their peers and nature. Over the last year, preschoolers learned about the natural world at BNC, moving from forest exploration in the fall, to the frozen wetlands in the winter, to the spring meadows filled with blooming flowers and the singing of migratory birds. No rock or log went unturned, and no tree went unclimbed (yes, they tried to climb them all!).

As students answered questions like how does the tiniest acorn grow into the mightiest oak or how does healthy soil grow the salad greens for the classroom pets, the teachers were mindful of the inclusivity of each activity and how



it represents and affirms the students and teachers in the classroom. The teachers worked as a team to create culturally responsive curriculum that incorporated the students' interests and identities and gave them the chance to explore how they intersect with nature and the world around them.

Quotes from Parents

"Thank you! PTN has been such a gift for (my child), and for us to see her flourish. She really takes stewardship of the earth to heart, thanks to the amazing curriculum, and her quirky personality has been able to shine. We are so sad to say good-bye - I wish it went through middle school!"

"Honestly, PTN has changed (my child's) view on school and brought her to a place of celebrating her bright, spunky and incredibly active-self rather than letting us know how hard it was to hold it in all day. We actually look forward to parent-teacher conferences now. We know everyone is rooting for her, and we appreciate you (and the team) so much for turning the first years of schools around for us."

-Preschool Families

From Camper to Youth Leader

During the summer of 2022, Boston Nature Center was buzzing with joy and excitement. Whether hiking on the trails or learning about birds in the meadow, children of all ages had fun while engaged in nature! BNC provided ten weeks of summer camp to its surrounding communities through the Mattapan and West Roxbury sites. This year camp was offered in two-week sessions, giving a total of 606 campers, ages 5-15, and camp staff more time to build and bond together.

Community and connection have always been important to Boston Nature Camp. A strong sense of community is fostered through a scaffolded mentorship approach to connect youth with professional development opportunities. Starting as young as 6- or 7-years old, campers have said, I want to be a counselor here someday! They see BNC as their place and want to continue to grow with the program.

Leadership opportunities for campers are offered starting at age 14 with the Counselor-in-Training (CIT) Program. CITs train for a week with BNC's senior camp staff to learn about leadership, education techniques, and the social and emotional needs of campers. They participate in team-building activities and have opportunities to learn from past experiences from the Senior Camp Educators. Following their training, CITs can volunteer with camp for at least 2 weeks. They begin to see the professional side of camp and how they can become mentors to younger campers. BNC's Senior Camp Staff continue to support CITs through their volunteer weeks with meetings, trainings and providing feedback. This support helps youth develop confidence as they develop their professional skills.



During the winter months BNC staff remains connected with CITs and their families while sharing opportunities for the following summer. Various levels of engagement are offered so that teens can choose the best path that meets their needs. Some campers choose to volunteer as a CIT for an additional summer to continue to build their confidence around working with youth.

Once they are ready for a professional work opportunity CITs are invited to apply as a Junior Camp Counselor or for the Willow Tree Youth Leader program. Becoming a junior counselor may be the first professional work experience for them and having a community that they are familiar with helps them thrive. Mentorship of Junior Counselors continue through feedback sessions, staff meetings and in-service training. If campers are more interested in a long-term professional opportunity they are encouraged to apply to The Willow Tree Youth Leader program, which is an integral part of BNC's community beyond summer camp. With the guidance and support of their supervisor, Youth Leaders facilitate public programs, operate the farm stand in Mattapan Square, and participate in conservation biology research.

We believe that camp changes lives and want to ensure that every child in our community who wants to experience professional development growth through our program has the opportunity to do so.

Program Statistics



School Program

Schools have included: Boston Green Academy, Charles Sumner School, Conservatory Lab Charter School, Dennis C. Haley Elementary School, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 School, Jackson Mann School, James J Chittick Elementary School, John F. Kennedy School, Lee Academy Pilot School, Maurice J Tobin School, Mildred Avenue School, Sarah Greenwood School, Thomas J Kenny School, William Monroe Trotter Elementary School, Young Achievers Science, and Math Pilot School.

2,921 Children
683 Sessions
29 Schools



Pathways to Nature Preschool

Pathways to Nature Preschool is a year-round, on-site nature-based preschool program.

63 Children
Contact Hours: 83,025



Community Group Programs

Groups have included: Boston Public Libraries, GraceWorks Childcare, Hawthorne Youth and Community Center, Haynes Early, Intersection Church, Manville School, Roxbury Community College, Sister Mary Hart Children's Program, Spark Boston-City of Boston, The Big Sister Association of Greater Boston, Tuft University, Village Preschool, Yachad, Zoo New England.

4 community groups
1,393 Participants
76 Sessions



Summer Camp

Eleven weeks of Summer Camp at the Boston Nature Center, Six weeks of Summer Camp at West Roxbury satellite location.

683 Openings Filled
\$142,613 Provided in Scholarships



Special Events and Fundraisers

Bird-a-thon, Outside with the Owls (in-person), Net Zero Carbon Neutral Ground Breaking & Ribbon Cutting, Retirement Celebration for Julie Brandlen

276 Attendees
\$22,120 Raised for BNC's Education Programs thru Bird-a-thon



School Vacation Week Programs

Two School Vacation Week Programs

95 Openings Filled
\$7,346 Provided in Scholarships



Public Programs

Sample of Programs: Apple Cider and Astronomy, Bald Eagle Walk along the Neponset River, BIPOC Affinity Family Story Walk, Dorchester Tree Time Exploration, Exploring New Brook Farm, Firefly Watch, Fungus Walk, Maple Sugaring, Science of Rainbows, Wild Edible Walk.

1,509 Participants
91 Programs



Volunteers

Groups have included: Allison Young, Allscripts, Alnylam, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Boston Cares, Boston Latin, BU First Year Student Opportunities, Costello Medical, Genuine Volunteer Group, Ivy Street School, Kearny Boston, Seyon Group, Slalom, State Street, Takeda, Wolf & Co., Work Inc.

607 Volunteers
4,272.2 Hours
Value of Service: \$ 118,206.78



Community Use of BNC's Facilities

Community use organizations have included: Boston Children's Hospital, Boston Cyclists Union, Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW), First Teacher Boston, Harvard Medical School, Mothers for Justice and Equality, Prisoners Legal Services, Trinity Church.

55 Private functions

Giving Back to Nature

This year BNC experienced a return to pre-pandemic levels of volunteerism at the Boston Nature Center. The spring season kicked off with Volunteer Day at BNC, where people of all ages came out to help prepare the pollinator gardens and spruce up the grounds and nature play area. The spring saw a substantial influx of large and small corporate groups who came out to maintain and repair trails, remove invasive plants and plant native trees, shrubs and perennials. These groups continued to provide a helping hand throughout the summer and into the fall. We are eternally grateful to groups such as Slalom, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Alnylam, who all contributed a tremendous amount of sweat equity towards the stewardship and restoration of BNC.

It is impossible to talk about volunteerism at BNC without mentioning the small but mighty group of individual volunteers dedicated to protecting the BNC tree canopy by pruning and removing invasive vines. This year a dedicated group of individuals led efforts to help establish a new solar pollinator garden underneath the final piece of our net-zero project, a large ground solar array. They have single-handedly planted thousands of native pollinator plant species in that space. Their hard work has not only served to beautify BNC but will also provide a home to many essential pollinator species, enriching local ecosystems.

This committed crew wasn't the only group of individuals who gave their time and energy to BNC. We have an outstanding team of incredibly knowledgeable Sanctuary Committee members who generously give their time and expertise to help guide, promote, and assist in all operational decision-making and strategic planning areas. In addition to the Sanctuary Committee, we were fortunate to have the support of the Mattapan Community Health Center who helped guide the development of our camp's healthcare policies and procedures.

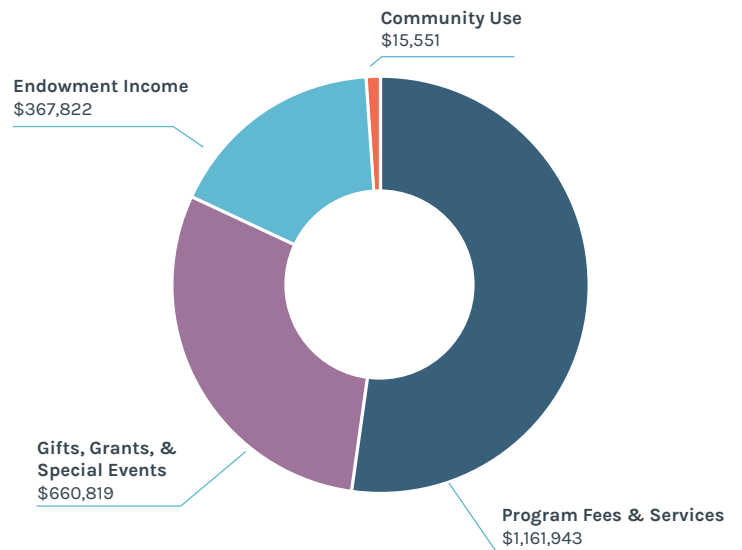
We continue to be grateful for all of our volunteers' labor, dedication, and support. Their compassion and meaningful contributions ensure that the people and wildlife of the Boston Nature Center can thrive together.



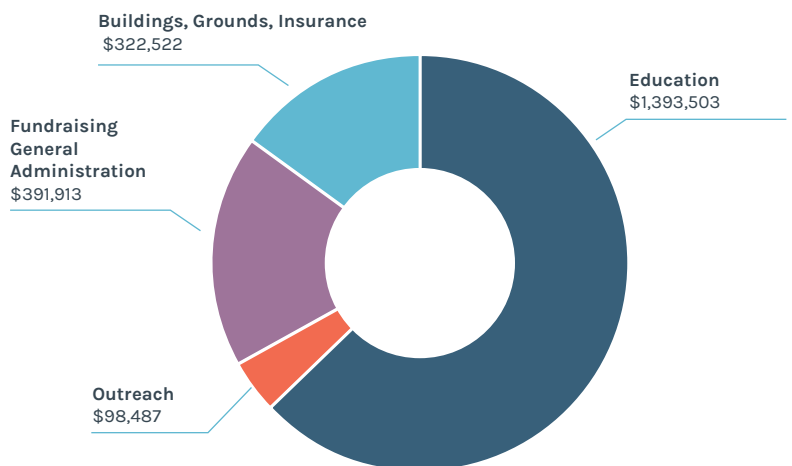
Finance Overview

Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center (BNC) annual budget for the FY 2022 totaled \$2,206,134.36. BNC secured the necessary income to meet its expenses. We are deeply appreciative of the generous support from BNC's donors and volunteers who provide BNC with the means to offer affordable programs. BNC strives to ensure access to its high-quality programs including summer camp, school vacation programs, and the Pathways to Nature Preschool, and offers participants a sliding scale which includes Massachusetts vouchers. The charts below indicate the major income and expense categories for the year (unaudited).

INCOME



EXPENSES



Individual Donors and Donor Advised Funds

The Boston Nature Center gratefully acknowledges its donors, supporters, and volunteers. Thank you for supporting inspiring and engaging urban education. BNC happens because of your generous support.

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Ward's Berry Farm

* An individual who passed away this year

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BNC extends special thanks to the following foundations, businesses, organizations, and government agencies for their generous leadership support for the full range of BNC's youth, family, and community educational programs and conservation initiatives.

Abbot and Dorothy H. Stevens Foundation	The Cedar Street Foundation	Liberty Mutual Foundation
ABCD, Inc.	Copeland Family Foundation, Inc.	MA Dept. of Early Education & Care
Alfred V. Lincoln Trust	E & L Campbell Family Foundation	Sigmund E. and Barbara B. Herzstein Fund
Alnylam US, Inc.	Helen G. Hauben Foundation	Summer Fund
Arbor Day Foundation	Josephine and Louise Crane Foundation	Tern Foundation
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mass, Inc.	Lampke Family Foundation	Willow Tree Fund



Nature Heroes Like You
 helped make nature accessible to over 8,500 visitors at BNC in 2022

Every effort was made to accurately reflect each contributor. If you find an error in the list, please accept our sincere apology and contact Zaskya Prerez at 617-983-8500.



Julie Brandlen Retires

Julie Brandlen came to Mass Audubon after a successful career as the Executive Director of the nonprofit Rosie's Place, a shelter offering a safe and supportive environment for women experiencing homelessness and poverty. When she arrived at Mass Audubon, construction at the George Robert White Conservation Center had just begun. Boston Nature Center was one of the nation's first urban nature centers and wildlife sanctuaries and was Mass Audubon's second urban sanctuary following Broad Meadow Brook in Worcester. After leading BNC for the past 21 years, Julie retired as the Boston Region Director on July 8, 2022. We are all lucky to have gotten to work with her, and her impact on this space and the surrounding community is immeasurable.

Julie's sense of hospitality and dedication to engaging the community in the surrounding neighborhoods offered a sense of belonging for all and created a warm and welcoming environment at BNC. She has enriched countless lives and has opened doors for so many people to find themselves in nature. Because of her guidance and influence, BNC developed into a multi-faceted, multi-partnered, thriving center which operates nationally-accredited camps, a licensed nature-based preschool, STEM programs within the Boston Public School system, a youth employment and leadership program, farm stands, and more. BNC's campus achieved net zero, carbon neutral status this past Earth Day 2022, a vision that Julie steered toward with laser focus.

As we celebrate Julie's retirement, please find more information on our webpage about more of her accomplishments, and consider making a gift to BNC's Sanctuary of Belonging Fund to ensure that BNC has the resources needed to continue this important work.

Boston Nature Center Staff

Katie Anderson, Preschool Teacher, West Roxbury
Kim Baker, Camp Director, Teacher Naturalist, Hyde Park
Emily Barrow, Preschool Teacher, Jamaica Plain
Julie Brandlen, Anne and Peter Brooke Director, Jamaica Plain
Jen Buckingham, Preschool Teacher, Somerville
Shawnta Carson, Preschool Teacher, Milton
Liza Centeio, Visitor Service, Dorchester
Emily Cherkin, Teacher Naturalist, West Roxbury
Heather Deschenes, Operations Manager, Weymouth
Sherry Eskin, Per Diem/Preschool, Jamaica Plain
Correne George, Teacher Naturalist, Milton
Chelsea Gutierrez, Preschool Teacher, Braintree
Megan Harrington, Preschool Teacher, Roslindale
Claire Harris, Preschool Director, Dorchester
Hilary Johansen-Silve, Assistant Preschool Director, West Roxbury
Timothy Juba, Caretaker, Mattapan
Christopher Montero, Teacher Naturalist, Sommerville
Erin Kelly, Acting Director, West Roxbury
Adam Leiterman, Teacher Naturalist, Jamaica Plain
Stephen Lin, Teacher Naturalist, Brighton
Michael McWade, Property Manager, Milton
Emily Mei, Preschool Teacher, Quincy
Julia Murphy, Teacher Naturalist, Brighton
Joanna Newberry, Preschool Teacher, Jamaica Plain
Zaskya Perez, Development Officer, Jamaica Plain
Jamie Semel, Teacher Naturalist, Brighton
Lissa Sangree-Calabrese, TerraCorps Member, Allston
Darcelis Worrell, Teacher Naturalist, Dorchester

Sanctuary Committee

Hazel Agyemang, Dorchester
Rosemary Anderson, Clerk, Norwood
Catherine Campbell, Roslindale
Nate Hagee, Roslindale
Martha Heath, Jamaica Plain
Jocelyn Heywood, Randolph
Maria Higgins, Mattapan
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Vivian Ortiz, Vice Chair, Mattapan
Bill Perkins, Chair, Jamaica Plain
Rachele Rosi-Kessel, Roslindale
Charlene Ross, Boston
Lela Silverstein, Mattapan
Laura Smeaton, Clerk, Roslindale
Patricia Spence, Dorchester
Meg Wallace, Rockport



**Boston Nature Center
& Wildlife Sanctuary**

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