



FRIENDS NEWSLETTER: ELLISVILLE MARSH RESTORATION PROJECT OCTOBER, 2012

This newsletter is produced on a periodic basis to keep members of the Friends of Ellisville Marsh, Inc., apprised of developments and opportunities to become involved. In this issue: Ellisville Plant Life, Ellisville Inlet, Savery Pond Project, Nesting Shorebirds. Spotted Knapweed.

Remarkable Ellisville Plant Life

Have you ever wondered what those delicate flowering plants are along the marsh edge, or growing on the barrier beach in Ellisville? Now you can identify many of them yourself, thanks to Irina Kadis and Alexey Zinovjev of Salicicola.com, who conducted site walks and catalogued many of our plants throughout 2011, with 155 species documented. An Ellisville plant sampler is now available on our web site at www.EllisvilleMarsh.org – click on the “Plant Life” tab. Irina and Alexey’s full catalog of Ellisville plants can be found at www.salicicola.com/checklists/Ellisville/.



Seabeach Sandwort

Formal name:
*Honckenya
peploides* ssp.
robusta.

May 2012
Photograph courtesy
of Alexey Zinovjev
and Irina Kadis,
Salicicola.com.

Please Renew Your Annual Membership Now

Annual dues keep our programs going. Without them, we could have to dig into the long term endowment fund to cover routine operating expenses and inlet maintenance costs. Membership renewal is affordable and easy to do; visit www.EllisvilleMarsh.org and click on “Donate”

Ellisville Inlet Holding Fast

This from our lead director for inlet maintenance and engineering, Jack Scambos: “The inlet has had a great year! Tidal flows continue to come straight in and out with an increase in tidal range (the vertical difference between high and low water elevations) in the back of the marsh of approximately 30% in 2011-12, compared to pre-dredge conditions. This enhanced tidal flushing is critical to the recovery of native cordgrass at the



back of the marsh, which is expected to take several years. We anticipate that analysis of 2012 monitoring data will show that a high level of water quality was also maintained. The physical structure of the inlet itself has remained stable since our last maintenance cycle in January (see the inlet as mapped by GPS this August vs. pre-2011 at left). There is also some indication that the inlet may be attempting to self-armour at its eastern end. That is, rocks are being piled on both sides of the inlet through natural processes and this may help it resist blockage during storms. Finally, the old barrier spit, which was mechanically breached in January 2011, continues its gradual migration toward the main part of Ellisville Beach. Aerial images suggest that when this migration is complete the beach will look very much the way it did in 1984 when the marsh was considered to be healthier.”

Savery Pond Water Quality Monitoring Project Update

We are pleased to report that two rounds of water quality sampling were completed at Savery Pond this summer. This pilot project was undertaken as a first step toward understanding what may be required to restore the Ellisville estuary, the freshwater side of the Ellisville ecosystem. Samples were collected by our consultant, Aquatic Control Technology (ACT). Volunteers received training from ACT during the second sampling event so that we ourselves can collect samples for lab analysis next summer. ACT is scheduled to deliver their assessment report in November. If you would like to receive a copy of the report or attend a presentation of findings and recommendations, please email us at SaveryPond@EllisvilleMarsh.org and we'll be sure to include you. Thanks to the \$2,000 grant we received from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund and the generosity of people living near Savery Pond, the project will have no impact on the Friends' operating funds.

The Spotted Knapweed Scourge – Will Weevils Work?

A previous article described the invasion of non-native Spotted Knapweed underway at Ellisville Beach and Ellisville Harbor State Park. (See our May 2011 Update at: <http://www.ellisvillemarsh.org/FEMcontent/Friends%20Newsletter%2005.2011.pdf>).

Pretty purple blossoms belie the plant's insidious nature. Left unchecked, it can displace all other plants around it. From Missouri to Washington state, the plant is considered a top threat to natural biodiversity. A new strategy is being applied this year in Myles Standish State Forest, thanks to an initiative undertaken by the forest's own Friends group. The Friends of Myles Standish State Forest (FMSSF) researched potential solutions and found that the Knapweed Root Weevil, which is found naturally in Europe but not here, can be effective in controlling the plant. FMSSF applied for the necessary permits, purchased a supply of the weevils, and with the cooperation of MA DCR, released them in several areas of the forest in September. An excellent article by Frank Mand appeared in the Old Colony Memorial: <http://www.wickedlocal.com/plymouth/news/x1402245282/MYLES-STANDISH-STATE-FOREST-Friends-fight-invasive-species-with-seed-eating-bugs#axzz26laXoLFK>.

We will be watching the results of this test closely and support its 2013 extension to Ellisville Harbor State Park, where there are several dense fields of Spotted Knapweed. It's likely that the Ellisville Beach infestation came across the marsh from these sites, so eliminating the source will help control its further spread at Ellisville Marsh. Stay tuned.

End of Season Report on Nesting Shorebirds

For beach goers, this was a less intrusive summer as only areas north of the main beach path needed to be fenced off and virtually all of the sandy beach was left open. Having trained, local people monitor nesting activity on a daily basis allows fencing to closely follow actual nesting activity. And when there is no longer the need to protect an area, fencing is taken down in a timely manner after consultation with Mass Audubon.



Photo courtesy of Diane Fletcher ©2012

However, this was a disappointing year for Piping Plovers and Least Terns on Ellisville Beach. Plovers are designated as Threatened species under federal and state endanger species laws, and Least Terns are state-listed as Special Concern, affording them similar levels of protection. Two pairs of Piping Plovers made nests here and in spite of multiple attempts, only one chick survived long enough to fledge. Typically, three or four pairs nest on Ellisville Beach and at least two or three chicks fledge. One unlucky pair made three separate nests, each with four eggs, only to see each one destroyed by predators or high tides. Least Terns again colonized what was left of the old barrier spit with as many as six nests. However, it is likely that predators got those nests as well since all activity ceased abruptly prior to the expected hatch dates.

To Contact the Board or Share Your Ideas:

Please email us at Board@EllisvilleMarsh.org . We welcome your ideas and inputs.

And thanks for your continuing support!