



FRIENDS OF ELLISVILLE MARSH NEWSLETTER: SUSTAINABILITY OCTOBER, 2013

There is an urgent need for you to renew your membership now. We need operating funds for this winter season's maintenance, so please renew now to maximize the impact of your gift. The Friends have applied for an extension of our work window so this winter's work will be particularly important and less expensive.

Double the Impact of Your Gift!

Have you renewed your Friends' membership for the 2013-14 membership year yet? If not, don't forget that your membership renewal or endowment fund gift is eligible for a 100% match, but only until the year's end. It's easy to make your donation, and membership levels start at just \$15. Just go to our website:

http://ellisvillemarsh.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=28.

We operate very frugally but your donations are needed to keep us going. Thanks for your generous support!

Thank You, Eric Cody!

How does one begin to put into words what Eric Cody has done for this organization? Eric, founder and out-going President, is the heart and soul of the Friends, and thankfully he's not really going anywhere, still very much at the center of all that the group accomplishes. But it became clear that if Eric was to have any free time at all, and if the organization was going to have a long-term sustainable future that didn't rest on the shoulders of one individual, the distribution of labor was going to have to change within the organization.

The Board of Directors wants to take this opportunity to say an enormous 'thank you' to Eric for his vision, passion, and ability to make things happen, where a lesser leader might have given up long ago. It is because of Eric's determination and skill that the Friends has been able to accomplish all that it has in the past 7 years. Thanks to Eric's tireless efforts, the wildlife of Ellisville Marsh thrives and more people than ever have been drawn in to work to protect and treasure all it has to offer. With Eric's experience and wisdom to guide us, the Friends will continue to strive to protect this special place, welcoming Jack Scambos at the helm.



Photo courtesy of
Mike Brennan,
September 4, 2013.

President's Corner: Jack Scambos

It's quite a view from the catbird seat here as the new President of The Friends of Ellisville Marsh. I have had the honor and privilege of working with most of The Board for several years and must tell everyone what a great group of dedicated, community-oriented folks they are. Each of the directors has taken responsibility for specific areas of The Friends ranging from Regulatory Affairs (more on that one later) to member outreach programs like Event Planning. Although we continue to move towards a sustainable solution for the Ellisville Marsh, our group has also progressed into some really interesting areas.

Birds Our annual Bird Walk in May is something that everyone can enjoy. We're fortunate to have Brad Winn from Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences on our board, and he has led several of these trips. The report from the participants is that this is just a fabulous day enjoying one of the greatest and most diverse bird assemblages in southeastern MA.

Plants We have a great addition to our website with an illustrated inventory of all of the plants that a team of local botany experts, Irina Kadis and Alexey Zinovjev, could identify in the marsh; truly interesting stuff! Download this beautiful photo guide Plant Sampler: <http://ellisvillemarsh.org/FEMcontent/PlantSamplerOct2012.pdf> or visit this comprehensive checklist of Ellisville plants: <http://www.salicicola.com/checklists/Ellisville/>

Regulatory On the regulatory front, we are a little past the halfway mark of our five year permit to maintain the channel to the Ellisville marsh as a clear and unrestricted link to its life-giving ocean. This connection, maintained for over a 100 years by the local hay farmers, fishermen, and lobstermen over the decades was blocked by the powerful no-name storm of 1991. The degradation in marsh grass over the 20 years it was blocked is easily recognizable as the wide mud flat that occupies the back ¼ of the marsh near Ellisville Road. Once the grass dies off, the mounds that are typical for a salt marsh topple over, leaving an elevated, mud flat that is poorly suited for repopulation. Reestablishing the link to the sea is a clear way to stop this destruction and perhaps even reverse it.

The regulatory path, as you can imagine, is arduous and contorted, sometime pitting local conservation community members against large, statewide agencies. One of our most engaged regulatory agencies is the Federal EPA who seems to understand the important link between this salt marsh and the ocean. We are cautiously optimistic about our success and we hope that we can continue to insure the life giving tidal flow for this "nature's water filter".

This is tedious work, with several hundred pages of data submitted each year in support of the Monitoring Programs that are part of our permits. All of your board members spend many hours monitoring the sensors, creating the reports, preparing the submissions, and following up on questions. We desperately need your support to continue these efforts. We are incorporated as a non-profit so your donations are 100% tax deductible. Please continue your generous support at this critical time for our organization.

It Takes a Village To Raise a Chick!

by Eric Cody

Every now and then, our environmental monitoring programs take a decidedly personal turn. This is a story of one of those times. Piping Plover nest monitoring on Ellisville beach was, for the most part, a lesson in frustration this summer. Four of the five nests laid by our three pairs of Plovers were taken by predators or high tides. Re-nest attempts failed for the same reasons. To make matters worse, all but one of the lost nests had a full clutch of four eggs and had been incubated for some time. In other words, the birds made a large investment of effort only to see it wiped out. Foxes, coyotes, crows, raccoons and possibly skunks stalked the beach at night. Our team, in a coordinated effort with Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program, stepped up and erected protective fencing around and netting over the fifth nest when fox tracks were found within a few yards of it. Called an "enclosure," this level of protection was used very sparingly on Cape Cod this summer as it can sometimes backfire and cause nest abandonment or call unwanted attention to a nest. One reason this pair of birds was special is that the female was banded on the Cape last summer and could be individually identified.

The good news: all four of her eggs successfully hatched on June 27th and the chicks trooped out of their safe haven and down the beach to feed themselves. For the next eight days, Friends' members mounted a protective vigil, starting as early as 6:00 am and covering many of the morning hours when crows are most likely to strike. Led by

stalwart Rosemary Smith, Friends' volunteers shadowed the chicks and their parental chaperone up and down the beach, maintaining a safe distance and keeping crows at bay.

"Little Rosemary", the one piping plover chick that survived due to the efforts of Rosemary Smith and the other dedicated beach nesting bird volunteer monitors. Photo courtesy of Diane Fletcher.



Little Rosemary under a protective mom's wing (note the light blue leg band on "Waldo"). Photo courtesy of Diane Fletcher.

Other volunteers joined the cause. The result? All four chicks survived the next ten days, gaining weight and learning how to blend perfectly in with the beach. But in a sad turn, three of the four chicks were taken by predators between July 7th and 11th. Only one chick remained. *But she flew on July 22nd, salvaging the summer's work in what can only be described as a small miracle.* Her name? Little Rosemary. Perhaps we'll see her again next summer, along with her mother.

Friends' Shorebird Nest Monitoring Program Gains National Attention

Check it out: http://www.fws.gov/endangered/map/ESA_success_stories/MA/MA_story3/index.html

Trash Art

In the beginning of August Abby Foley collected 656 pieces of garbage from Ellisville Beach in one hour and Ellen Russell used all the colorful pieces to make a sailboat sail piece of art. The trash found includes a doll's arm, an insulin needle, a toothbrush, and an asthma inhaler.



The Foley/Russell collaborative *objet d'art*.

Photo courtesy of Ellen Russell.

Taking on Spotted Knapweed

by Paula Marcoux

A few Julys back, lovers of pretty little flowers may have been charmed by a new addition growing among the poison ivy, dunegrass, and cedars by the harbor's mouth in Ellisville: multiple sweet little purply-pink blooms on a tall stem fringed with delicate toothed leaves. Turns out to be none other than the dreaded Spotted Knapweed, a scourge that arrived on the East Coast after a successful invasion of North America's northern tier prairies. This knapweed is a perennial that managed to give the slip to its predators (a couple of weevils that subsist only on the stuff) as it quietly made its way out of its Central European homeland to this continent some years back. Now it has its way, unfettered, with any sunny patch that uncleaned mower blades spread its seed to, quickly becoming the dominant party by tolerating almost any conditions and releasing substances into the soil that put the kibosh on all other plant life. (With one possible exception: judging from an informal survey of the most infested part of Ellisville Harbor State Park this August, the only native plant that has the fortitude to stand up to the pink peril is our beloved poison ivy!)



Spotted Knapweed close-up photo courtesy of Irina Kadis; **Ellisville habitat filled with Spotted Knapweed** photo courtesy of Paula Marcoux.

Following the lead of forward-thinking members of the Friends of Myles Standish State Forest, and working with the advice and help of Arnold Arboretum botanist Irina Kadis, the Friends of Ellisville Marsh has been trying to slow the march of this aggressive invasive. First, two years ago, back when the plant was mistaken for its less-vicious biennial cousin, we tried snipping the flower heads before they made seeds. This summer we sent away for some of the weevils that the knapweed thought it had said goodbye to forever back on the Ukrainian steppe. We released a few hundred of the cute little guys on private property adjoining Ellisville Beach. Years will pass, and probably more weevils will be needed, before we know if our efforts will pay off.

If you find Spotted Knapweed growing on your own property (check your roadside especially), you may be able to pull the entire plant up (very dry conditions are helpful), bag it, and dispose of it in the trash. Mowing after seeds have begun to form will assure you a bumper crop in future – beware!

Bird Brains help with Shorebird Count

This year, we were happy to start contributing data to the International Shorebird Survey (ISS, link here: <https://www.manomet.org/program/shorebird-recovery-project/international-shorebird-survey-iss>). Thanks to the efforts of Stu Sanders and other "Bird Brains" from the Pine Hills, we started a regular effort to census migrating shorebirds on Ellisville's rich tidal flats, assessing the importance of this site to the long-distance migrants that are refueling there on their way to and from their Arctic breeding grounds / South American wintering grounds. This is a vital long-term effort with over 80,000 counts over almost 40 years at 1,200 sites throughout the western hemisphere.