



# Looking Deeper, Connecting Better

Fall 2024 Update



Judy and Don Quinn. Photo courtesy of Keith Quinn.

## In Memory: Don Quinn

It is with great sadness that we report the death on July 10 of longtime Friends' supporter and well-known local attorney Don Quinn. Don was far more than a member. He laid the foundation for the protection of Ellisville Marsh, a place he revered. His tireless work over more than a decade enabled the 2003 gift of land that

parcels that comprised Ellisville Marsh so that the area could be permanently protected. He waged a court battle against the state of Massachusetts to determine the legal boundaries of the property and prevailed. Don Quinn was a force to be reckoned with in a court of law. He later negotiated the Settlement Order that resolved a neighborhood dispute with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, paving the way for the formation of the Friends of Ellisville Marsh.

Don provided legal and practical advice to the Friends which was invaluable during the founding of our nonprofit corporation in 2007. He advised the board of directors on such matters as the Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, and governance. Over the years, Don was always ready to help when the Friends' leadership team needed advice on regulatory permitting, contracts, and other matters. He never charged the Friends for his advice and counsel. It is no coincidence that Don and Judy's house is perched on the hillside above Ellisville Marsh. They looked out over the marsh as guardian angels would. The Friends were greatly blessed by Don's watchful eye and sharp mind

For Don Quinn's obituary in the *Boston Globe*, please visit: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/donald-quinn-obituary?id=55539038>

To contribute to Don's Memorial Fund, please visit us at: [Donate – Friends of Ellisville Marsh](#) and note "In Memory of Don Quinn" on your gift.

Contributed by Eric Cody.



## *Touch Grass: Scientific Views on the Health-Promoting Benefits of Natural Places*

In case you're not connected with anyone in Gen Z, "touch grass" is an expression that means to step off the screens, big and small, get off social media and, quite actually, touch grass; that is, touch something "real" and natural.

Many of us are innately aware that spending time in nature promotes health and well-being. We intuitively sense that vistas, forest walks (or "forest bathing" as the Japanese encourage), gardening, and beach time lead to an improved mood and increased vitality.

There is a growing body of scientific literature to support this idea. One of the earliest studies, published forty years ago (Ulrich et al., *Science*, 1984), compared outcomes between two groups of gallbladder surgery patients. One group stayed in recovery rooms with views of a brick wall, the other group was in recovery rooms with views of trees. In all other aspects, the patients were equivalent. Researchers found that those in rooms with tree views had significantly shorter hospital stays, lower use of narcotic pain medication, and fewer overall postsurgical complications compared to those with views of the brick wall. This finding has been supported by many other studies of adults over the decades since it was published.

recent study of seven-to-nine-year-old schoolchildren in Michigan found that higher levels of visible nature from classroom windows, particularly of trees, were associated with fewer behavior problems. (Pearson et al., *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2023.)

More specific to our coastal environment in Ellisville and, in particular, our proximity to a protected natural place, the literature shows that blue spaces, not just green spaces, seem to be particularly restorative, promoting feelings of relaxation and refreshment. Natural spaces high in biodiversity and environmental quality (free of litter and pristine) provide additional psychological benefits. Exposure to such environments can strengthen our sense of connectedness - our emotional and cognitive bonds to the natural world.

Why should we care about feelings of connectedness? Higher feelings of connectedness with nature have been associated with more environmental acts, better health, higher subjective well-being, better mood, greater happiness, and a deeper sense of meaning, all of which promote greater health of both the individual and the environment. (Wyles, et al., *Environment & Behavior*, 2019; 51:111–143.)

We may not know why spending time in blue and green spaces is so beneficial to us, physically and mentally, but perhaps the why isn't important. Most of us spend so little time in nature, we forget we are of the earth, not separate from it. We forget this at our peril. So, we hope you will choose to "touch grass" and reap the benefits to your mind, body, and soul.

Contributed by Adela Hruby



## Friends' Latest Aerial Infrared Orthophoto

The Friends captured our first, high-definition aerial orthophoto (three-dimensional image) of Ellisville Marsh in 2008, well before we began performing maintenance of the salt marsh inlet. Additional photos were commissioned in 2011, 2018, and most recently, this past August. By specifying infrared as well as the more natural, red-green-blue spectrum, we can use the image to assess the health of marsh vegetation, which gives off heat. The imagery even helps us to discern the extent of the eelgrass

applications. Of all the environmental monitoring programs the Friends have undertaken since 2007, these aerial orthophotos contain the most detailed geospatial data for describing recent changes in the salt marsh. Among changes visible in the orthophotos: new areas of vegetation have taken root in the shorebird nesting area on the barrier beach and along the marsh inlet channel; areas of the marsh without vegetation have expanded; sandbars in the old harbor have grown and gained height; and the sixty-year-old rock jetty on the state park side of the inlet has partially collapsed. We plan to correlate on-the-ground, vegetation sampling results with information from aerials using a Geographical Information System (GIS). The Friends contracted with BlueSky International for the flight and digital surveillance services required to produce this imagery.

For an interesting article on “blue carbon,” click on this link”:

[Seagrasses and salt marshes can store more carbon than trees. Adding it up is easier said than done. - The Boston Globe](#)



### **What Made These Circular Cuts?**

Do you have a redbud tree or rosebush in your yard with neat, semicircular sections cut out of the leaves? What did this? Will it damage your ornamental plantings? Not to worry, these indicate the presence of leafcutter bees, one of over 4,000 native bee species in the US. Leafcutters are among the best pollinators for late-season fruits and vegetables so they'll help your garden grow. They use the leaf cuttings for their strange-looking nests, not as a food source. And they generally don't harm the plants. Leaf cutting by bees can

and responds by blooming in time to have their pollinators functioning and not starving due to lack of pollen. Just goes to show that when you look closely, you find wondrous things.

## Sand Mining Project Looms Over Ellisville Estuary

A large-scale sand mining operation has been proposed for a parcel of land in the Indianhead Resort campground, a scant two-tenths of a mile from the herring run that feeds into the Ellisville estuary. It's about the same distance from the boundary of the Ellisville Harbor Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), which was created in 1980 to safeguard Ellisville Marsh. First proposed more than a decade ago, the project would extract 475,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from the site. The applicant, Indianhead Realty, was denied the required special permit in 2014 by the Plymouth Zoning Board of Appeals but has appealed the decision a number of times since then. Three appeals have been denied and a fourth decision is pending. The Friends have opposed this project since 2014 for its potential impacts on wildlife habitat, groundwater, air quality, and noise, not to mention the impact on local roads from as many as 20,000 truck trips in and out of the site. For more information on sand mining in southeastern Massachusetts, visit: [Sand and Gravel Mining - Community Land and Water Coalition](#).

The Friends' new membership year began July 1. Have you renewed yet?

[Renew Your Membership for 2024-25 Here](#)



A fluffy least tern chick enjoys fish takeout brought by his mother. Photo courtesy of Diane Jordan.

## Shorebird Nesting Season Wrap-up

It was an exciting shorebird nesting season on the Shifting Lots beach this past summer. The team ultimately saw 14 piping plovers fledge, topping last season's newly set record of 12 fledglings. We had five pairs nest in the area. Given the territorial nature of this threatened species, and the relatively limited nesting space, the team witnessed a fair number of squabbles that seemed more intense than in prior years. As the number of birds rebounds, and usable beach erodes due to climate change and rising sea level, we can only expect these squabbles to intensify.

Once nesting areas were claimed, the five plover pairs laid a total of 20 eggs. One nest was lost early in the cycle, likely due to predation. However, the stoic pair simply moved their nest down the beach a bit and started over, laying another 4 eggs. The season started around May 11 when the first nest was found and wrapped up on August 3 with the last surviving plover chicks fledging. Of the 24 eggs laid, we documented 18 hatched chicks, with 14 surviving long enough to fledge.

In addition, the piping plover families shared the beach with a least tern colony. Due to their aggressive dive bombing of anyone daring to get close, the terns are more



Many thanks to our dedicated shorebird monitors for another successful season, including Eric and Christine Cody, Diane Jordan, Annette and Rob Leckie, and Paula Marcoux, one or more of whom were on the beach every day from April to August.

Contributed by Annette Leckie

The Friends of Ellisville Marsh welcome your feedback, questions, and comments.

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