

FRIENDS OF THE

**BLUE HILLS**

PROTECT • PRESERVE • PARTICIPATE





**2022 Board Members**

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- Bob Murray  
TREASURER
- David Dobrindt  
SECRETARY
- Mike Albert
- Carina Bandle
- Laura Beebe
- Winston Daley
- Emily Grilli-Scott
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**Sponsor Organizations**

- Canton Cultural Council
- Colonial Road Runners
- Dedham Savings
- Liberty Mutual Group Inc.
- Milton Garden Club
- Morgan Stanley
- The McGowan Group
- Orchard Cove
- REI Co-op
- UL Solutions

Friends of the Blue Hills  
PO Box 416  
Milton, MA 02186

Cover photo:  
Ava Deronette, taken  
by Casimir Deronette

**Dear Friends,**

Ask any member of the Friends of the Blue Hills what makes the Blue Hills special, and you'll get a variety of answers. Our members love hiking in the hills and the woods, biking, picnicking, swimming, skiing, meeting friends, enjoying the beauty of nature, solitude, and being fewer than 10 miles from downtown Boston yet feeling a world away.

For all these reasons, Friends' members work to preserve this amazing natural habitat so wildlife can thrive and all of us can enjoy the natural wonders offered by the Blue Hills.

Your support makes a tangible difference every day by helping to provide maintenance for the trails and protection for endangered species. Your work to address pedestrian safety along the roads that cut through the reservation and improve public transportation access is making a huge difference to those current — and future — visitors to the park.

Last year, you made a major impact by helping to assure passage of the Public Lands Preservation Act. Your help in getting this bill through the legislature means there are now key legal safeguards to protect the Blue Hills and all of our public parks.

Together, we accomplished a lot in 2022 — this Annual Report celebrates all you achieved.

We're so thankful for your continuing participation and support. Until the next time we meet, we wish you happy trails (and hills and woods).

For the Blue Hills,



Judy

Judy Lehrer Jacobs  
Executive Director



Matt

Matt Panucci  
President

**We Couldn't Do It Without You**

As you may know, visitors to the Blue Hills Reservation have the option of exploring trails through forests, meadows, and wetlands, up hills, and around ponds, totaling 125 miles. Some routes are perfect for beginning hikers, while others can challenge an experienced hiker training for a trek in the White Mountains. While the terrain varies tremendously, the trails have one thing in common: they all require care to keep them accessible, attractive and safe. Throughout the year, visitors benefit from the work of Friends' volunteers, who blaze, brush, prune, clear, rake, and repair trails throughout the year. In 2022, the Friends organized, trained and recruited volunteers who volunteered 900 times in the Blue Hills!



**150**  
BAGS  
of invasives  
removed



**300** VOLUNTEERS  
supported the  
park more than 900 times



**18**  
EVENTS  
with  
corporate/  
business volunteer  
groups



**1,600**  
HOURS  
of volunteering



**43**  
VOLUNTEER  
events



## How You Help Wildlife

We love our human and canine visitors. Everyone is welcome. The same cannot be said for a variety of invasive, non-native species that can threaten our habitat and ecosystem. In wooded areas of the Blue Hills Reservation, invasive species include aggressive garlic mustard, fast-growing mile-a-minute vine (shown here), and tree-strangling bittersweet plant.

Luckily, your support helps provide the tools, training and support that volunteers need to remove these plants in the most ecologically sensitive areas of the park. By helping to control invasives, you protect the habitat that Blue Hills' wildlife depend on to survive.

## Advocating Together for the Park's Future

Your voice, together with the voices of other members, helped to accomplish a lot for the park and its visitors last year. Here's six ways you made a difference:

### 1 Protecting Public Lands with the Public Lands Preservation Act

After more than two decades, we succeeded in passing the Public Lands Preservation Act. The intent of this law is to prevent the loss of acreage from our public land. You may remember that in the early 2000s we lost over three acres of the Blue Hills in a 'land swap.' The Public Lands Preservation Act will help safeguard our public land for years to come. This act establishes protections for public land by ensuring that when public parks are used for anything other than parkland, they must be replaced by land of comparable value, and requiring that the public be notified prior to any attempts to change the use of public lands. *Many thanks to all our members for helping to increase protection of all our public land!*



### 2 'Be Kind' and Care for the Park

Think about the Smokey the Bear slogan that the National Park Service used in the 1950s to reduce forest fires: "Only YOU can prevent forest fires." Smokey is still helping people remember how to prevent wildfires while encouraging personal responsibility with a positive vibe. That's the kind of

communication we want to create to ensure we're all taking care of the Blue Hills. The campaign will reinforce the existing culture of care and respect that visitors experience in the Blue Hills, and work to positively impact the behaviors of those few people whose actions disturb other visitors or harm the habitat.

To find out what message would resonate today, we partnered with the DCR and Friends of the Fells to facilitate four focus groups; survey 3,500 visitors to the Blue Hills and Middlesex Fells; and reach out to thousands

of people on social media to test how best to communicate with people. We saw clear themes in the research, and people responded most to a message to 'be kind' and care for each other and the park.

In the coming year, we will work with the DCR and our partners to move the campaign forward. We'll start with pilot projects to recognize and reinforce the positive ways most people act, such as leaving no trace and staying on trails.



Photo: John Parker

### 3 Crossing Safety for Hikers

Buck Hill and the Skyline Trail are two of the biggest hiking attractions in the Blue Hills. However, motor vehicle traffic in areas adjacent to Route 28 in Canton and Randolph, especially between Chickatawbut Road and Route 93, can be dangerous to

hikers who are crossing the road that bisects the trail. The Friends is working with the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization and neighboring town officials on a study that will make recommendations on how to protect hikers and improve access to the easternmost parts of the Reservation.

### 4 Improving Access Via Public Transportation

If you live in Boston neighborhoods that are only five miles from the park and don't have a car, it's a real challenge to visit the Blue Hills. In an effort to make the Reservation more accessible to people who don't have cars and help reduce the number of motor vehicles on our roadways, the Friends worked with community partners and the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization to study the best ways to improve public transportation to the Blue Hills. Last fall this study was completed, resulting in several recommended actions. We continue to work with our community partners, as well as state and local officials, to make sure the recommendations are implemented.

## 5 Marking the Trail to Increase Access for Quincy Residents

Many people who live near the Granite Links Golf Course do not know they can access the Blue Hills on foot.

Thanks to the advocacy of members and partners of the Friends of the Blue Hills, the City of Quincy has agreed to require Quarry Hills Associates, operator of the Granite Links Golf Course, to maintain and mark an existing trail with wayfinding signage. This will help Quincy and Milton residents identify and walk to the Ricciutti Drive trailhead to enjoy the Blue Hills. We are also working with staff at the Department of Conservation and Recreation to mark not only the trailhead at Ricciutti Drive but also the Quarries Foot Path.

For more information about the trail marking and maintenance and how you helped increase access to the Blue Hills in Quincy, visit [friendsofthebluehills.org/trails-quincy](https://friendsofthebluehills.org/trails-quincy).



## 6 Preventing Development Threats

Our members consistently rank preventing development threats as a high priority. In response to your concerns, we are taking proactive steps to protect the park before the next development that threatens to drain Blue Hills' wetlands and destroy valuable endangered species habitat.

Just a few years ago, a 276-unit development was proposed for a site adjacent to Fowl Meadow. The apartments, cars and paving involved with this development would have damaged sensitive wetlands in this part of the park, killing endangered species and irreparably changing this special landscape.

How can we protect land next to the park that acts as a buffer to protect the habitat of wildlife in the Blue Hills? How can we

identify land that is currently open space or lightly developed but would threaten the Blue Hills if it were developed more intensely?

Those were the questions we sought to answer when we initiated the Blue Hills Buffer study. Thanks to member support, we developed an app that categorizes property around the park in five different towns, helping us identify which properties are most at risk for development.

The next step? The data gathered during the study will help us identify ways that we can work with state and municipal officials to protect buffer lands through zoning modifications or conservation easements.



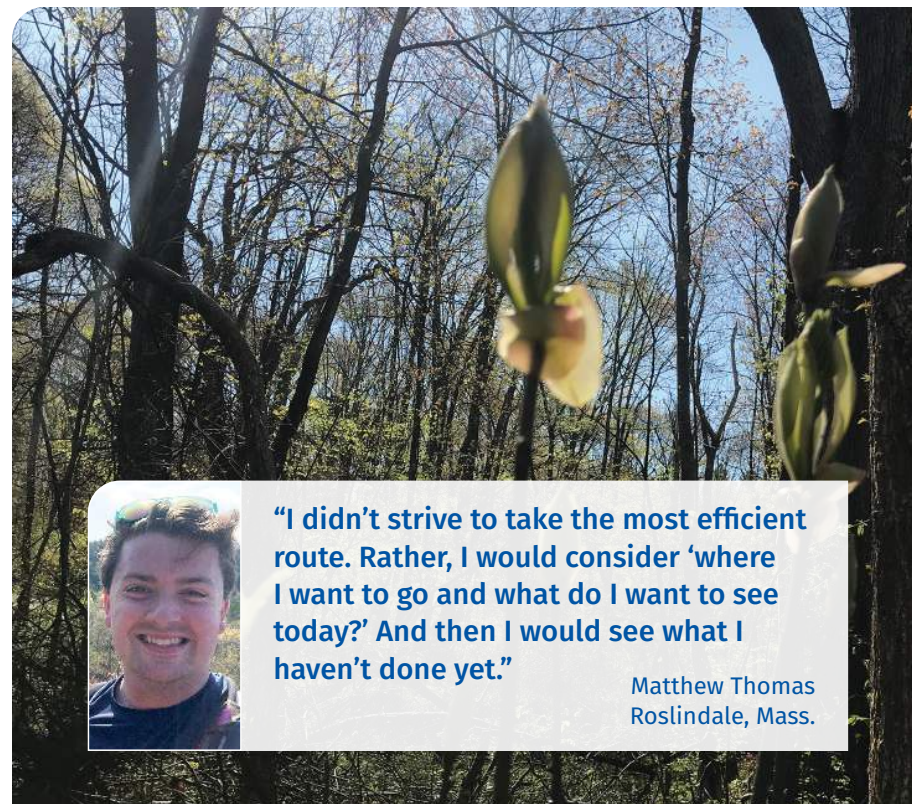
Photo: Yakir Propp

## Enjoying All 125 Miles

More than 700 people have signed up for the 125-Mile Club, committing to exploring all 125 miles of Blue Hills' trails. Matthew Thomas was one of more than 50 people in 2022 who earned a 125-Mile Club patch by traveling all 125 miles of trails or completing the Skyline Trail end to end. In reflecting on his journey, he said "I didn't strive to take the most efficient route. Rather, I would consider 'where do I want to go and what do I want to see today?' And then I would see what I haven't done yet."

Although it may seem daunting, participants like Matthew take the challenge one step at a time... and enjoy the journey. You can check our website for new resources, including suggested routes to get you started. When you finish, you'll be the proud owner of a special 125-mile club commemorative patch!

For more information visit: [friendsofthebluehills.org/125mileclub](https://friendsofthebluehills.org/125mileclub).

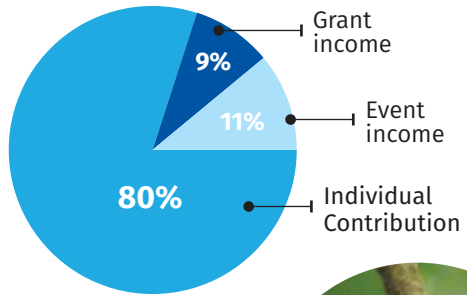


**"I didn't strive to take the most efficient route. Rather, I would consider 'where I want to go and what do I want to see today?' And then I would see what I haven't done yet."**

Matthew Thomas  
Roslindale, Mass.

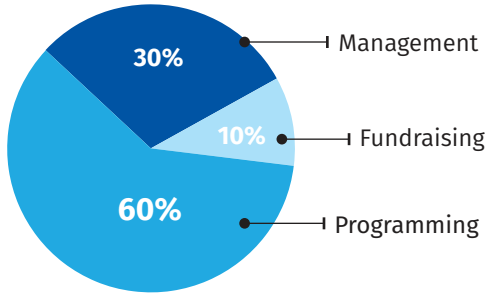


## 2022 Income



**Total revenue**  
\$268,000

## 2022 Expenses



**Total expenses**  
\$330,000

*The difference in revenues vs. expenses is due to timing of donation received.*



Bird photos: Top left: Yvaping Su; Center and bottom: Danny Arnott



## June is Membership Month

Every June we celebrate our members with special events to let you know how wonderful you are!

According to our member survey,  
**you** gave the Blue Hills a **4.8** rating.

