

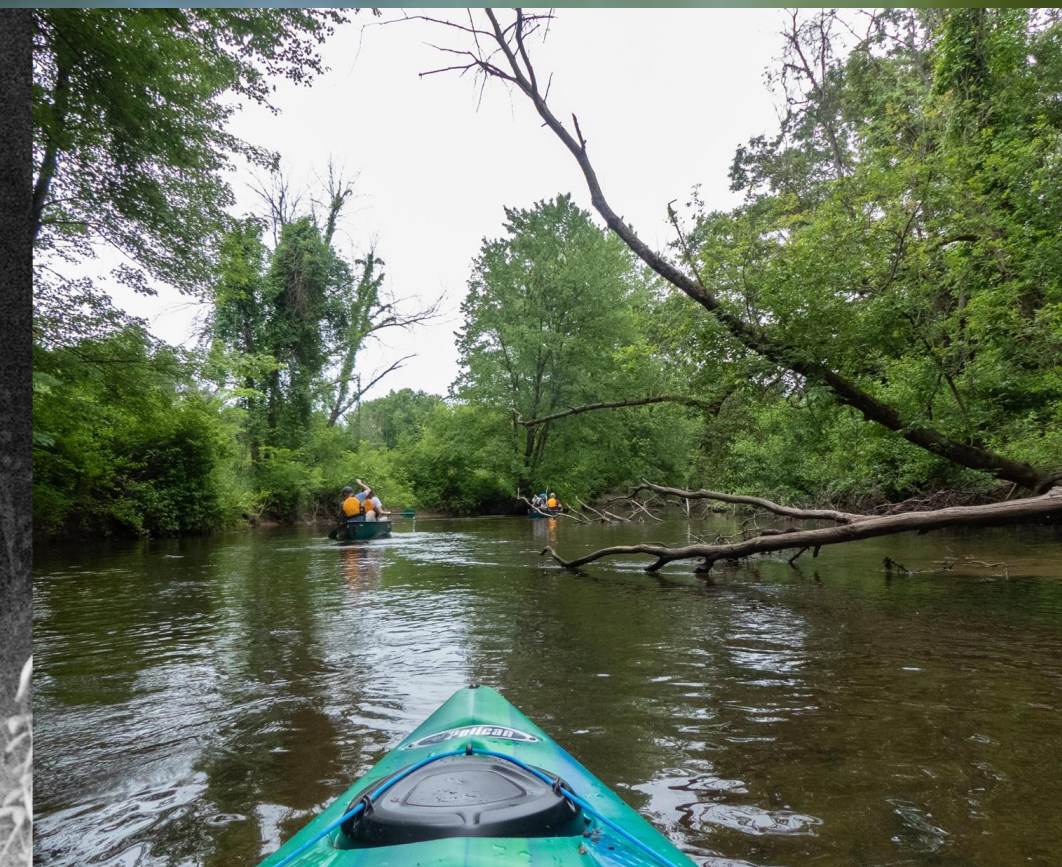
Mallard Ducks



Damselfly



Raccoon



Boating at the QR



Great Cormorants



Paddlers



Turkeys

Right in Your Backyard

During this day and age, many people are unaware of the natural resources and areas so close to their homes, and fewer actually use these areas. For example, one study reported that 56% of a U.S. community reported being aware of nearby trails and only 33% reported using these trails (Reed et al. 2004).

The Quinnipiac River's (QR) natural beauty remains unknown to the general public. Beginning in New Britain, CT, it twists and turns all the way to New Haven, CT where it meets the salty waters of Long Island Sound (see Upper & Lower QR Maps in *View the Q Story Map*). Many backyards and public spaces lay at its shore, allowing it to be an easily accessible resource for all.

The QR flows through multiple habitats and gradually changes from freshwater to saltwater. As a result, the different types of life that can be found are very diverse. Our work focused on making the general public aware of the wildlife that can be spotted along the QR to encourage more visitors along this important natural area.

Our Goal

The goal of this project is to encourage outdoor recreation, such as wildlife watching, along the Quinnipiac River by educating the public about QR wildlife via an interactive Story Map.

Recording Field Data

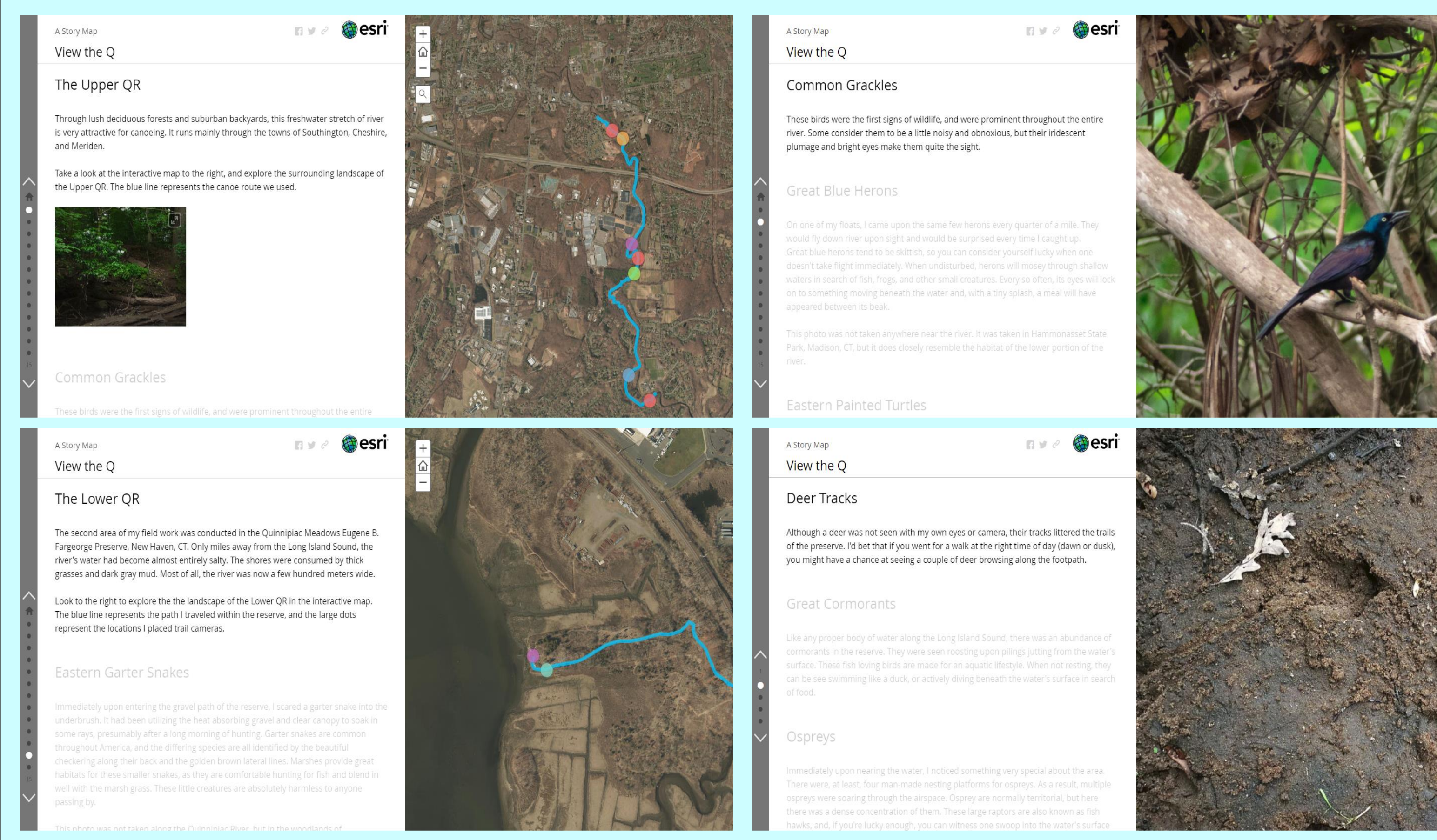
- Starting with occasional paddles down the Upper QR, we recorded wildlife sightings during the summer of 2019. Using the smartphone Track Kit GPS, we created a digital track of our paddles along with waypoints marking animal sightings (see Maps in *View the Q Story Map*). In addition, I brought my own camera to document our findings photographically.
- Eventually, we acquired two Bushnell Trail Cameras. They were placed at a handful of areas throughout the river, and recorded videos and photos whenever motion was detected. Here are the trail camera locations:

- Upper QR Canoe Trail, Southington to Meriden, CT
- Quinnipiac River Valley Audubon's Riverbound Farm, Cheshire, CT
- Cheshire Land Trust's Ives Farm, Cheshire, CT
- Quinnipiac Meadows Eugene B Fargeorge Preserve, New Haven, CT

View the Q Story Map

The second step of this project was to display all the mapping and wildlife field data into a comprehensive Story Map. Esri Story Maps are combinations of imagery, mapping, and text all displayed in one cohesive webpage to support a story.

The *View the Q* Story Map that I created tells the story of the wildlife that reside in different sections of the QR, integrating interactive maps created using Track Kit GPS, camera trap photos and my personal photos. I organized the Story Map so that the public could take a virtual tour from the Upper QR to the Lower QR (see sample portions of the story map below).



Results & Future Directions

Wildlife Field Sightings

Through six hours of paddling and a month of camera traps, we recorded five species of birds, four mammalian species, two reptilian species, one species of amphibian, and one species of insects (see story map to learn about specific species).

Between the two sections of the river, over twice of the species were found in the Upper QR. Although, this is most likely the result of more time spent in the upper area and the help of camera traps. The trail cameras provided nearly half the sightings for the Upper QR, so potentially, even more species could be found in the Lower QR if a cameras was placed there.

View the Q Story Map

The purpose of the Story Map is to bring awareness to the Quinnipiac River and encourage outdoor recreation along the river. To reach a broad audience, our future project goals are:

Short Term Goals:

- Get the Story Map featured on www.qrrivertrail.org
- Get the Story Map featured on the QR Facebook page

Long Term Goals:

- Continue to add wildlife data to the Story Map
- Assess if and how the Story Map encouraged the public to experience the beauty of the Quinnipiac River!



Visit *View the Q* Story Map @
<https://arcg.is/0yrHGD>

Scan the QR code to
access the Story Map!

References

Reed JA, Ainsworth BE, Wilson DK, Mixon G, & Cook A. 2004. Awareness and use of community walking trails. Preventative Medicine 39(5): 903-908.

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