

ETERNAL LANDSCAPE



“Daybreak, Winter Marsh,” by Dorothy Kerper Monnelly, a longtime chronicler of the 20,000-plus-acre Great Marsh. (“THE GREAT MARSH”)

By Jan Gardner | September 16, 2007

Harvard scientist Edward O. Wilson has called Dorothy Kerper Monnelly the “Ansel Adams of the wetlands.” While Adams’s signature subject was Yosemite Valley, Monnelly for more than 30 years has focused on the Great Marsh, near her home in Ipswich. Stretching 70 miles from Cape Ann to New Hampshire, it is one of the most pristine salt marshes in North America.

Monnelly shoots in black-and-white with a wide-format camera, a modern version of the one Adams used. Now her photographs have been collected in the book *“The Great Marsh: Between Land and Sea”* (Braziller).

She hopes the images — of the tides, trees, grasses, and sky in every season — will encourage the protection of a marsh that is productive as well as beautiful. A single acre of a typical salt marsh can produce 10 tons of organic matter in a year, while a wheat field, cultivated and fertilized, yields only a ton and a half.

Monnelly will show her work at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Porter Square Books, 25 White St., Cambridge. For details on an upcoming exhibit, visit dorothykerpermonnelly.com.

The Boston Globe