



# *The Sycamore Islander*

May, 2000

Volume 79, No. 5

## **Hear about the new fish passage at Little Falls Dam.**

We will have a special speaker at the May 10 meeting on Sycamore Island: Larry Leasener is the Chief of Special Projects, Fisheries Service, Dept. of Natural Resources for the state of Maryland. He will discuss fish restoration of shad, herring, and sturgeon in the Potomac River as part of a larger restoration effort of the Chesapeake Bay. Wait-listers are encouraged to attend on this special occasion. **Doc will have the charcoal grills lit and waiting at 7:00 p.m. for those who would like to barbeque before the meeting.**

## **Minutes of April 12 Meeting**

**Attendance:** Tryon Wells, Jane Winer, Johnna Robinson, Ann Marie Cunningham, John Noble, Trip Reid, Betty Burchell, Peggy Thomson, Jeff Komarow, Alan Gelb, Gerald Barton, David Winer, Brad Coolidge, Holly Syrrakos, Doc Taliaferro

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order at 8:17 pm. Minutes from the February meeting were approved. There were no minutes from March because there wasn't a quorum.

**Treasurer's Report:** Alan Gelb presented a first quarter report on expenses. They are generally on track with insurance payments appearing high because of the timing of bills due.

**Grounds Supervisor:** Trip Reid reported that beavers have eaten one birch tree but the other trees have been fenced with chicken wire. The Committee is considering planting willow trees at the top of the Island to slow erosion. In looking at what to plant, the Grounds Supervisor takes recommendations from the Maryland Native Plant Society so that the Island adds only native plants.

**The Islander:** Jane Winer talked about the hand-drawn Island map hanging the Clubhouse. She said that the Island's is a copy with the original in a private collection. Gerry Barton mentioned that he was happy to see the large mouth bass hanging on the Clubhouse wall. It was also reported that the Wildflower Walk

was a great success with many blossoms and 20 blossom-seekers.

**Membership Secretary:** Peter Winkler sent a message that he didn't have a report because the Financial Secretary, Bob Henry, was out of town and unable to pass on the necessary information. Because of the Club's slowness in processing applications this year, they will be accepted through April-next year they will be accepted in Jan. only.

**Weekend Caretaker:** Jeff Komarow reported that weekend caretaking is going well.

## **Old Business**

A list of members will be posted on the ferry so that membership status can be verified.

**Re: Membership Application:** President Tryon Wells recalled that there had not been an official vote taken at the Feb. meeting on the issuance of membership applications even though a vote was scheduled. He proposed that the vote be taken immediately. The vote was on the following:

Applications will be accepted until the end of March this year and limited to the month of January in subsequent years.

The motion passed unanimously.

*The Sycamore Islander* is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors—any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list—are welcome and should be sent to the Editors, Jane and David Winer, 5927 Onondaga Road, Bethesda, MD 20816. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to davidwiner@erols.com in all common formats. The deadline for inclusion in a particular issue is receipt at the Editors' address ten days prior to the second-Wednesday monthly meeting of the club. **Earlier submissions receive priority.**

## Minutes of April 12 Meeting (continued)

**Modification of Caretaker's Apartment:** The Club is waiting for drawings. In the meantime, Gerry Barton checked the high water marks in the last century and prepared a report correcting a note in the last *Islander*. In this century there have been only 4 floods above the 20 foot level: '36, '37, '42, '72.

**Use of Membership List:** Tryon received a call from Mac Thornton, requesting the use of the Club's mailing list for the Potomac Conservancy for a special direct mail. The meeting unanimously opposed giving the list to any organization. Jeff Komarow proposed an adjustment of the rules or bylaws to reflect the sense that it is a condition of membership that the membership list and waiting list not be used for any purposes outside of Club business. A separate statement, to be voted

upon, should appear elsewhere in this issue.

**Orientation for New Members:** A proposal should appear in this *Islander* presenting a motion to be voted on with regards to the sentiment that the Club will have Orientations, and to become a member or obtain a waiting list pass, it is necessary to attend an Orientation.

### **New Business:**

**Web Site Modification:** Tryon Wells suggested putting the Island's database on the web, in a secret page, password-protected. The purpose of this is so those officers who need membership information would have ready access. Tryon will get estimates for the work, will consider volunteers capable of handling the task, and will look into developing a committee to research this topic further.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 pm.

## Upcoming 45<sup>th</sup> CCA Downriver Race: Two Notices

The CCA Downriver Race is, we believe, the longest-running whitewater race in the nation. The first race, on May 6, 1956, was organized by four paddlers who wished to promote white-water paddling and went on to found the CCA. Their course from the Rocky Island area to Sycamore Island, our partner in these races, is essentially the same one we use today. Racing has always been an integral part of the club's activities and has produced a number of world champions like Cathy and David Hearn, Jon Lugbill and Andy Bridge.

The first race of the new millennium will be run on May 21, starting at 11 am. It will finish at Sycamore Island at about 2 pm with refreshments and awards to follow. Elaborate safety precautions are taken. So come on out and join the fun.

—*Reprinted from the newsletter of the Canoe Cruisers Association, by John Heidemann*

---

The 45th CCA Downriver Race is Sunday, May 21, 2000. The race is down the Potomac River from Rocky Island (or the Old Anglers Inn put-in, if the river is over 5 feet) to Sycamore Island.

The race is for **ALL PADDLERS**: young/old, expert/novice, parent & child, tandem teams, etc. You only compete in your category! There will be many awards, free lunch, and a T-shirt. You can register at sign-in on Race Day, but the T-shirt is free for those who pre-register.

Sign-in is 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Great Falls Inn in Maryland (Old Anglers, if river level is over 5 feet). The race begins at 11 a.m. Don't miss the fun! If you don't want to race, but would like to

volunteer to help, please e-mail Star Mitchell at: stark1@erols.com or call her 301-530-3252. We need people to time, help register, and run the Sycamore Island ferry.

For a registration form and more details go to the BCE link at:

[http://ccadc.org/bce/00CCA\\_Downriver.html](http://ccadc.org/bce/00CCA_Downriver.html)

Do join us for a day of great festivity!

—*Star Mitchell, Liaison for Sycamore Island Club, Canoe Cruisers Association, & Bethesda Center of Excellence*

## Three Agenda Items

There are three items that will be discussed in upcoming meetings that deserve widespread member attention. Without reference to the merits of each, at the last meeting I was asked to describe them for this month's *Islander*, in order that members be notified about these issues, and encouraged to bring their voice to future meetings on any of these subjects.

### **The Caretaker's Quarters**

Since last fall, there has been discussion among some members about building a quarters for the caretaker that is above the flood levels for most floods experienced by the Island. This discussion was partly precipitated by the deteriorating condition of the bedroom and bathroom floors in the current quarters and the thought that these rooms should be renovated.

In the last three months, two sets of building plans have been drafted and will be presented to the club over the next few club meetings. One builds a long room at the second-floor level of the clubhouse outside the current kitchen and between it and the Maryland shore. The other tears down and re-builds Ken Fassler's workshed-on-stilts into a two-story structure on the pilings of the old workshed.

What members must decide is (1) whether the cost of building a higher-level quarters can be justified against the (relatively) rare instance that the current quarters are flooded (though the inconvenience and dislocation of the caretaker at such times is considerable); and (2) if it is decided to build a higher-level quarters, which of the competing plans should the club build, giving consideration to the location of the quarters, which is quite different in these plans, and to the cost estimates, which may also vary considerably.

### **Orientation for New Members and Passholders**

There is a perception vocalized at meetings over the past few years, that some large parties have been conducted less responsibly than in years past and that the number of other unruly incidents has become more common. This has led to some rule changes and to some stepped-up enforcement. Concurrent with these actions however, is the idea that the club has not done its part in informing new members and waiting list passholders of both the rules and the responsibilities of membership. More than once, an annual orientation has been suggested as a way to describe the character of the club to new members. Under consideration is the idea that a club applicant or a waiting

list pass applicant may be required to attend an orientation before they can use the Island. Expect more discussion on this subject and a formal floor proposal in coming months.

### **An Online Member Database**

Few members have any idea of how the waiting list is maintained, the dues is counted, or the mechanics of each month's *Islander* mailing. Basically, these functions are done on the personal computers of various members who are each charged with these tasks as part of the job they have volunteered to undertake. Currently, the Financial Secretary and the Membership Secretary labor over separate databases that have to be reconciled constantly so that changes in address, phone or other member information is correct in both. Stirring the pot is the monthly *Islander* mailing, which uses the Financial Secretary's database to print out its labels, and is often the first alert that a member has moved and that their personal information must be updated. Other data stored by other officers overlaps these databases. The Supervisor of Canoeing keeps his own list of canoes stored in the canoe shed while the Financial Secretary (in his own database) tries to determine which members must pay for their rack. The Supervisor of Clubhouse keeps his own list of lockers. A copy of the latest membership list is routinely requested by the caretaker for reference. The scheduler for weekend caretakers wants up-to-date telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. And, the Supervisor of Website publishes some of this information to the website (locker and canoe rack assignments) for the convenience of the general membership.

The net effect of all this information moving around is that it often doesn't, mistakes are easy to make, and the process burdens each officer's time unduly with requests that are outside of their main task. Particularly burdened are the Financial Secretary and the Membership Secretary.

This situation has prompted some to suggest that the different lists and databases be merged into one central database, appropriate parts of which can be edited by each officer as needed. This is most elegantly accomplished today using available Internet technologies along with appropriate data security and can be done at moderate cost. An ad-hoc committee will refine the details and prepare a formal proposal in coming weeks.

— Tryon Wells

## A True Fish Story

There is a new fish passageway at the Little Falls Dam. This structure allows the long-denied shad and other species access to prime spawning and feeding spots upstream. The dam now allows migratory and resident fish access to ten miles of historical spawning grounds upstream of the dam, as far as Great Falls. In the original construction, the dam did include a vertical slot fishway for migrating fish, but it was later abandoned because of poor location and high maintenance caused by large amounts of debris that it trapped.

The new fishway is in part a result of Maryland's fish passage program that stemmed from the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement to restore the health of the bay. The program seeks to restore migratory fish species to or close to historic levels. The program began in 1988 and since then 292 miles of rivers in Maryland have reopened to fish. However, shad populations are still in bad shape. In a recent ranking of the health of bay fish by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, shad received a ranking of 3 out of 100. Experts said that the new fishway will make a huge difference in future ranking of the shad. The fishway at the Little Falls Dam is the latest in a series of dams in the Potomac basin modified to assist fish migration. Other nearby sites include: Mattawoman Creek, Hancock Run, Rock Creek, and the Northeast and Northwest branches of the Anacostia River.

At one time, shad was the most important commercial species in the Chesapeake Bay. The decline of shad and other fish in the region began in the 1930s and continues to today. Declining water quality, construction of dams, loss of habitat, and overfishing have slowly caused the decline of the shad. These factors lead to a 1982 moratorium on fishing in Maryland. Virginia implemented a similar ban in 1993.

In 1995, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) began working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and citizen volunteers on a project to restock shad to the Potomac. The project is led by Jim Cummins, an aquatic biologist with ICPRB. Each spring during shad spawning season, he and volunteer assistants catch shad on the Potomac near Mount Vernon. The fish are squeezed of their eggs and milt. The fertilized eggs are taken to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Fish Hatchery in Charles City,

Virginia. After hatching, the shad fry are tagged for future identification with a chemical substance (oxytetracycline). This leaves a fluorescent trace that will be detectable in certain tiny bones in the heads of the fish, even as adults.

These fry are released in the ten-mile stretch of river upstream of the Little Falls Dam. The fry should naturally imprint their release site in this same part of the Potomac, and should return as adults to spawn. Since 1995, over seven million shad fry have been raised and released into the Potomac above Little Falls Dam.

This spring, Jim Cummins and his volunteers are again out on the river in the stocking effort and to see if any of the shad broods have returned to spawn. Experts are confident that the fishway will assist in the restoration of the shad population and other migratory species including river herring, striped bass, white perch, and resident species such as smallmouth and largemouth bass, bluegill and other sunfish, and walleye.

The fishway is an innovative design that incorporates three W-shaped labyrinth weirs within and below a 36-foot wide, 4-foot deep notch in the dam. The design and modeling for the fishway was performed by Dr. Mufeed Odeh and a team at the U.S. Geological Survey/Biological Resources Division of the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls, Massachusetts in 1994 and 1995. The weirs reduce water velocity to levels that allow fish to move upstream over the passage despite a wide range of river flow. The structure is 75 feet from the Virginia shore, where migratory fish will be attracted below the dam. Cost of the \$2-million project was shared between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Construction of the notch was completed just in time for this spring's mighty spawning runs.

*—Re-written by David Winer from official materials and from interviews. Thanks to the following who provided information and photos for this piece: Curtis Dalpra and Jim Cummins, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin; Mike Bailey, “a friend of the shad”; and Ray Fletcher of Fletcher’s Boats.*



Cofferdam and crane about a mile below Sycamore Island near the Virginia shore.



From inside the cofferdam, views of the Little Falls pumping Station, and below the dam, the beginning of the mile-long section of Little Falls.



Inside the cofferdam. Debris from the dam-cut is scraped up by a backhoe into buckets for removal. Water leaking into the cofferdam is pumped out through the hose on the right. River level is about ten feet above the buckets.

## Construction of the Little Falls Dam Fishway in December



Workmen observing the proceedings.



Buckets of old dam material are transferred to barges.

Photos by  
Mike Bailey

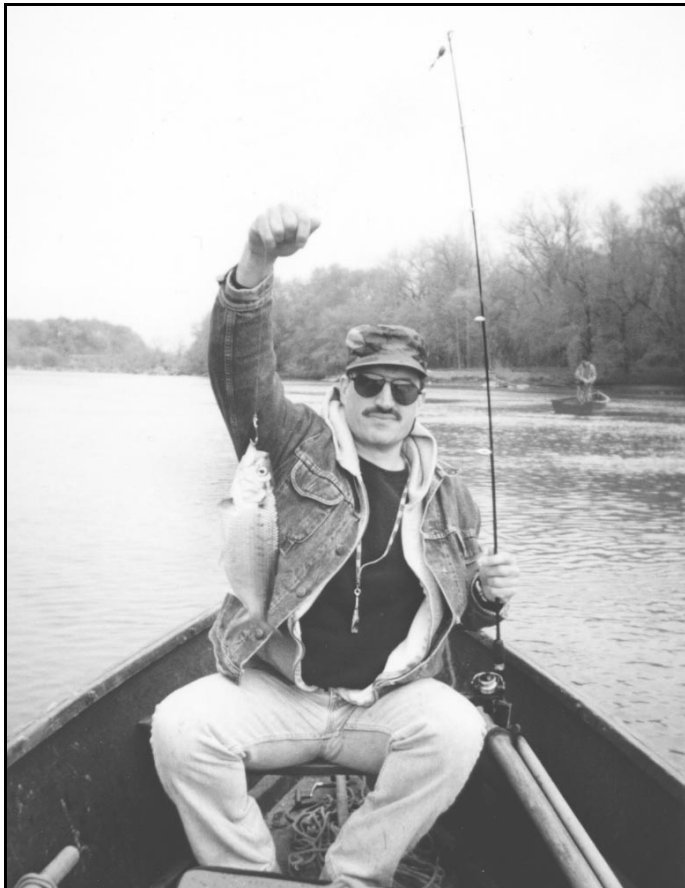


Digging from the river bottom in the fishway notch.

# Will the Shad and Rockfish arrive at Sycamore?

— by George Malusky II

Once again shad fishing at Fletcher's is outstanding, with the season starting around April 1st. The hickory shad arrived first and the white shad usually arrives later in the month (this



**The author, showing how it's done (between Little Falls and Fletchers). A nice hickory shad, George.**

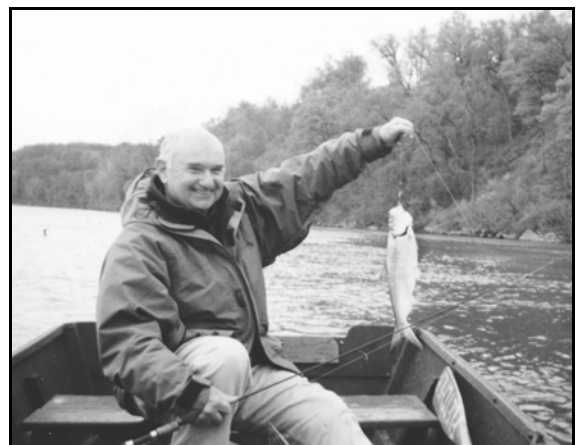
year April 16). These fish provide some of the best sportfishing in the area. Shad spoons (fished Carolina style) and shad darts work great for Spin Fisherman. Fly Fisherman use pink, yellow or other colorful shad flies with sinking lines.

High water and strong winds can make the river unfishable this time of year. When in doubt, call Fletcher's Boat House (202-244-0461) for river/weather conditions or for boat rentals. When fish-

ing at Sycamore Island, check out their impressive web site for river conditions ([www.sycamoreisland.org](http://www.sycamoreisland.org)) or call Doc.

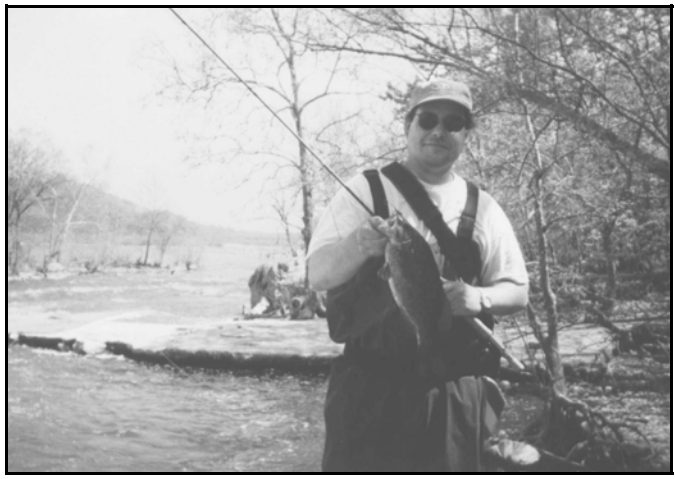
We can look forward to LARGE numbers of rockfish (stripers) and herring migrating into the Fletcher's/Chain Bridge area of the Potomac River in May and June. Fishing for rockfish in D.C. is Catch & Release until open season begins in the first week of June (one fish allowed per day over 18 inches). Use cut herring, sassy shads, bucktails or large crankbaits. Fly Fisherman use clouser minnows and deceivers for the rockfish.

With any luck, the newly constructed fish ladder (Passageway) at Little Falls Dam will "welcome" many rockfish, herring and shad to our waters at Sycamore Island. I recently fished above and below the completed fish ladder at Little Falls. I was accompanied by a long time fishing buddy, Marc Flor, and a non-exaggerating Kodak camera (nothing against any of my fishing buddies). The river was a little high (3.9 feet) and if it were any



**Your Co-editor follows George's lead. Good advice!**

higher I would not attempt to venture towards the Dam (too dangerous). The good news is we caught plenty of 2 to 3 lb smallmouth bass below the fish ladder. We used small white bucktails,



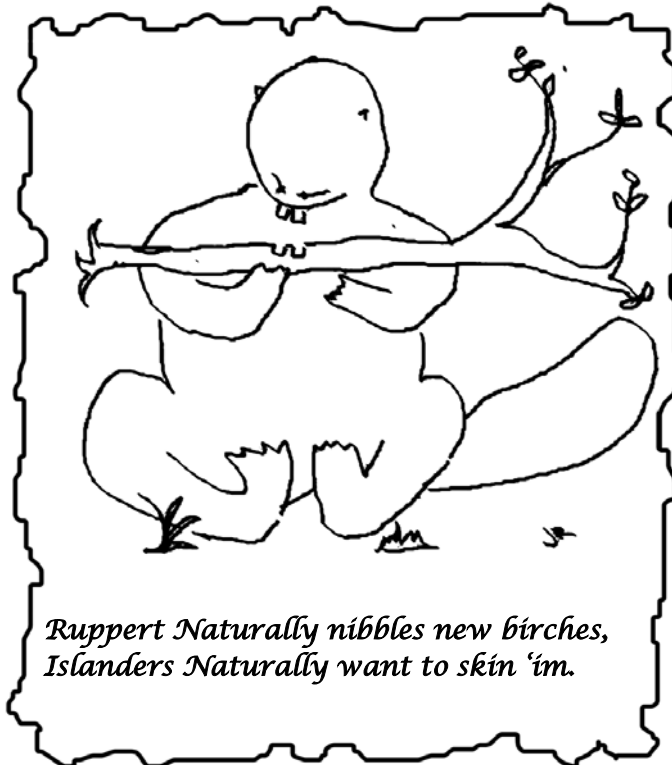
George Malusky and his companion, Marc Flor, encounter superb smallmouth bass fishing while wading just below the dam at Little Falls. Do these guys look proud, or what? The new fish passage is behind George at the left.

shad rap lures and black clouser minnows. The sad news is that we did NOT catch or see any shad, herring, rockfish or white perch. Maybe the fish haven't found the Passageway yet or I need to think more like a fish; Only time will tell.

The walleye fishing will pick up at Sycamore Island in mid June. Fish near the creeks on the Virginia shoreline, using Rebel crayfish lures and Rapala shad rap lures. Then hold on for the best summer smallmouth fishing in Maryland!

---

## *Ruppert*



*Ruppert Naturally nibbles new birches,  
Islanders Naturally want to skin 'im.*

Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

## Notes from the Island

**Mon 3 Apr** Congratulations to those of you attending the annual river clean-up, and especially to the Judson/Esch family that organized the details. The great fun that was had and the fact that few seemed inclined to leave the conversations after potluck proves that virtue really is its own reward. Quick notes... Maria Stenzel reported seeing the shad running and being scooped out 5 to the netfull at Chain Bridge. Fern Ingersoll counted 13 different types of wildflowers on the Island... come on down and try to match her. And Alex McCoy suggested a fishing contest be held one Saturday for Members... but Gerry Barton said it would not be any fun because George Malusky would certainly win. Still, an idea with merit??

**Tue 11 Apr** Flowers... flowers... everywhere !!! The green so fresh... surely this is among the most beautiful of times to be on the Island!! Yesterday we saw two geese just beginning to build their nests... so there are still some who have not even laid their eggs yet. The daily fights continue between the big goose whose mate's nest is on the fallen sycamore tree and the couple trying to build a nest on the canoe shed.

**Thu 12 Apr** I wish to report an event that happened while attending a funeral in Granbury, Texas for an uncle who was a much decorated war hero... shot down twice... and much loved in his community for his leadership and integrity. While driving from the church to the cemetery the funeral procession must have encountered well over a hundred on-coming cars. Without exception... every on-coming car pulled off the side of the road and stopped!!! Now folks... I do not mean they edged over to the side of the road and slowed down... in Texas the road shoulders are wide... and I mean they pulled off of the road and stopped!! Without exception!!! You could have driven all the way using the left hand lane. But what is significant is that these drivers did not know and were not recognizing the character of my uncle. This gesture of respect they would have accorded to even the smallest or meanest of them.... and I ask you to reflect how lucky we are collectively that there are still places in this country where the old ways still hold sway.

**Fri 13 Apr** If you walk the up Island trails leaving the swimming area you will be struck by the numerous clumps of luminescent phlox. Phlox is coming into its glory all over the island and on cloudy days it seems to glow. Also numerous this year are the Paw Paw blossoms,

which are green and have to be looked carefully for, but hang beneath the branches like little bells. Last year there were not very many blossoms, and all year we only observed two fruit on the Island, and few fruit in the entire area of the towpath, so it will be interesting to track their development this year. Anyone with ideas about what affects Paw Paw fruit production and delineates good years from bad... please let us know.

The other night after dark we noticed an odd sound coming a long way from up river, and as it came closer it became distinguishable as the calls of an approaching flock of geese. As the searching flock got closer to Ruppert's Island, the geese staying near Hotel Cormorant there began to call back, and the two different types of calls were quite distinguishable... the one calling ahead and the other welcoming. The Caretaker's Wife commented that the approaching geese were being "called down," and surely the process would be the envy of any human flight controller.

**Sat 15 Apr** We continue to get questions about the presence of the snow shovel near the Captain's Float. Now, at night there is no more perfect sleeping quarters for geese than moderately sized floating platforms, by definition affording them the security of a moat. What is more, this goose motel comes complete with a cleaning service to remove any of the night's droppings the next morning. Thus the red snow shovel is a multipurpose tool... becoming in March a perfect goose pooper scooper.

**Wed 19 Apr** Questions have been asked about the purpose of the various chairs scattered about the Island. These are compass rose chairs. You will have seen a compass rose on maps... where the mapmaker has drawn a circle and superimposed from the center of this circle the lines of the map that correspond to true north and the other prime directions. And sometimes these lines extend to the edge of the map... especially in old maps. In a similar sense a clever Japanese garden is set up to emphasize intersecting lines of sight... and sometimes a bench is located to designate a particularly beautiful viewpoint... and in this case the gardener has placed a particular compass rose in the map of his garden. Sometimes it is left to the visitor to wander the garden and try to discover the hidden intersections the gardener has planned... and so take delight in the discovery... and in this case we walk about with our own personal and physical compass rose seeking



## Notes from the Island

the right place to set it or “sit” it. Of course, on our Island the Master Gardener and Mother Nature have conspired to set us in a sort of Japanese garden and fill our lives with unseen lines of intersecting beauty. It is a blessing to come to the thought that such hidden treasures are here for us, much less to actually discover them. Thus the chairs... but do not think they are sited at discovered intersections... they are merely places around the Island to rest one’s personal compass rose while the search continues. They are also symbols of a terrible secret... that the grass paths known as the beaver trails are actually the result of a selfish attempt at a meditation garden.

**Thu 20 Apr** This is a First Gosling Alert!!! Round up the kiddies and all stale bread and come on down!!! There are at least two groups that have come over from Ruppert’s Island, because all of the Sycamore Island geese are still sitting their nests. The first false Solomon’s seal blossoms have appeared, and a robin appears to be building a nest in the hickory tree next to the deck, where we may all observe the developing family over the next few weeks.

**Fri 21 Apr** One begins to notice that the bluebells are finally past their peak. True, it has been a long blooming season for them, and even now small yearlings are still popping up, presaging a spectacular season next year. And while there are so many other shows just getting underway, this first significant fading is a real message: Get down here!! These are the best of days on the Island!!! No one should miss it!!! When a gentle breeze stirred a strange sound in the trees yesterday we looked up and realized it was the sound of the first maple helicopter seeds, falling through the branches with a sound not unlike little hail or frozen rain. There are so many sounds to harvest down here... sounds not available in the urban congestion... sounds that are part of our primal programming and that our bodies expect to be immersed in as part of our natural environment. The development of electricity and the internal combustion engine has surrounded us with other sounds... but consider how recent these are in generational terms and thus how thin is this artificial veneer of culture. On some level twenty thousand generations of genetic programming yearn for these natural sounds as a form of nourishment. So come on down... catch a few natural sounds... think of it as an aural vitamin supplement for your genes.

**Sat 22 Apr** It was chilly... it was damp... the river was above 5 feet and rising... but the Workfest went on and an intrepid crew of thirty-three showed up: John Matthews, Gerry Barton, Renee and George Dunham, Ann Kip and Mark Breneman, Tryon Wells, Tove and Susan and Madelyn Elfstrom, Vicki Judson and Jennifer and Tom Esch, Steve Sarfatti, Trip Reid, George Malusky and friend Mark Flor, Blair Bower, Jim Drew, Jim and Christine Matthews, George and Marcia Loeb, Maria Stenzel, Bob and Michael Henry, John and Diane Noble, Tom and Diane Levy, Mark Strasburg, and John and Joey Thorne, and of course, the Caretaker’s Wife. The Clubhouse was cleaned and the swimming floats put in. Gerry Barton and Tom Esch repaired parts of the wooden walkway. Repairs were begun on the screens on the porch. The door from the deck to the warm room was repaired by George Dunham and re-hung. Trip Reid brought down another river birch to plant, and while I did not see him much... days later I would find where large, thorny, obnoxious clumps of weedy shrub rose had been removed from people areas. Perhaps the best adventure was when Maria Stenzel, George Malusky, and Mark Flor took a canoe up-river to bring back a four foot diameter tire, although they paid for their fun by not returning in time for lunch. And the lunch was everything we have come to expect... one person was heard to comment that watching George Loeb at the grill was what kept him going. One result of the high water was that your caretaker did all the ferry work and was not able to bear witness to who was doing what this year, so many of you will have to remain unsung. However, special mention in the dispatches this year goes to Mark Flor, frequent fishing companion to George Malusky, who put in a hard morning’s work and is not even on the waiting list. As the river was still rising, the Island was closed in the afternoon after the Workfest participants had left.

**Thu 27 Apr** Today seems more like a day in November than in April... chilly and damp... the temperature is struggling in the 40s. Mid-morning the Caretaker’s Wife called to say that while driving on Highway 355 a State Trooper stopped all eight lanes of traffic to let two geese and their goslings cross. Now... didn’t your heart skip a beat when you just read that?  
—Doc Taliaferro

—Excerpted from the Caretaker’s Log at  
[sycamoreisland.org](http://sycamoreisland.org)

# Wildflower Report

—Joan Heidemann

The annual Sycamore Island wildflower walk took place on April 8, a beautiful, sunny, balmy morning. Twenty people and one dog turned out — an attendance record. After assembling at the bottom of the circular footbridge, we inspected garlic mustard, sicklepod, gill-over-the-ground and red dead nettle. The path down to the canal showed us star chickweed and saxifrage (the "stonebreaker"). Sharp eyes spotted an infant Dutchman's breeches. (We passed this orphan quickly, assuring the group that we'd see many more farther on — bad advice.)

Yellow corydalis was missing on the downhill slope, but the usual paw-paw was in flower at the towpath end of the footbridge.

Spring beauties and violets of a particularly pretty deep

purple color bordered the towpath as we walked upstream. Periwinkle, both blue and white, bloomed near the ferry; wild phlox and Virginia bluebells were along the shore farther on. The canal bank seemed to specialize in yellow flowers — abortive buttercup, false (or Indian) strawberry, ragwort, and the well-known dandelion.

We left the towpath to walk through the trees to the shore of the river. The surprise here

was the huge increase in lesser celandine, a pretty enough shiny yellow ground cover but one of the most invasive wildflowers

around. It seemed to cover the area once occupied by a large spread of trout lilies (or at least trout lily leaves). We did see some of their leaves but no flowers, nor did we find any wild ginger. Close to the river's edge were nodding star-of-Bethlehem, golden Al-



Wild Phlox —JDW

exanders, and swamp buttercup.

We rejoined the towpath expecting to find groups of Dutchman's breeches but did not see a one, although they have been quite plentiful in other years

and there are many farther upstream. Noted but not yet in bloom were May apples and sweet Cicely. We strolled back downstream and saw yellow violets and sessile trilliums (aka toadshade), both the dark red and the green variety. We disbanded at the ferry amid appreciative remarks about the sunshine, the spring colors and soft, warm breezes.

The next morning it snowed.



Photo- courtesy of Tom Richards

## Sunday Relief Caretakers

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
May 7	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dark	Judith Hope Nancy and Winston Wiley	202 232-2445 301 299-7586
May 14	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dark	Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins Judith Bader and Roger Herst	301 320-7688 301 320-6436
May 21	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dark	Irene and Robert Sinclair Susan and Greg Super	202 966-5204 703 892-1846
May 28	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dark	Ann and Alan Boneau Maxine Hattery	301-320-3695 202-362-1361

**\*\*\* Caretaker Volunteers \*\*\***

**Call John Krasny (301-564-0342) or Jeff Komarow (301-897-5996) to volunteer for caretaking in June or July. You can also contact them by e-mail at [jfkrasny@erols.com](mailto:jfkrasny@erols.com) or [jeffkomarow@aol.com](mailto:jeffkomarow@aol.com) Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. It's a great way to spend time on the Island!**

## Large Parties

Date	Time	Who	What
May 07	1300 to 1900	Betty Burchell	20 folks from church choir
May 23	1200 to dusk	Alan Gelb	20 Cub Scouts
May 31	1000 to 1300	Deborah Sheppard	21 kids and 10 adults
June 3 - 4	Overnight	Marty Burgess	15-18 Junior High kids Camping
Jun 25	1400 to 2000	Norman Metzger	15 folks for play reading

**A large party application form may be printed from the club's Web page at <http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systeps.htm>**

— or —

**To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties,  
Bill Eichbaum , 301-229-1713**



## *The Sycamore Islander*

6006 Welborn Drive  
Bethesda MD 20816-1158

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org>

Address Service

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BETHESDA, MD  
20817

First Class Mail

First Class Mail

May 2000

### **This Issue:**

- The Corps of Engineers do their thing.
- Fish do too. (get caught)
- Wild walkers set attendance record.
- Doc waxes metaphorically about chairs.



### **A Passage to Sycamore**

— photo by Nancy Jedziniak of the Army Corps of Engineers

Nearing the end of construction. The “W” shapes break the current. Three of these barriers slow patches of water at gradually increasing heights, enabling Shad and other fish to get over the falls to spawn. See story inside for explanation, along with earlier photos of the cofferdam stage.

## Upcoming 45<sup>th</sup> CCA Downriver Race: Two Notices

The CCA Downriver Race is, we believe, the longest-running whitewater race in the nation. The first race, on May 6, 1956, was organized by four paddlers who wished to promote white-water paddling and went on to found the CCA. Their course from the Rocky Island area to Sycamore Island, our partner in these races, is essentially the same one we use today. Racing has always been an integral part of the club's activities and has produced a number of world champions like Cathy and David Hearn, Jon Lugbill and Andy Bridge.

---

The 45th CCA Downriver Race is Sunday, May 21, 2000. The race is down the Potomac River from Rocky Island (or the Old Anglers Inn put-in, if the river is over 5 feet) to Sycamore Island.

The race is for **ALL PADDLERS**: young/old, expert/novice, parent & child, tandem teams, etc. You only compete in your category! There will be many awards, free lunch, and a T-shirt. You can register at sign-in on Race Day, but the T-shirt is free for those who pre-register.

Sign-in is 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Great Falls Inn in Maryland (Old Anglers, if river level is over 5 feet). The race begins at 11 a.m. Don't miss the fun! If you don't want to race, but would like to

The first race of the new millennium will be run on May 21, starting at 11 am. It will finish at Sycamore Island at about 2 pm with refreshments and awards to follow. Elaborate safety precautions are taken. So come on out and join the fun.

—*Reprinted from the newsletter of the Canoe Cruisers Association, by John Heidemann*

volunteer to help, please e-mail Star Mitchell at: [stark1@erols.com](mailto:stark1@erols.com) or call her 301-530-3252. We need people to time, help register, and run the Sycamore Island ferry.

For a registration form and more details go to the BCE link at:

[http://ccadc.org/bce/00CCA\\_Downriver.html](http://ccadc.org/bce/00CCA_Downriver.html)

Do join us for a day of great festivity!

—*Star Mitchell, Liaison for Sycamore Island Club, Canoe Cruisers Association, & Bethesda Center of Excellence*