

Into Spring

March 31 Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

April 1 Spring Workfest

April 22 Sycamore Orientation

The Sycamore Islander

March 2007

Volume 86 No. 3

President's Letter

Winter Is Over!! You heard it here first! It's time to clean out the cobwebs and get ready for Spring. The Spring Workfest is scheduled for April 1st (Rain Date is April 15th). Save the date. On Sunday, March 18th, we'll be holding a meeting on the Island to prepare for the Workfest. You do not have to be an Officer or Supervisor to help with the planning and organization of the Workfest. If you're handy (or even if, like me, you're not), I encourage you to get involved. We will need extra help because Tryon Wells, our Captain and Webmaster, recently lost his mother and may not have as much time over the next few months to devote to the Island as he normally does. Call or email me for details. (202.492.2003; jkoma-row@covad.net)

On the renovation of the Caretaker's quarters, I unfortunately have nothing new to report. We continue to look for a licensed professional engineer to prepare mechanical plans and specifications at a reasonable cost. One option may be to address this need with interested contractors.

I mentioned previously that Norm Metzger will be stepping down as Editor of the *Islander* at the end of the year. The December 2007 issue will be his last. Amanda Cannell will be taking over as Editor and will be apprenticing with Norm on the last few issues of 2007. Let's give Amanda our strong support and lots of good articles for future editions of the *Islander*.

Because the February meeting was snowed out, Frank Daspit and Nell Hennessy have offered to host the March meeting at the Irish Channel Restaurant & Pub, which is located at 5th and H streets, Northwest, in the District of Columbia, near the Gallery Place Metro stop. The date is March 14 at 8:00 PM. Peter Winkler, our Vice President, will be chairing the meeting because I have an out-of-town commitment. We will be circulating a draft of rules of procedure for the conduct of future meetings. After receiving comments, changes to the By-Laws and Standing Rules will be published in the April *Islander* and put to a vote at the April meeting.

Enjoy the good cheer at the Irish Channel Pub on March 14th. I look forward to seeing many old and new faces at the Workfest on April 1st (no fooling).

— Jeff Komarow

The Sycamore Islander is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list are welcome and should be sent to the Editor, Norman Metzger, 638 G Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003-2724 or by fax to 202/544-6027. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to normanmetzger@verizon.net. Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell).

The deadline for the April issue is Wednesday, March 28

2007 Island Calendar [Date changes bolded]

Event	Date/Time	Contact	Rain Date
Spring Workfest	Sunday, April 1 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, April 15
18 th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup	Saturday, March 31 9 a.m. to noon.	Renée Dunham (p. 3)	
Annual Orientation	Sunday, April 22 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Tamara and Joe Belden	Sunday, April 29
Canoeing Class @ Sycamore Island.	Saturday, May 5 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.	Frank Daspit and Jim Drew	
Annual Wild Flower Walk	Sunday, May 6 10 a.m. to noon.	Jane Winer	
Downriver Canoe Race	Saturday, May 12	Star Mitchell (p. 3)	
Long-Timers' Reunion	Tuesday, May 29th	Charlotte Brewer	Tuesday, June 5
Summer Solstice BBQ, River Song Party and Sleepover	Saturday to Sunday June 23 to 24	Joe Hage, Whitney Pinger	
Fishing Derby	Saturday, August 18	George and Shelley Malusky	
Sycamore Regatta	Monday, Sept. 3 1:30 p.m. till dusk.	Sherry Pettie, Vicki Judson, Anne Waidmann	
Fall Workfest	Sunday, Nov. 4, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, Nov. 11

Volunteers Needed for the 19th Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup March 31, 2007, 9 am - Noon

What do a diving board, phonograph, pogo-stick and 889 tires have in common? They have all been pulled out of the Potomac Watershed in the last year! Families, scouts, students, retirees, and thousands of other concerned citizens from Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania will hit the shorelines, public lands, neighborhood parks, and schoolyards of the region during the Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, on Saturday, March 31.

The Alice Ferguson Foundation, based in Accokeek, Maryland in Prince George's County, founded and has coordinated the Potomac River Watershed Cleanups for the past 19 years. The Foundation's goal is to celebrate a trash-free Potomac Watershed by 2013. We on Sycamore Island have traditionally cleaned up our own site and invited helpers from outside the Club. We provide trash bags and gloves. You might get a little dirty and maybe a little wet. You may work on land or from canoes. You may find a treasure. One year, Joe found a sword in its sheath!

Bring a bag lunch and we will provide drinks and dessert. For several years now, this event has been an "approved" Sycamore event, for those garnering credits to host a large party. For more information, visit www.PotomacCleanup.org. Our Sycamore Island coordinator is Reneé Dunham who you can call at (202) 686-6451 or e-mail at rgdunham@erols.com.

--Reneé Dunham

...and Trip Reid adds that...

Since 1989, more than 35,000 volunteers have teamed with 250 partner organizations to tug 1,230 tons of trash from the Watershed's streams, rivers, and bays. Last year's haul of almost 232 tons included more than 13 tons of recyclables, 889 tires, 11 shopping carts, eight car bumpers, three bed frames, two recliners, \$50 in foreign currency, and, yes, even the proverbial kitchen sink.

Sycamore Orientation Set for April 22nd

The annual Sycamore orientation for waiting list families will be held on Sunday, April 22, this year. The rain date is 29th. This event is offered annually and attendance once is required for membership or to purchase a guest pass. Those of you on the waiting list who have not yet attended an orientation should make sure that you attend one of these prior to your name coming up for membership.

The orientation is a great deal of fun with old-timers mingling with those who have more recently discovered Sycamore and sharing their knowledge of its history and ways. We meet around 10:00 in the morning and, weather permitting, walk around the island discussing topics as we go, and then share a potluck lunch together.

If you are planning to attend, please contact Tammy and Joe Belden (202-882-2224 or tamarabelden@gmail.com) and let them know. In addition, bring a dish to share with others for lunch.

Canoeing Downriver

The CCA Potomac Downriver is Saturday, May 12, 2007. Pre-registration cost is \$15.00 with a Saturday, May 5th deadline to pre-register. Registration cost at the gate is \$25.00. Registration forms will soon be on the Island and CCA websites. Please volunteer to help with the race if you do not paddle. Call Star Mitchell 301-530-3252 or starmitchell@verizon.net

From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist

From the Archives

71 Years Ago at Sycamore Island

From the April 1936 *Sycamore Islander*

As was noted in the previous *Islander*, the record-breaking flood of 1936 washed away the buildings, including the clubhouse. The Club jumped into action, soliciting building loans from members to re-build. What follows are selections from the *Islander* that show members' reaction to the devastation.

The Island looks quite strange these days, with the only building in sight the small house which was erected for the caretaker, and which is built mostly of doors from the locker-rooms. Practically all of the wreckage has now been assorted and is piled about the Island among the Virginia blue-bells. The ferry is operating, the well cleaned and a pump installed, but the well water will not be tested for a few days yet.

The most difficult proposition for anyone landing on the Island seems to be to determine just where he is standing in relation to the old buildings, with the only guides the trees and holes left by the water beneath where each building stood.

Members have been assorting lumber and pulling nails from it over each weekend, and last Sunday we had what Woodie Weaver termed a nail-pulling and lumber-lugging bee, with considerable work accomplished by the twenty or more members who were on hand. It showered quite frequently during the morning and the only shelter to be had was in the caretaker's small shack and beneath the wreckage of Stodder's platform, until several of us turned the old pool-table upside down and assembled under that. A fire for cooking was built near the big tulip tree that still stands near where the lower corner of the club-house used to stand, and a lean-to of canvas was then erected there.

Our correspondents, Woodie Weaver and Jack Stodder, advise us that the condition of Upper Sycamore Island is "almost unbelievable," stating that the portion of the Island above the uppermost beach and camping spot is now nothing but a mass of rocks, with no vegetation upon them. The lower part is as heavily wooded as ever and quite a bit of sand was deposited upon it. This report about the trees being washed from the upper portion of the Island answers a question which has long puzzled your staff. That is, we have frequently wondered why the trees on the upper portion of Upper Sycamore were not large trees, but only about twenty-five years in age. The explanation is clear enough now: those trees have grown since 1889, when the flood of that year probably also cleared that part of the Island.

In Touch With Joe....

I've got big news! I was wrong. Not that me being wrong is big news. I was wrong about the eagles! It turns out that they *are* nesting and now seem to be taking turns sitting on the eggs. I'm happy that they're back. I'm proud of our eagles; I love watching them and showing them off to Island visitors.

The river is at eight feet as I write this and it seems we're getting a bona-fide spring flood. Last year, as you remember, there was no snow to melt and the river never flooded. We were in a drought, as I recall, until that torrent in June. Anyway, it's nice to have a high water event to go along with all the other signs of spring. I just saw a crocus in bloom and the bluebells should be blooming by the time you read your next *Islander*. There are wood ducks returning to our shores and the air is filled with the songs of cardinals. We're still seeing some migrating ducks and this morning I saw a canvasback as well as a group of lesser scaups^a. On the down side, I just picked a tick off my neck (not a deer tick).

I'm looking forward to the warmer weather, but it sure was nice to have some good winter weather in this area for a change. I went ice climbing at Windy Run! (There's a waterfall there on the Virginia shore down river from Fletcher's boathouse) The river froze solid as did the canal and the ice-skating was perfect. It was so cool playing Frisbee on ice skates in the middle of the river. The freezing and thawing river made for some interesting morning commutes, but you can read about that on my daily log.

One very wintry afternoon after the ice storm I went over to Turkey Run Park, to take a hike and look for more ice climbing possibilities. (I had to drive there instead of my usual canoe route). The trail was sheer ice when I got there, smooth and untrampled. Luckily I came prepared, I put on my crampons and grabbed my ski poles and trudged the two miles through the snow up-river to the Beltway. My search for a climbable waterfall was fruitless, so I sat on a rock to take a break and eat a snack before I started back. It was a wintry scene of snow and ice and I was quite removed from the Beltway traffic above. I admired the sunlight tinting the trees on Plummer's Island and even though the cold was rapidly seeping back into my bones I felt happy to see that my tracks were the only tracks on the trail -- crampon tracks at that. Then, something in the sky, at the head of Plummer's Island, caught my eye. I knew immediately that it was some kind of bird-of-prey when I saw the flap-flap-flap-soar flight pattern, but when it banked at mid-river and showed me its long pointed wings and slate grey color I knew it was one of the peregrine falcons that I had heard might be nesting here. I watched until the bird came to rest on a tree limb, very close to and level with the bridge. Then I saw the mate perched on a limb nearby. Eagles *and* falcons nesting inside the Beltway!! Things just get better every year.

The plumbing is back on in the clubhouse and the toilets are working in the ladies room once again. I found when I turned the water back on that I had to replace a fill-tank valve in one toilet and I had to replace the feed line to the ladies room sink. A large branch fell and hit the phone line to the house. It didn't break the cable but pulled the wood siding from the house where the cable was attached. I think I can nail it back in. The Workfest is coming up soon. I want to try and paint the exterior of the clubhouse along with some other fun projects. Call me if you want to help get things ready for that big day. By the way the April 1 Workfest is on my birthday. No fooling, again.



No, he's not!

^aThe Editor, to his chagrin, didn't know either. According to a googled definition, scaups are "either of two diving ducks (*Aythya marila* or *A. affinis*) having predominantly black and white plumage in the male. Also called bluebill."

Sycamore in Winter

— Photos by Joe Hage



Saturday Relief Caretakers March — April

March		
3	10-2	Richard & Penelope Doolittle
	2-dark	David & Lynda Martin-McCormick
10	10-2	Paul Lang/Joan Barron
	2-dark	Morris Cobern
17	10-2	
	2-dark	Gavin & Claire Bloch
24	10-2	Christy Halvorson Ross
	2-dark	
31	10-2	
	2-dark	Jody & Bobby Benjamin
April		
7	9-3	
	3-dark	
14	9-3	
	3-dark	
21	9-3	
	3-dark	
28	9-3	
	3-dark	

**** Caretaker Volunteers ****

To volunteer, contact Maxine Hattery at 202-362-1361 or hattery@aol.com

Large Parties

May 25 (rain date 26th) from 12 to 3

Alan and Caroline Gelb will be hosting a wedding ceremony for between 50 and 70

A large party application form may be printed from the Club's web page at
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm>

To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties, John Noble
 e-mail: johnnoble@comcast.net, phone: 301-448-8562



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To view this month's Sycamore Islander on the Internet, go
to:
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/incunabula/islander.htm>

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Sycamore Events

March Meeting — Wednesday, March 14,
8:00 p.m. At the Irish Channel Restaurant
& Pub, 500 H St. NW, Washington DC,
202-216-0046.

18th Annual Potomac River Watershed
Cleanup, Saturday, March 31, 9 a.m. 12

Spring Workfest, Sunday, April 1
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

April Meeting — Wednesday, April 11th, 8
p.m. At the Island!

Sycamore Orientation — April 22, 10 a.m.

N.B. General meetings are held at 8 p.m. on the
second Wednesday of the month.



Photo by Joe Hage