



# The Sycamore Islander

DECEMBER 2012 | VOLUME 91 NUMBER 12

## President's Letter

The Sycamore Island Holiday Party will be Wednesday, December 12th, at 8:00 p.m. at the home of Stan Wiggins and Karen Possner, 5332 Westpath Way, Bethesda, 301.320.7688. Directions: Take Massachusetts Avenue north. Turn left on Sangamore Road. Turn right on Westpath Way. 5332 will be on the left.

Following a brief business meeting and elections, the Holiday Party will adjourn to eggnog, wine, and tables laden with favorite holiday dishes and deserts brought by all of the members and waitlisters attending. The annual Holiday Party is always a very festive and happy evening. David Winer has agreed to make his famous eggnog. I'm planning to bake a pie. See you there!

The report of the nominating committee appears in this issue. Some experienced leadership is continuing and a number of first time office holders and newer club members are proposed.

I conclude my two years as club president this month. It has been a very enjoyable and satisfying experience. Being president has never seemed a burden or overwhelming. I think this is because of how the club works together and Islanders volunteer to make Sycamore Island a lasting and even better place.

There have been, for instance, a number of new developments during the past two years and the result has been that members have voluntarily taken on new tasks and responsibilities. In these two years we have adopted and implemented a completely new membership admission

process. Bill Marmon, John Noble and many others made this happen. We built a new heated winter bathroom for both men and women. Tryon Wells, Joe Hage and others did the building. We established an environmental committee. Drew Walsh and Ann Lucy are the co-chairs and a great many Islanders have actively participated.

These and others examples—including the volunteer time by members as substitute caretakers and at work sessions, and especially the time and efforts of event coordinators, club supervisors, and club officers—have made the work of Sycamore Island truly a shared and collective effort. I think it is this that has made the past two years a really very enjoyable experience for me. Thank you to all Islanders.

JIM DREW  
President



BACKYARD BIRDCAPES



## Minutes for the November 14 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Drew at the home of Jane and Dave Winer

**Attendees:** Bill Marmon, Lucky Marmon, Sherry Fizedale, Alan Gelb, Ann Lucy, Dave Winer, Jane Winer, Ann Marie Cunningham, Trip Reid, Jim Drew, Marianne Ross, Tryon Wells, Drew Walsh, Jody Benjamin, Jeff Komarow, Stan Wiggins

The minutes of the October meeting as printed in the Islander were approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Alan Gelb explained that in the past, the caretaker's salary and bonus have been discussed along with the next-year's proposed annual budget at the December meeting. It was recommended last December that the caretaker's salary and bonus be decided at the November meeting. The Personnel Committee met on November 12th to evaluate our caretaker Joe Hage's performance and make recommendations. Members attending the November Club meeting voted unanimously to follow the Committee's recommendation on both salary and bonus. The membership also voted to give Joe a 10-year Service Award.

This year's revenues are estimated to be higher than

usual (est. \$90,000) due to the payment of dues by new members. Annual dues are not expected to be raised for next year. Down the road, we cannot expect as big a bump from every lottery. Currently reserves are at \$70,000...below our target. Alan notes that the Club does not publish financial statements.

**Captain's Report:** Capt. Drew Walsh reported that the Work Fest was a big success. Some 40–50 persons participated. Steve Newman, Toby Elstrom, Dave Winer, and Tryon Wells worked hard constructing steps to the tool shed and will finish soon. Bravo for them. The Captain was disappointed not to see more waitlist members at the work fest. Special kudos to the children who gave their all raking leaves. And note. . . some of them are on the Wait List.

A request that a friend of a member be allowed to temporarily store and use his scull on the Island during the winter months was rejected. Island rules require that the member accompany all guests they bring to the Island. The member's friend is encouraged to apply for club membership at the time of the 2014 lottery.

**Membership Committee:** Bill Marmon announced Jonathan Zimmerman and Maya Beth Lodish are Sycamore Island Club's first new post-lottery members.



DAVID WINER



## WINTER BIRD WALK

Please join us for the Fourth Annual Sycamore Island Winter Bird Outing scheduled for Saturday, February 9th, 2013. As in past years, we will begin the outing at 8:00 AM with bagels and coffee at the clubhouse. Our plan is to walk the Island and the towpath in the vicinity of the Island from 8:30–10:30 a.m. looking for visiting winter waterfowl and other winter resident and migratory birds. Following the walk, we will compare notes on the day's sightings over coffee around the wood stove in the clubhouse. Both beginners and experienced birders are encouraged to join us.

Last year, participants walked the Island and were rewarded with good looks at numerous resident and migratory birds, including: Wood Duck, Ring-neck Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, grebes and various woodpeckers. Our resident Bald Eagles usually start to nest this time of year just down river from the Island in a Sycamore tree that is also easily seen from the Island. If you would like to attend this year's event, please contact our trip leader Paul Hagen at phagen@bdlaw.com or 202.789.6022 by February 7th.

Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather.

A proposal by John Noble to publish the Waiting List along with the Membership Roster was discussed. It was decided to publish the Membership Roster and to give those on the Waiting List the option not to have their names published.

**Environmental Committee:** Ann Lucy reported that the ten little saplings, newly planted in the upriver swale on the Virginia side of the Island, survived the flood. There have been very few beaver sightings recently.

**Nominating Committee:** The following people have agreed to be nominated as club officers and supervisors.

President: Bill Marmon  
Vice-President: Sherry Pettie Fizdale  
Co-Recording Secretaries: Ann Marie Cunningham,  
Lucky Marmon  
Treasurer: Alan Gelb and Caroline Gelb  
Financial Secretary: Lisa Kliefoth  
Membership Secretary: John Noble  
Editor: Carol Beehler  
Archivist: Karen Possner  
Captain: Drew Walsh  
Deputy Captain: Gerry Barton

Supervisors:  
Finance: Bill Eichbaum  
Law: Maurice Tobin

Clubhouse: Marianne Ross  
Grounds: Ann Lucy  
Painting/Captentry: Karl Kosok  
Website: Tryon Wells  
Entertainment: George and Shelley Malusky  
Camping/Parties:  
Canoeing: John Membrino  
Swimming: Larry Heilman  
Relief Caretaking Scheduling: Jodi Benjamin

**Committee Reports:** Large Parties. There was a lengthy discussion of a recent incident where a club member held a large party for at least 17 people on the Island after his large party application was denied. Nor did he offer to pay the fee. The penalty for this deliberate flouting of the rules can range from a two-year suspension of the privilege to hold a large party to expulsion. This member received a two-year suspension. The member was angry when confronted with the violation. Some members thought that the more severe penalty should have been applied.

The meeting was adjourned. Members feasted on an array of delicious goodies generously provided by Jane and Dave Winer.

Respectfully submitted,  
LUCKY MARMON  
Co-Recording Secretary





# stair building

Photos by David Winer





## Notes from the Island

**Monday, November 5, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.35 Water Temperature: 49**

First of all, the pull rope is back up and the ferry/Island is open for business! Drew brought the rope down yesterday at 1:00 (I guess he's not a big "Skins" fan) and the two of us got the thing back up where it belongs.

I also wanted to mention that the river temperature has dropped considerably and that everyone should keep in mind standing rule 6-c which states; "Club canoes or boats cannot be used if the river level is 5 feet or higher, or if the water temperature is below 55 degrees Fahrenheit." Right now the river is a frigid 49 degrees.

**Thursday, November 8, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8 Water Temperature: 46**

I want to make sure that everyone knows that the bridge is open, the ferry is running, and there is a big WORKFEST this Sunday! I hope you can all come out, it looks like the weather will be nice and there is a ton of work to be done.

The barred owls were making a racket again last evening but strangely I have not heard the red-shouldered hawks since I got back a week ago. I have seen

several songbirds though, including a ruby-crowned kinglet and today, a golden-crowned kinglet. I've also been seeing a squirrel hanging around. The funny thing is, this squirrel doesn't dash for the closest tree when you get near to it. I think it might be sick or maybe it's blind, its eyes seem to be kinda glazed over. Or maybe it just had a hard night during the Superstorm.

**Wednesday, November 21, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 46**

Well, most of the leaves have fallen and it's nice to be able to see the river from my windows. The leaves that are left on the trees seem to cast a yellow glow over the Island, especially when the autumn sun is setting.

This is the time of year when the beaver are very active, and every morning this week I've had to take inventory of the trees that have been felled. I've tried to do late night vigils and we've wrapped many of the vulnerable trees but those darn beaver are persistent and always manage to find the unwrapped trees. Unless we want to get out the pistols, I guess we just have to accept that the beaver are going to get a few of our trees every year. Maybe it's not that bad, fewer trees mean fewer leaves to rake up, right?

We had a work crew here on Sunday and Drew, David Winer, and Tryon have built us a beautiful new flight of stairs to the shed. The stairs will make it much easier to use the shed and apparently Drew has big plans to build shelving up there so that all our stuff can be stored where we can find it. It's going to be a big improvement!

I was surprised to see a great egret yesterday. I thought they had flown to Florida weeks ago.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone. And thanks for everything—I have so much to be grateful for!

**Friday, November 23, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3 Water Temperature: 44**

I wanted to let everyone know that Dallas Finn died yesterday, November 22, 2012. She was 93 years old. She and her husband Richard (who passed in 1998) moved to the area and became members back in 1973. They lived next door to Phil Thornson at 7007 Macarthur Boulevard. Dallas Finn was a long-time Sycamore Islander, a writer, and mother of two daughters. She wrote two books about Victorian Japan and was a lecturer on 19th-century Japan for the Smithsonian Associates. She spent a lot of time over-





*Come to the*  
SYCAMORE ISLAND

*Holiday Party*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH  
8:00 P.M.  
*at the home of* STAN WIGGINS *and*  
KAREN POSSNER  
5332 WESTPATH WAY, BETHESDA





New stairs to the shed.

seas but had been confined to her house in recent years. I had the pleasure of getting to know her in just the last three years when she asked me to help her with her trash and her mail. I spoke to Dallas' daughter, Allison, who said she cherished her childhood memories of being on Sycamore Island with her mother. She will be missed.

#### **Sunday, November 25, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 46**

It's been a good-weather weekend and the Island is hopping. Good to see everyone, (and their out-of-town guests) while we celebrate the holiday of gratitude.

#### **Friday, November 30, 2012**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 45**

I guess the theme for the past month has been beaver destruction and a new set of stairs for the tool shed. As I mentioned before, the steps are looking beautiful and soon the new door and rails will complete the project. I did the demolition on the old, ladder-like stairs and I installed the plywood to cover the hole in the floor. It's so nice now to have the old steps gone. It adds a lot of extra room in the shed and to the area below!

Regarding the beaver, I've been seeing their wet

tracks on the boardwalk almost every morning, after they picked away at our most vulnerable saplings. Usually it is obvious where the beaver are residing and every year about his time I would notice a bouquet of tree branches piling up around the holes dug into the banks near the towpath. But this year those holes were quiet. It didn't look like anything was living under the towpath, so I decided to try and find out where they were taking all of our trees. My first guess was that they were taking them up to Ruppert's, so we paddled up there. It did not take long to notice the large piles of fresh tree branches piled high on the south bank. It was surprising to think that the beaver would travel all the way to another island to get suitable trees but it was obvious that this beaver was stocking up plenty of food and was getting ready for a long, cold winter.

Like the beaver, I too am bracing myself for the cold winter months ahead on the river. It can be a challenging time, but part of me is actually looking forward to it. There is nothing like the special, quiet moments on the Island that only winter can bring.

Happy Holidays Everyone!!!

JOE HAGE  
Caretaker

# *The Sycamore Islander*

6613 80th Place  
Cabin John, MD 20818

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## **FIRST CLASS MAIL**

# *Happy Holidays*

### **Nominations Committee Report**

The nominations committee reports that the following persons have agreed to be nominated for 2013 officer and supervisor positions:

#### **Officers**

PRESIDENT Bill Marmon  
VICE-PRESIDENT Sherry Pettie Fizdale  
RECORDING SECRETARY Ann Marie Cunningham  
CO-RECORDING SECRETARY Lucky Marmon  
TREASURER Alan & Caroline Gelb  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY Lisa Kliefoth  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY John Noble  
EDITOR Carol Beehler  
ARCHIVIST Karen Possner  
CAPTAIN Drew Walsh  
DEPUTY CAPTAIN Gerry Barton

#### **Supervisors**

FINANCE Bill Eichbaum  
LAW Maurice Tobin  
CLUBHOUSE Marianne Ross  
GROUNDS Ann Lucy  
CARPENTRY/PAINTING Karl Kosok  
WEBSITE Tryon Wells  
ENTERTAINMENT George and Shelley Malusky  
CAMPING/PARTIES Jonathan Zimmerman  
CANOEING John Membrino  
SWIMMING Larry Heilman (with Bob Whelan)  
RELIEF CARETAKING Jodie Benjamin

*The Sycamore Islander* is the monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Every attempt is made to publish the *Islander* before the second Wednesday of the month in advance of the monthly meeting. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors—any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list—are welcome. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to: Carol Beehler, cbeehler@comcast.net. The deadline for inclusion in the January issue is January 2.