



The Sycamore Islander

SEPTEMBER 2013 | VOLUME 92 NUMBER 9

President's Letter

The regular club meeting is on Wednesday, September 11, at 8:00 p.m. on the Island. Come early for a dip and/or picnic!

I write this in the mellow glow of the Labor Day Regatta on the Island. Under the direction of the incomparable Cindy Bertaut, this year's Regatta was a great success with some 50 adults and children joining in one of the Club's coolest events. More detailed results are reported separately. Since my name will not be listed as a winner I want the record to show that Lucky and I placed forth in canoe-around-the-Island event. (We would have been third if Olympic kayaker David Hearn and his family had not entered and all but lapped the field.) The paper bag pick-up event, a perennial favorite, was again a big hit this year. Blowing up and marking those 150 + brown bags with Cindy and Lucky gave me a new appreciation for this event. Young Scott Bertaut brought a dozen or so of his high capacity water rifles for a late starting water gun/capture the flag event that was quite popular.

Thank you Cindy for a wonderful afternoon!

We welcome Roger Herst as our new Supervisor of Swimming. Roger replaces Larry Heilman, a legend in his own time, who has held the position for longer than anyone can remember. Roger will coordinate with Larry and other members of the special swimming safety committee to insure that the good work of the committee is fully implemented and maintained.

Mark your calendars for the following upcoming events:

- Fishing Derby—directed by George Malusky—Saturday September 28.
- Annual Young timers/Old Timers Midweek Potluck Lunch—directed by Lucky Marmon—scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday Oct. 1, with rain date Tuesday Oct. 8. (Note this event has been renamed and is open to all members and wait listers who can get away for a midweek lunch on Island.)

BILL MARMON
President

Minutes for the August 14 Meeting

President Bill Marmon called the meeting on the Island to order.

Attendees: Lucky Marmon, Bill Marmon, Tryon Wells, Jody Benjamin, Gerry Barton, David Winer, Ann Lucy, Jim Drew, John Noble, John Membrino, Larry Heilman, Alan Gelb, Ann Marie Cunningham, Drew Walsh

Communications: Bill Marmon brought to members' attention a story which appeared in the Sunday, August 11, *Washington Post* about the perils of the Potomac River at and near Great Falls. It is mounted on cardboard and standing for all to see and read in the club house.

Treasurer's Report: At the end of July, the club had a balance of \$117,000 in the treasurer's account. Our operations spending over the current year was almost \$50,000. Barring unfortunate and costly events, we are on track to spend \$85,000 in 2013. This would leave us with a carryover balance (reserve) of about \$82,000—a little below our long-run target of one year's spending, but pretty close.

This opens up the question of whether the club should consider partial prepayment of the Notes taken out to fund the rebuilding of the clubhouse a few years ago. Following the discussion of this option at the meeting, Alan agreed to prepare a proposal for consideration later in the year.

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh discussed replacement of the screen doors leading to the club porch. Member Tove Elstrom recommends that PVC or metal replacement doors be considered.

Drew reported that Joe Hage's trail crew worked hard to clear overgrowth around the curlicue bridge and the high small path leading to it. They also did work near the upper parking lot.

Joe Hage has built a kayak stand for club kayaks.

Drew reports that he is planning to purchase a new ping pong table. Tryon Wells offered to help with the selection, aiming towards buying a high end table that will last a long time.

Membership Report: Membership Chair John Noble reports that there are no vacancies.

Canoe Supervisor: Canoeing Supervisor John Membrino reported that special canoe instruction classes held in the past have been sparsely attended. Frank Daspit is the instructor and those who have attended his classes give rave reviews. How to beef up attendance? It was suggested that the instruction be coupled with new member orientation session. There will be more discussion of this in the future as it was felt that while a great deal of attention has been paid to swimming safety, canoeing skills and canoe safety need to be addressed.

Relief Caretaking Scheduling: Jody Benjamin thanked those members who volunteered as relief caretakers during July and early August. They are: Adrienne Allison, Topaz Terry and Melanie Clark, Rachel Rudy and Nat Reid, Louise Meyer, Ann Marie and John Cunningham, Julia Strasser and Andrew Cassidy, Julie Saulnier and Mark Friedrichs, Sandra Young and Raj Purohit, Penelope Mitchell, Fred Wright, Ashley Baquie, and Bruce Delaplaine.

Old Business: The motion to amend Standing Rule 2 by adding section g that reads, "Smoking is prohibited in the clubhouse, deck, and toolshed" was voted on and passed.

**Put it on your calendar:
October 1st, 11:30 a.m. on the Island**

Annual Young Timers, Old Timers Potluck Lunch

**Bring a poem, a joke, a story or just yourself.
We will sing old familiar river songs with
Joe Hage accompanying us on guitar.
Bring a dish to share and enjoy a beautiful
October day with old and new friends.
Would love to know if you are coming!**

CONTACT

**Lucky Marmon, lucretiamarmon@gmail.com
301.654.7893 home 301.503.6105 cell**

Raindate October 8th

New Business: Chairman of the Special Nominating Committee, David Winer, reported that the committee has selected Roger Herst as the new Supervisor of Swimming. Roger agreed to serve and his appointment was approved unanimously. It was suggested that the swimming safety committee meet with Roger to brief him thoroughly on members' concerns for water safety and the steps taken so far to promote it.

Jim Drew and others commented that Roger will "have big shoes to fill," noting that former Swim Supervisor Larry Heilman has put incredible energy and effort into making the Island a safer place to swim and paddle. Thank you, Larry.

Labor Day Regatta: Bill Marmon said that he would contact Cindy Bertaut, who in the past has organized the Club's Labor Day Regatta. Subsequently, Cindy agreed to schedule the event for Labor Day, Monday, September 2.

Fishing Derby: Bill Marmon agreed to contact George Malusky regarding the annual Fishing Derby. Subsequently, George scheduled the Derby for Saturday, September 28.

Annual Young Timers/Old Timers Mid-week Potluck Lunch: This event is scheduled for 11:30 on Tuesday, October 1, with the rain date of Tuesday, October 8.

The next meeting will be held on the Island on Wednesday, September 11, at 8:00 pm. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-recording Secretary

Project Volunteers

We are establishing an list of volunteers who are interested in helping out on various work projects around the Island that arise throughout the year. If you would like to be added to the email chain please let me know. My email is andrew.h.walsh@gmail.com. Thank you!

DREW WALSH
Captain

Annual Fishing Derby!



Saturday, September 28

Members, Waitlist, and Guests:
join the fun starting with Malusky's turkey-bacon
and coffee at 8:00 a.m. Prizes awarded. You won't
want to miss *this* event!

Notes from the Island

Friday, August 30, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 81

The summer flowers are blooming but it's becoming apparent that fall is right around the corner. The Virginia creeper is starting to turn red, the sycamore leaves are turning brown and collecting on the lawn, and I saw my first migrating birds. They were two Caspian terns, cruising downstream before sunset with their red beaks and short strong wing beats. A rare treat.

It is also at this time of year that the cormorants start to gather in a dead tree near here. Every night before sunset you can watch them flying in from all quadrants, flocking to the same dead tree opposite Ruppert's Island. The same is true for the three great egrets we have. You can depend on them to roost in the same tree across from the captain's float, at the same time (relative to sunset) every evening. I suppose the official start of autumn should be when the cormorants and egrets decide to leave, which makes sense since the cormorants always come back on the first day of spring.

This is also the time of year when the beaver get busy. I think they go into some kind of winter panic and just start cutting down trees for the heck of it. We'll have to be ready with the chicken wire.

I'm looking forward to September, one of the prettiest months on the Island.

Thursday, August 29, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3 Water Temperature: 80

The nice weather has been great but it's a double-edged sword for the caretaker. All of those perfect days really brought the members (and their many guests) out of the woodwork and I've been working the ferry like mad. It was such a relief to get a rainy day yesterday. Finally, the bell is getting a rest. I knew I was getting "caretaker's burnout" when I started getting excited about the fact that it gets dark (and the Island closes) two minutes earlier each day.

Never buy a Craftsman lawn mower. The thing broke down on me again. Fourth time this year.

Dave Winer has been working on getting a new zip line installed. I know the kids will appreciate that.

There is a regatta being held here on Monday. I can't say that there is a lot of buzz about it but we hope you

JOE HAGE



all come down and participate in the festivities. I was reading about the heyday of the Sycamore Island regattas and back in the 1920s it was not uncommon for 1,500 people to line the shores of the river to watch the guys compete, some coming from as far away as Philadelphia!

Monday, August 26, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 78

Many of you have been asking about the large bees/wasps that are nesting on the ground in the fields on the Island. They are called cicada killers and here's what I learned about them.

Cicada Killers are seen in early summer. After mating, the female wasp digs a burrow about six inches deep in the soil. Inside the burrow, she will make several cells, or small oval-shaped chambers. You can usually tell a Cicada Killer's burrow by the U-shaped dirt around the hole.

Next, the female wasp hunts cicadas. Cicadas, such as the Dogday Harvestfly, are very important as a food source for young wasps. Once she finds one, she will sting it and paralyze the insect. Then the wasp will carry the cicada, which may weigh three times her own weight, back to the burrow. She will put the cicada in one of the cells and lay an egg on it. The female wasp will continue hunting cicadas until she has filled the cells of her burrow. Each cicada body gets its own egg. It seems that Sycamore Island is one of the premier places to watch this extraordinary behavior.



JOE HAGE

Sunday, August 25, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 78

This must be the August sent from heaven! I can't believe this weather, and the river is nice and clear too. Enjoy it while it lasts!

Late summer is a great time to look for wildflowers on the Island, and this year the flowers have been exceptional. The most abundant of the wildflowers is hands-down the jewel weed, or touch-me-not. It's a kind of impatiens, and it is everywhere. You don't have to look hard to find these monsters, some are over 9 feet tall! The other flowers, though less abundant, combine to create a rainbow of colors across the Island—yellow sunflowers, red cardinal flowers, purple iron weed, pink phlox, and a meadow of yellow loosestrife.

There are also some unwanted blossoms on the Island. I was busy pulling kudzu and oriental bitter-sweet the other day. These are invasive vines that will aggressively cover the Island if not kept in check. Another nasty plant is the Japanese knotweed. I've also been busy watching out for poison ivy.

The horse shoes have disappeared. I thought that they might turn up once I cut the grass but no luck. If anyone has a set of horse shoes in their basement that they aren't using, I'm sure the club would love to have them. Likewise, we need a ping pong table. It was decided at the last meeting that the captain should purchase a new ping pong table. I think it would be cool to get one of those indoor/outdoor tables. Then we could play on the deck on nice days.



JOE HAGE

Thursday, August 15, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 80

Check out that water temperature and then look at the calendar! Unseasonable for sure!

The most exciting thing to happen on the Island recently was the catfish that was brought in on Sunday night. Our catfish-hunting duo from last month's *Islander* did it again, and this time they caught a 35-pounder! It took them a while to wear it out but somehow they got it into the canoe without flipping. Ben and Andy were tempted to bring the monster in for a certificate but finally decided to let it go.

I did not do another epic river trip to the Bay this year but we did get the sailing canoe out, and a couple weeks ago Mary and I spent a night on Vaso Island (also known as Herzog Island).

We had another good meeting last night. It's not often that we get a quorum in August. I suppose the nice weather helped to bring people down on a Wednesday night.

The nicest thing happened yesterday. One of the club member's kids, Justin, a sophomore in college, came by to give me a present. He wanted to thank me for pulling him and his friends back and forth to the Island all summer long. He was busy getting ready to go back to school in Colorado but took the time to carry a six-pack all the way down the hill. Thanks Justin!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

2013

REGATTA

Photographs by
David Winer



The Sycamore Islander

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ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

To volunteer as a substitute caretaker, please email your choice of day and shift to Jody Benjamin, benjafamily@gmail.com.

Saturday Relief Caretakers September/October 2013					
SEPTEMBER	9 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK	OCTOBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
SEPTEMBER 7	Julia and Peter Smith	Lynda and Gary Slayen	OCTOBER 5	Please Volunteer	Kevin Haley
SEPTEMBER 14	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer	OCTOBER 12	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
SEPTEMBER 21	Please Volunteer	Tanya and Geoffry Cook	OCTOBER 19	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
SEPTEMBER 28	Please Volunteer	Norman and Nancy Metzger	OCTOBER 26	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer

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 and 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 October issue is September 30.