

The Sycamore Islander

MAY 2014 | VOLUME 93 NUMBER 5



President's Letter

The next club meeting is Wednesday, May 14, on the Island, assuming that current flood levels subside.

We welcome 24 new wait listers to club rolls, the result of our second membership lottery held at the April meeting. We had 114 completed applications for 24 spots and were sad we could not accommodate more of the interesting and highly qualified applicants. The selection of 24 brings the wait list to 60, which means that maximum wait for new applicants should be no more than 4 years (wait list used to be 10 years or more, before we closed it altogether). Many thanks to Membership Secretary John Noble, with assistance from Elizabeth Thomas, for masterful management of the process. And thanks also to Lisa Kliefoth and Tryon Wells for the back office work that goes along with new member selection.

New and old wait listers, and members who would like to review, are invited to attend new member orientation on the Island on Sunday, May 25, at 11:00 a.m. Orientation is an important pre-requisite for using the Island as a wait list pass holder or as a member. As an added attraction this year, Frank Dapsit, an experienced canoe instructor, will hold a canoe orientation class around 12:30. Existing members, along with wait listers, are invited to attend.

Caretaker Joe Hage, accompanied by Mary Kearney, is making a two-week adventure, May 5–17, to explore the entire length of the C&O Canal from Cumberland MD to Georgetown. Joe and Mary hope to highlight the work of the C&O Canal Trust.

Writes Mary on www.canalbycanoe.com, “Our inspiration is simple curiosity about the C&O Canal and its dream of a westward passage over the mountains for



DAVID WINER

Rare twin leaf is the flower du jour on the Sycamore Island Wildflower Walk

people and goods.” She continues, “We have all this adventure and history, right in our own backyard, but there’s so much we don’t know about it. We marvel at its ingenuity. Who designed and built all these beautiful, long-lasting structures? What were they for, all these walls and tunnels and locks and aqueducts? Who worked and played and lived here? And why is this a cool place for present-day adventurers to explore?”

Because most of the canal is dry today, Joe and Mary will be traveling by canoe in the Potomac, but will be staying in lock-houses, exploring historic canal towns, and soaking up canal lore and reporting on the website. Check it out!

BILL MARMON
President

WANTED: A Few Good Ladies and Gents to plan and execute the Summer Solstice Fest for Islanders, Wait-Listers and Kids on Saturday, June 21! In the past we have danced to the music of Joe Hage & Friends and to fiddlers and caller for Contra Dancing, just like uptown in the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo.

ATTENTION: We need someone to organize the games for all ages and to choose a band (Joe & Friends: Good choice!) and order the food, that is, appetizers whipped up at home to share, sort of like food at a Workfest, only this time it’s a FEST FEST! Drinks too, of course. We have featured root beer ingeniously made on the spot, along with icy punch to quench the thirst. (I’m happy to share my recipe.)

It will be warm and beautiful here on the Island by Saturday, June 21. Y’all come! Make it happen! Make it memorable!

I can no longer be in charge of the party but I am willing to help. Mainly I hate to see a GOOD THING go by the wayside. Please call Jane Winer: 301.229.8963 ASAP!

Minutes for the April 9 Meeting

Attendees: John Noble, Ann Lucy, Roger Herst, Ned Goddard, Drew Walsh, Lisa Kliefoth, Nat Reid, Star Mitchell, Rachel Rudy, David Winer, Bill Marmon, Alice Bullard, Jim Drew, Jane Winer, Marianne Ross, Tryon Wells, Richard Bertaut, Trip Reid, and Ann Marie Cunningham

Call to Order and Minutes: The meeting was called to order by President Bill Marmon on the Island. The minutes of the March 12, 2014 meeting were approved.

Communications: None

Financial Report Report: Lisa Kleifoth reported that she had made the last deposit of dues payments that day. She said that 42% of the members paid in January, 42% in February, and the rest paid in March, for a total of \$90,500. She hopes that in the future, dues payment will become as routine as the sun rising, so that additional prompting isn't necessary to secure payment. Installment payments are available for those who prefer them. More and more members are making online payments.

Captain's Report: Drew Walsh reports that the workfest will be held on Sunday, April 13, with the main task being to put the floats in the water. Once that is complete, everyone will enjoy the pot luck lunch.

Roger Herst led us all in a chant of "Safety, Safety, Safety!" He is concerned that the state could shut down all swimming if there is an incident. He proposed purchasing a rescue surfboard with handles that is very easy to launch and easy to hang on to. This would be kept near the swim float. The aluminum canoe could be moved near the captain's float. Roger will write an article about safety that will stress that we are all responsible for the safety of children, guests, and members.

Greens Committee Report: Alice Butler will publish notes of the committee meeting that will describe the satellite photos they studied to determine the growth and shrinkage of the Island over time, and their plans for fall plantings that may help slow the erosion on the upriver side.

Membership Report: John Noble proposed the election of new members.

Nat Reid grew up on the Island, as he is the son of long-time member Trip Reid. Nat is the director of Dayspring Retreat Center. His wife Rachel Rudy first came to the Island 20 years ago and is a landscape

designer. They have two children, Leland, 8, and Daniel, 6. They were recommended by Ann Satterthwaite and Thomas Edsall.

Thomas Haley fell in love with the Island as a guest of friends Louise Mayer, Bernard Veuthey, and Cora Shaw, and has been actively supporting the club by pulling the ferry and supporting workfests. He was recommended by Jody and Bobby Benjamin and Drew Walsh. Please welcome our new members.

There are now three vacancies which will be filled at the next meeting. The club receive 114 applications for the waiting list, with 34 in the age group of 39 or younger, and 80 in the older group. 12 applicants' names were drawn from each group to be placed on the waiting list. The applicants will receive an invitation to join the waiting list, and will have 15 days to respond. Thanks to Elizabeth Thomas who helped organize the database used for the lottery.

Caretaker's Report: Jody and Bobby Benjamin expressed gratitude to the stalwart volunteers who harnessed the ferry and pulled it through the vicissitudes of March weather. They are Kevin Haley, Thomas Gibbon, Alice Bullard (Waite), Chris Weals (Hancock), Sandi and Jeff Komarow, Russell Sturm and Michele McNally, Steve Taswell and Joey Lampl, Moll Carr and mac Thornton, and Gerry Barton.

New Business: The Summer Solstice party has been a wonderful tradition on the Island, with a live band, pot luck, dancing, karaoke, and activities for the kids. It is in need of an organizer. Joe Hage is always willing to help the organizer pull it together, and Jane Winer is willing to share her experience. But they need a leader. Please help!

Canal By Canoe: Joe Hage continues his efforts to bring awareness to the water and waterways around us. This time he is partnering with Mary Kearney in an exploration by canoe of the entire length of the beautiful C&O Canal, from Cumberland, MD to Washington, DC, May 5–17. They are doing this to promote the work of the C&O Canal Trust to protect, restore, and promote the canal. Follow their trip on their website <http://canalbycanoe.com/>

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-recording Secretary

Swimming at Sycamore Island

Swimming season is here and we want you to enjoy swimming in the Potomac. How many Washingtonians have that opportunity? When was the last time you saw a swimmer in the river, other than at Sycamore Island?

We want swimming at Sycamore to be safe. This year we are adding a RESCUE SURFBOARD at the swimming dock that can be operated by a single rescuer. There are handles on it for a distressed swimmer to hold on to while the paddler moves to shallow water. We think it provides an easier and faster means of rescue than a canoe, although a canoe will still be available at the captain's dock. Remember the most practical start for a swim in any river—UPSTREAM—because if you have a cramp, smash a foot on a submerged rock, or feel weak or out-of-breath, you can always let the current float you safely back. If you swim downstream it's easy to go too far and have trouble returning against the current. Downstream current is always your friend to bring you home!

And beware of float noodles. A swimmer who uses one admits that his/her swimming ability is limited. The accidental loss of this artificial floatation device while in the water could be disastrous.

Our greatest danger of accident occurs with club guests who don't know the river's peculiarities. An experienced club member should always accompany his/her guests while swimming.

And what about youngsters? Kids are filled with bravado, absolutely certain they can handle the



DAVID WINER

Potomac. They often take chances avoided by adults. It's imperative to have adult supervision when Huckleberry Fin youngsters are swimming. And with very young children, it is an observed fact that when drowning, they don't struggle in the water. They just sink out of sight.

And please remember: NO DIVING!

ROGER HERST
Swimming Supervisor



JENNIFER HEARN

Davey and Jesse Hearn competing in last year's CCA Downriver Race

CCA Potomac Downriver Race

If the rain gods and river level cooperates, the CCA Potomac Downriver Race is scheduled for Saturday, May 17. This 7.5 mile intermediate canoe race starts just below Great Falls and ends at Sycamore Island. Club members are welcome to help with the race and cheer competitors on. The CCA Race is one of the longest-running canoe races in the country, celebrating its 59th year! Competitors will likely start crossing the Island ferry "finish line" sometime around 11:30 a.m.

Volunteers and competitors will celebrate with a picnic and awards ceremony on the Island in the afternoon.

For event information, go to: <http://www.sycamoreisland.org/events/se140517.htm>

Additional information found on the Canoe Cruisers website: <http://www.ccadc.org/notices.html>

Please contact Howard Morland, 703.525.1429, hbmorland@aol.com if you would like to volunteer as a safety boater or help out with the race.

JENNIFER HEARN

Notes from the Island

Thursday, April 3, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.5 Water Temperature: 49

I had to disconnect and take down the outdoor bell for the phone. It was neat having the phone ring outside but after a lot of trial and error, I realized that it was the faulty bell that was causing my phone to short out.

We have been getting a lot of activity at the bird feeders: chickadees, titmice, and woodpeckers. I added a second feeder by my window and it has been a joy watching the birds up close, especially the bright yellow gold finches. The geese are nesting now. I counted four nests on the Island but two of them are without eggs and may have been plundered by raccoons.

Friday April 4, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.3 Water Temperature: 49

The river is trying to go down but with more rain on the way today it doesn't look like we'll be running the ferry this weekend. Bummer!

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 49

Well, we didn't get as much rain as they predicted and the river dropped below five feet on Sunday morning. We had a few visitors and it was fun to see some old familiar faces. Of course, nobody came down yesterday in the rain but the rain hasn't effected the river level and the ferry is open on this sunny day. I wonder where the people are?

We saw a garter snake on Sunday, and today the carp are jumping and splashing in the river. The woods are really coming alive now.

Wednesday, April 9, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 50

The bluebells are out! Along with the Dutchman's britches and the spring beauties.

Nice weather today and the meeting is on the Island tonight so I guess the ferry is going to get a workout.

Friday, April 11, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.5 Water Temperature: 55

I can't say that I was shocked but I was a little surprised that the bell never rang yesterday. I thought that with the winter we just had, and it being one of the best Spring days we've had so far, I thought I would get



Trout lily

some visitors. Just goes to show you never can tell.

I took advantage of the slow time and attached a come-along to the tree that is leaning over our ferry cable on the mainland. I was able to get some of the weight of the tree off of the cable and stabilize it but we'll have to deal with that tree sooner or later.

The river is now warm enough to take out the club canoes and the docks will be out on Sunday during the WORKFEST!

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 63

I really hope that the small roof above my foyer gets replaced soon, the water was pouring into my apartment this morning. The upper roofs seem to be performing well though with no visible leaks.

We had a great time at the workfest on Sunday. We had the old regulars plus quite a few new members, and we even got to meet some of our most recent wait-listers. They had their names picked on Wednesday and they were here working by Sunday, not bad! I think we had over fifty volunteers that day.

Thursday April 24, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 59

Sad news, it looks like the eagle's nest has broken apart and half of it has dropped to some lower branches. We just noticed it on Sunday and I'm not sure how long it has been that way. I don't know the status of the chicks but lets hope they got out in time. We also had a goose



Cardinal eggs

nest fail. The geese abandoned the nest for some reason, maybe it's because there was a whiffle ball in the nest with the eggs? Very strange.

The bluebells are now fading. Boo-hoo

Friday, April 25, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 59

This club is full of amazing people. Penny Mitchell has generously donated a very nice spotting scope to the Island. It's an old-school Bausch and Lomb bird-watching 60X telescope. Now she is off to Palestine!

Monday, April 28, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 60

The river was on a slow descent and I was hopeful that the water level would get below three feet for the first time this year, but now it's going up and there is more rain on the way. We didn't get any spring floods but the river has been at a steady high volume.

A pair of cardinals decided to build their nest low in a bush right next to the screen porch. I passed there yesterday and I startled to female from the nest and I could easily see the five spotted eggs in the nest. Speaking of nesting, some of the goslings have hatched and soon we'll have more little fuzz balls waddling around here.

I was expecting a mad rush to the Island yesterday. I thought that yesterday would be the day to really kick start the Sycamore season. Funny thing, only two parties all day.

The poison ivy is coming up so be on guard. I was out there yesterday getting some of it with the weed

killer. The invasive, Japanese knotweed seems to be having a good year, and the pesky stuff is spouting up all over the place, ahgg!

I'm going to put a fresh coat of paint on the swim dock ladder before I install it to the dock. Which means a lot of rust removal and oxide priming as well. It looks like we'll be getting a new ladder for the other swim float.

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Water Level at Little Falls: 50 Water Temperature: 55

The river just went above five feet and the ferry is closed.

The rain is coming down pretty good and the river level predictions are a cause for concern but it's not certain that we'll get flooding down here. It looks like most of the rain is in the eastern part of the watershed so I'm not panicking just yet.

If there is a flood before I leave for my trip, I'll be sure to have all of the pre-flood preparations done. I will raise all the ropes and tether the ferry to the Island where it will bob in the river and be safely away from the docks and trees. If the river is flooding when I leave I will leave a canoe locked to the mainland. When the river recedes, the members will have to canoe over to the Island and retrieve the ferry. Then they will have to lower the ropes and clear the mud from the steps and walkways.



I just went out to raise the ferry rope and it was a good thing I went out when I did. In the short time I was out there the river went up three tens of a foot, from 5.3 to 5.6, and the dock went quickly under water. I like to get the ferry squared away before the dock goes under and today I was cutting it close. I had to take the ferry over to the mainland to undo the chains so I could raise the rope and it was a little scary. The river wasn't real high, but just the fact that its all brown with large logs and lots of trash flowing by, made the ride a little heart-thumping. Even though I've done this routine many times, it still puts me in full-alert mode. I guess that's a good thing, my motto has always been, respect the river, so far so good.

Hopefully I'll be able to start the painting of the clubhouse in May, just waiting to hear back from the club officers about the proposal I submitted.

Don't forget! Follow me and Mary Kearney at canal-bycanoe.com as we paddle from Cumberland to Georgetown to support the C&O Canal Trust. I've heard many of you complain about the condition of the canal here by Sycamore Island. Here is your chance to make a difference. Follow our trip and donate to the Trust! Love the Canal? Support the Trust!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



DAVID WINER



DAVID WINER



DAVID WINER



DAVID WINER



DAVID WINER

The Sycamore Islander

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ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Saturday Relief Caretakers **May/June 2014** To volunteer for a shift, please contact Jody Benjamin, benjafamily@gmail.com

MAY	9 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK	JUNE	10 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK
MAY 3	Julie Saulnier and Mark Friedrichs	Alice Bullard and Jason Waite	JUNE 7	Please Volunteer	David and Sharon Gustafson
MAY 10	Carol and Kevin Hearle	Sandra Young and Raj Purohit	JUNE 14	Please Volunteer	Madeline Carter (Graham)
MAY 17	Marianne and Phil Ross	Please Volunteer	JUNE 21	Please Volunteer	Greg Kats
MAY 24	Andrew Umhau	Harley Feldbaum and Nicole Fraser	JUNE 28	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
MAY 31	Louise Meyer	Chris White and Tamara Zemlo			

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. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to: Carol Beehler, cbeehler@comcast.net.

The deadline for inclusion in the June issue is May 30.

Masthead photo by Bruce Beehler

Large Parties Scheduled



Marianne Ross, June 29, 4–9 p.m., 35 guests
Richard Bertaut, May 31, afternoon, 12 guests, water-pistol melee