



# *The Sycamore Islander*

JULY 2014 | VOLUME 93 NUMBER 7

## President's Note

**The next club meeting will be on Wednesday July 9, on the Island, at 7:30 p.m. Come early with a picnic and enjoy the Island!**

Note the 7:30 start time, earlier than usual to make time for the guest appearance of Joe Bell, a hydrologist from the U.S. Geological Survey. Last year the USGS proposed to relocate some river quality monitoring equipment on Sycamore Island. The matter was thoroughly discussed at several meetings, but before a final decision was made the USGS found itself without funding because of the budget sequester crisis and the matter was suspended.

Bell will reintroduce the proposal and talk more generally about factors impacting water quality in the river including nitrates in the river and "river geomorphology," a term he will explain.

The business meeting will address several important issues including the election of Ann Marie Cunningham as chair of the 2015 officer nomination committee and the proposed bylaw change that would tighten up due dates for paying annual dues.

Vice president Tryon Wells will preside at the July meeting. (I will be out of town at a family reunion.)

With swimming season now upon us, please remember that all members need to take responsibility for the swimming safety of their guests and any other situations that look dangerous. Children must be supervised at all times by an adult. Members should ask any unsupervised children to exit the river. Also please do not permit anyone to play with the new lifesaving equipment, including the new surfboard.

**BILL MARMON**  
President

## Minutes for the June 11 Meeting

**Attendees:** John Noble, David Winer, Bill Marmon, Jim Drew, Marianne Ross, Tryon Wells, John Cunningham, John Lentz, Molly Newberry, Meredith Griggs, Larry Heilman, Gerald Stanley Barton, Jonathan Rose, Duncan Thomson (F.O.J.), Jody Benjamin, Bobby Benjamin, Charlotte Brewer, 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 May 14, 2014, meeting were approved.

**Treasurers Report:** Ned Goddard reported by email that he will report next month on the possibilities of repaying the construction notes early. In other respects, the finances are copacetic.

**Captain's Report:** Bill Marmon reported on behalf of Drew Walsh that a roofer is under contract to repair the roof above the apartment.

An arborist has been hired to do some tree work and to replace the rope on the rope swing with a better, safer cable—the same as used on the zipline.

The swim dock will be returned to the water as soon as the new anchor is ready—in approximately 3 weeks.

Ann Lucy resigned as Grounds Supervisor. Alice Ballard is willing to replace her. This will be decided next month.

The surfboard has been installed, and the safety equipment that washed away has been replaced at the captain's dock.

**Caretaker's Report:** Joe Hage reported that his life's mission is to let everyone know how great canoeing on the Potomac is. To that end, he and Mary Kearney canoed the Potomac alongside the C&O Canal, from Cumberland to Georgetown, raising awareness of the river, the canal, and the C&O Canal Trust. They presented a slideshow on their Canal-by-Canoe expedition. Under the auspices of the Canal Trust, they were able to stay in some of the lockhouses and they met Brent Walls, the new Upper Potomac Riverkeeper who posted an interview with Joe and Mary on the Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Facebook page. See pictures and read more about their trip at <http://canalbycanoe.com/>.

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

- Molly and Edward Newberry, and their children

Thomas, Erin and John. They love swimming, hiking, boating, biking and fishing. They are recommended by Silvija Strikis and Miguel Browne, and Garret Rasmussen.

- Jonathan Rose. He is an economist from the Adirondacks who has bicycled across the US twice for worthy causes. He is recommended by Charlotte Brewer, Sue and Greg Super, and Jody Benjamin. Please welcome our new members.

John also reported that 37 waitlisters have purchased passes. The membership will be published this month. John is proposing a revision to Bylaw 15, Expulsion for Non-Payment of Dues that would shorten the period from three months, as it is now, to one month and add a penalty for late payments. The proposed amendment will be discussed and voted upon next month.

**Relief Caretaker's Report:** Jody Benjamin expressed gratitude to those members and wait-listers who volunteer to pull the ferry on Joe's day off. In May, they were Gerry Barton, Marianne and Phil Ross, Louis Boorstin, Andrew Umhau, Harely Feldbaum and Nicole Fraser, Louise Meyer, Chris White and Tamara Zemko, Joe McBride, and David and Sharon Gustafson.

Jody also reported that the horseshoe pits have been rehabilitated. If anyone has horseshoes to donate, please contact Jody or Joe.

### **Bylaw 15 is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following**

#### Bylaw 15—Expulsion for Non-Payment of Dues

A member whose dues have not been received by the Financial Secretary by the date 30 days after dues notice has been mailed or delivered shall be dropped from membership, without advance notice to the member required, provided that the delinquent member may pay \$100 late fee during an additional 15 days. In the case of a member who elects to pay on a quarterly basis, pursuant to Bylaw 14, the first payment shall be made in accordance with the foregoing provisions, with subsequent payments due on April 1, July 1, and October 1. There is no grace period for subsequent payments for quarterly payers.

Applicants on the wait list are subject to the same terms. Members or applicants who seek reinstatement shall be obliged to reapply as new applicants, unless there are extenuating circumstances as determined by the Membership Secretary.



When Joe is on vacation, members serve as temporary caretakers. If you are willing to be contacted to serve as caretaker so Joe can revigorate himself, please contact Jody at [benjafamily@gmail.com](mailto:benjafamily@gmail.com). When Joe plans his next outing, she will contact you to see if you are available. It's worth \$50 per day.

**New Business:** Tryon Wells reported that the Solstice party is evolving into a square dance with a DJ, possibly to be held on September 27th. This is intended as more of an adult activity than most events on the Island. The planners are considering asking for a one day exception to the no alcohol rule.

Please contact Tryon at [tryonwells@verizon.net](mailto:tryonwells@verizon.net) or Jane Winer at [jdwiner@verizon.net](mailto:jdwiner@verizon.net) if you can help. And watch for more details.

As lightning flashed and thunder clapped and rumbled, Joe Hage reported that we still don't have a generator on the Island, which was approved a year ago. Bill Marmon will talk to our captain, Drew Walsh about it.

Next month, Joe Bell of the US Geological Survey will come to the Island to discuss their proposal to upgrade the instruments that measure water quality in the Potomac. He will also lead an informal, interactive discus-

sion on water quality to the members, which will include:

- New monitoring at Little Falls Pumping Station
- Continuous nitrate concentrations in the Potomac
- A cross-section of the river just downstream of Sycamore Island
- Lasting influences of road salts in the Potomac
- Fracking

As this will be a very interesting discussion, the next meeting will begin at 7:30 on July 9th to allow more time.

The striking photo on the page 1 of *June Islander* is of a Prothonotary Warbler and was taken by Bruce Beehler.

Larry Heilman expressed his concern that if there is any incident, we could lose the privilege of swimming. When he was the Supervisor of Swimming, an ad hoc special committee was formed that established guidelines on swimming safety that was to include training. He is concerned that we must keep a log of all incidents, ensure that the equipment is always available and in good working order through daily inspections.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM  
Co-recording Secretary

## Notes from the Island

**Friday, June 6, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.89 Water Temperature: 70**

This is the first day this year that the river is below four feet.

BTW, it is sort of pointless to pick up trash around the Island unless you carry it up the hill. It's great if someone wants to pitch in, but please, finish the job and carry the litter up the hill. I've got enough of my own trash to deal with.

**Thursday, June 12, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 5.6 Water Temperature: 70**

The ferry is closed! Again, maybe all weekend.

Every time I plan to go out of town, the river floods. I just finished getting ready for the rising waters, just like I did before I left in May. I'm starting to get a little concerned about how this climate change is going to effect the club. I hope this isn't the new norm, powerful rain storms every two weeks.

We had a major historic moment on the Island this week, we got our first stand-up paddle boards. I'm not sure that SUP's are appropriate at a canoe club, but what are you going to do?

The club meeting was here on the Island last night. It was a good turn out considering the weather. We welcomed yet another new member into the club and we met a new waitlister. It's good to have some new blood but I'm a little worried about these new people who are now able to use the club and bring guests, yet have only stepped foot on Island once before. It is fun to see the kids and babies on the Island. Mary found a Cherrio on the ferry; we thought that was a good sign. Speaking of Mary, anyone who has been down here recently knows that Mary has been here quite a bit lately. She loves being on the Island and she has been a big help running the ferry while I'm off doing my painting side work. BTW, for those of you who didn't know, before I took on the caretaker job I was a painter by trade. Hage Custom Painting was a successful business for over 18 years, so if you ever need an expert painter you know where to find me.

Mary and I did a short presentation before the meeting last night. We talked about our Canal-By-Canoe trip down the Potomac and we showed a little slide show. We need to rehearse a little more but everyone seemed to like it.

I'll be celebrating Father's Day on the Patuxent River. We'll be canoe camping near Jug Bay. Unlike the tidal Potomac, the Patuxent has a whole bunch of canoe camping sites, and they are really close by!

**Tuesday, June 17, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.4 Water Temperature: 75**

The ferry is running again. Gerry got here yesterday just as the river dropped below five feet and put the ferry back into service. I got here soon after and we pushed the docks back out into the river and we shoveled the mud. I also returned all of the safety equipment back to its proper place. Then I cleaned the goose poop from the docks and cut the "grass."

No word yet from the roofer (not surprising since we've been waiting for this guy since last fall), but the tree guys are supposed to come tomorrow around noontime.

**Friday, June 20, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9 Water Temperature: 79**

It's been an interesting week of nesting ants, tree work, and thieving raccoons. Sadly, the roofer continues to show up missing.

I got back from my long weekend and I found that I had a serious ant problem. We all get a few sugar ants in the kitchen at this time of year but when I saw them trailing across my living room I got concerned. On Wednesday as I was waiting for the roofer to show up I



Campsite on Patuxent river

JOE HAGE



JOE HAGE

followed the ant trail to a hole in my ceiling, right where the roof was leaking. I cautiously removed the trim on the inside of my ceiling and I discovered a nest of ants. The more of the wet ceiling I removed the more ants I found, and that was only the tip of the iceberg.

I went up on the roof and tore off the rubber that was covering the plywood and there I found an enormous breeding ground of two different sized ants. There were hundreds of the big black carpenter ants with the pinkish egg sacks and there were thousands of the tiny sugar ants with the egg sacks that look like small couscous. I spent the next two hours ripping out wet and rotten plywood and vacuuming up the ants as fast as I could. I ended up with a two foot by four foot hole in the roof, and another one to match it on the inside ceiling; I always wanted a sky light.

Gerry showed up and helped me cover up the hole with boards, plywood, metal sheeting and finally a tarp. We wanted to cover it really well in case the roofer didn't show up right away. That was on Wednesday, then the roofer didn't show up again on yesterday. He was here today, but just long enough to uncover the roof and then he left to get materials. I thought that he was coming right back but now I'm afraid I may have to recover the roof and put my lumber/tarp roof back together to keep the rain out over the weekend. I wasn't in favor of hiring this roofer and this is why.

The Island looks a lot different without the big tree at the corner of the deck. The down side is that we lost the nice shade on the deck. Someone needs to volun-



JOE HAGE

teer to go and buy a big sun umbrella for the deck. The tree climbers also installed the bolts for Dave Winer's fancy rope swing.

Watch your picnic baskets everyone, there is a bold and hungry raccoon on the Island. It was Tuesday evening when I had to shoo the coon from the porch steps, and on Wednesday the raccoon stole my box of cooked rice right off the picnic table while we were sitting on the dock!

**Monday, June 23, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 79**  
Happy Summer Solstice.

This is a great time for people to use the club after work. Last night we didn't close until 9:07, the end of civil twilight. Strangely, it seems that dark is arriving earlier this year. I seem to remember staying open until almost 9:30 during this time of year.



The river is slowly clearing up and it's slowly going down but so far the fishing has been terrible.

**Monday, June 30, 2014**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.44 Water Temperature: 80**

The times they are a-changing. Yesterday I paddled around the Island on a stand-up paddle board! It was fun but I think I still like canoeing better.

It looks like the fishing is finally picking up and I may have to go out and try my luck this evening.

The Island was really crawling with people yesterday. It was awesome to see everyone enjoying the river on paddle boards, and in canoes, kayaks and sailing canoes. Meanwhile, on the Island, we had the zip line, the rope swing and the hammock all going at the same time, not to mention the swimmers and the water slide. What a day!

This time of year is the busiest for the caretaker but the long days have given me a chance to get a lot of

chores done. In the last week or so I've cut the grass, adjusted the ferry rope, killed the poison ivy, cleared the trails on the Island, cleared the path down the hill, dredged the river channel to allow the ferry to get close to the dock, swept all the decks and walkways and steps, fixed the ramp to the canoe dock, put up the hammock, repaired three canoe thwarts, installed the water slide on the swimming dock, installed a smoke detector (Gerry installed the other one), picked up litter, helped the roofer, cleaned the bathrooms, cleaned the screen porch, cleaned all of the life rings, repaired the damaged life saving station, repaired the captains dock, changed an old toilet seat, planted a new Sycamore tree on the Island, cleaned gutters, and repaired a trail light. Plus, operated the ferry.

JOE HAGE  
Caretaker

# POTOMAC RIVER WATER QUALITY

7:30 on July 9, 2014



Joseph Bell, a hydrologist with the MD/DE/DC Water Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey will lead a discussion at 7:30 on the Island prior to the regular meeting on July 9th.

**He will discuss the following topics:**

**Impacts of road salts on river chemistry:**

Comparison of a small stream like Paint Branch tributary to a large river like the Potomac.

**Continuous monitoring at Little Falls:**

Non unique relationships between water quality parameters and discharge during storm events. He will show annual load data for nitrogen.

**River geomorphology:**

Joe will show the river profile just downstream of the Island and speak about transient features within a river, and will discuss how Sycamore Island is changing over time.



BRUCE BEEHLER

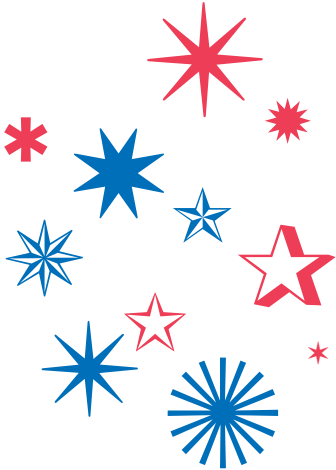
Common Mergansers

# The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place  
Cabin John, MD 20818

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](mailto:benjafamily@gmail.com).

Saturday Relief Caretakers <b>July/August 2014</b>					
JULY	9 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK	AUGUST	10 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK
JULY 5	Charlotte Brewer	Topaz Terry and Melanie Clark	AUGUST 2	Phoebe Hammill	Please Volunteer
JULY 12	Barbara Fisher (Pill)	Judy and John Lentz	AUGUST 9	Joe McBride	Please Volunteer
JULY 19	Meredith Griggs	Please Volunteer	AUGUST 16	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
JULY 26	Connie Miner and Greg Lalley	Madeleine Carter (Graham)	AUGUST 23	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
			AUGUST 30	Please Volunteer	Madeleine Carter (Graham)

*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](mailto:cbeehler@comcast.net). The deadline for inclusion in the August issue is July 31.