



The Sycamore Islander

APRIL 2015 | VOLUME 94 NUMBER 4

Minutes for the March 11 Meeting

Attendees: Gerry Barton, Melanie Clark, Lauren Bauer, Geoff Holdridge, Bettina Stern, Karen Possner, Rodolfo Castro, David Winer, Ann Marie Cunningham, Star Mitchell, Tove A. Ektstrom, Jim Drew, Tryon Wells, Lucky Marmon, Maureen Jeffreys, Michael Bergsman, Jeff Kamarow, Ned Goddard, Richard Bertaut, Meredith Griggs, Joseph Kildea, Judy Lentz

Club President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order.

Minutes: The January 2015 minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard reported that Montgomery County has given the club a tax credit of \$3,400 for a solid waste charge made on last July's property tax. Goddard pointed out to county officials that the club does not generate waste. What garbage we have is taken off the Island by club members. The club also received a \$100 credit for the cell phone we give to our caretaker, Joe Hage. Joe has been given a different phone.

Members' Club dues are coming in on schedule. So far, we have received \$40,000 in dues.

Membership Chairman's Report: Chairman John Noble's report was delivered by Richard Bertaut. In this

2015 dues cycle, 10 members have or will move to senior status, thus creating new openings for regular membership. He noted that six applicants would be presented at this meeting (March 11) and four will be presented at the April meeting. The waiting list will be reduced to 46 applicants. Dues payment by the 2015 deadline was good. Results from the intensive follow-up with non-payers will determine either valid inadvertent losing of membership or a decision not to continue membership. Twenty six applicants paid for passes for 2015.

Candidates presented for membership were the following: Christopher and Bettina Stern, Michael Bergsman and Maureen Jeffreys, Michael Borek and Rebecca Beynon, Joseph Kilea, John Weiner and Caroline Shiffer, Lauren Bauer. Four of the six were present, and all six were unanimously voted into membership.

Archivist Report: Archivist Karen Possner noted that she had recently received a document written in 1920 that relates to the Island. She urges members who possess other relevant documents to give them to her. Older documents that were once stored on the Island or at Tryon Wells' home are kept at the Washington Historical Society. Many of our documents such as *The Islander*, Minutes, and reports have been stored online and are available on the club's website.

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh reported that he and a small cadre of club members have been looking into a replacement option for the canoe dock. Their hope is to have a dock that is esthetically pleasing and lighter and easier to put in and take out each spring and fall. Drew wanted feedback from members about the various options he and his small group have been researching.

One option is the Candock, a Canadian product, which is made up of modular floating units or cubes that are connected at the corners. The Candock floats about two inches down in the water. Rudolfo Castro, who has helped to put out the dock in the past, stressed the importance of purchasing a dock that is lighter than our traditional wooden dock. He has forwarded information to Drew about an aluminum framed dock that can be clad with a variety of materials, including plastic. A resolution was passed authorizing the group that has been working on this issue to explore the options and decide on a dock that meets budget constraints as well as the other criteria. In the meantime, the old dock can be used.

New Business: Judy Lentz asked to permission to host a party that would celebrate her husband's life on June 6th. John Lentz was an avid canoeist and contributed greatly to the club over many years. Her request was approved unanimously.

One member of the wait list requested permission to hold a large party on the Island on June 20th. Lucky Marmon explained that in addition to having large parties approved at a monthly meeting, there is a form that needs to be filled out and certain eligibility requirements that need to be met in order to host a large party. She referred the applicant to the information on large parties on the Island website.

Jim Drew congratulated Caretaker Joe Hage on the quality and content of his blog in *The Islander*. Jim particularly enjoyed the recent quote from the Metallica song, "Trapped Under Ice," which pretty much sums up Joe's existence on the Island this winter.

David Winer has designed an attractive Sycamore Island Club logo that can be used on coffee mugs, shirts and other Island paraphernalia. Attendees authorized him to purchase 144 10 oz. mugs for \$5.40 each. These will be sold for \$10 or less at events such as the upcoming Work Fest, the summer Regatta, and the Solstice Dance.

The Work Fest is Sunday, April 12th, starting at 9:00. Bring food to share at a potluck lunch.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 8th, on the Island.

Respectfully Submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

Action Notice—Printed *Islander*

The electronic *Islander* is free and will continue to be free for all members and applicants via the web. When *The Islander* became available electronically several years ago, some member chose to continue to receive a printed copy. In order to reduce expenses, the 2015 budget provides that the printed *Islander*, May issue and thereafter, will only be available by paid subscription. Those who want a printed *Islander* must send a \$33.00 check to Allied Printing, 7420 Westlake Terrace, Apt. 1101, Bethesda, Md 20817 before April 30, 2015. Enclose your name and mailing and email addresses.

(Publisher's email: mdcobern@gmail.com) This subscription provides May 2015 through February 2016 *Islanders*. Subsequent printed subscription procedures will be announced in January 2016.

JOHN NOBLE
Membership Secretary

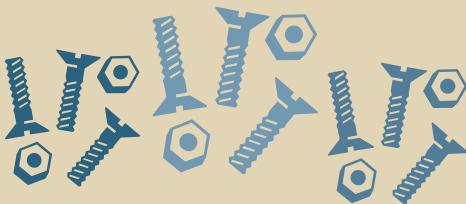
There's Something Missing from the Little Falls Gage

The U.S. Geological Survey is in the process of updating the instruments that they use to measure water quality. Joe Bell, who spoke to us about their measurements and presented us with maps at a meeting a year and a half ago, was considerate enough to let us know about their current activity. Certain measurements (nitrate, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, pH) will not appear on the website until the new equipment is fully installed and the software is updated accordingly. The discharge and height are accurate and will continue to be available.

ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM

WORKFEST

Sunday, April 12



Celebrate the end of winter and help Sycamore Island welcome the Spring! It is time to prepare our Island for the busy season, Sunday, April 12th, 9:00 a.m.

Members and those on the waiting list will descend on the Island to enjoy comradery as we work and share our potluck lunch together.

See you on the Island!



Sycamore Island mugs, available for \$10

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, March 3, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 32

The river is starting to thaw out slowly. I made it home on top of the ice yesterday but I don't want risk it today, I'm afraid I'll break through the ice.

There is rain on the way and it looks like we are in for a good old fashioned freshet. The river may go up to 8 feet by this weekend. It's not going to be a fun week but I guess it's what to expect at this time of year. We may want to start thinking of another place to have the monthly meeting.

I watched two deer run across the ice yesterday. They were on the Island and high-tailed it when they saw me coming.

Wednesday March 4, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 32

It's kind of a miserable forecast for this week, rain, snow, cold, fog, but there is some hope that Spring is on it's way. I saw my first wood duck of the year today! Wood ducks, otherwise known as Spring ducks, are the welcome, harbingers of Spring, yea baby.

Speaking of miserable weather, there is a whole lotta unpredictability going on with this half-frozen river.



JOE HAGE

The ferry is still closed of course, and there is no more canoe-sledding or ice-walking across the channel. The ice is way too thin for that.

The saving grace is that the warm rain-water is clearing a passage through the ice at the head of the Island and hopefully there will soon be enough open water to reach all the way across the channel to freedom.

I'm a little relieved that we've had some time for the river ice to thin out. It can be extremely scary and dangerous to get a flood while the river is covered with 6 inches of thick ice.

The other good news is that we're in for more cold so there won't be a ton of melting snow along with this rain, which should help minimize the chances of a flood.

I saw and heard our resident geese today. They came by the Island to see if there was any open water or any non snow-covered grass. They found neither, and their stay was very short. I expect they will be back soon,

though I'm not looking forward to their noisy territorial disputes. It's so nice and quiet when they're gone.

I took out the scope and saw gulls, lesser scaups, and common merganzers, way out across the frozen river.

Thursday, March 5, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 32

The river is going up. I don't think we're going to get 8 feet, thank goodness, but it looks like we will get about 6 feet at least. It could get ugly. Judging from the gauges upstream, most of the rain fell in the South Branch watershed. The gauge at Cumberland, on the North Branch, is actually going down, while the gauges on the South Branch are still climbing. As is the gauge further down, at Paw Paw.

The song birds are keeping me company here in the snow, but jeeze, they eat a lot of seed. You could use the bird feeder as an hour glass!

Chicadees, titmice, juncos, nuthatches, robins, cardinals, chipping sparrows, white-throated sparrows, yel-



JOE HAGE

Harbinger-of-Spring



JOE HAGE

Skunk Cabbage blossom



JOE HAGE

New members John and Lila Stiff, with daughters Dorothy and Eleanore

low-bellied woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, mourning doves, Carolina wrens, and one small racoon.

That poor racoon must be hungry. She did run away when I went out there but otherwise, she's been out there all day, digging in the snow below the bird feeder. She looks so cute with her back all covered with snow, like a little koala bear.

Friday, March 13, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 6.8 Water Temperature: 41

The ferry is closed for the weekend due to high water. I can't remember the last time we used the ferry to cross the river. I think it's been over a month!

The bird walk had to be postponed, again. I guess it won't be a winter bird walk after all, although "winter", and "bird walk" are two things that don't go easily together anyway. Maybe we can combine the bird walk with the flower walk that's coming up in April.

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 46

The river is at that annoying level. Too low to close the ferry and too high to make it easy to use the ferry. Thankfully it looks like it's starting to go down.

There is a whole lotta bird action going on. We've seen a great egret, eared, and pied-billed grebes and there

are more wood duck around than Mary and I can count. Yesterday two osprey flew over in the morning and then flew over again in the evening. These were not the feathered kind of ospreys though, these were the new billion-dollar aircraft that can fly like a plane but take off like a helicopter. I've only seen the planes fly over but once before.

There is still at least one squirrel on the Island, a black one. I think there were two squirrels that spent the winter on the Island but it's very rare to see them both together.

Tuesday, March 31, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 50

It's been a slow month but I think things are about to change. Winter hasn't yet released its grip but there are signs that Spring is about to explode onto the Island. The cormorants are arriving by the dozen and the phoebes are searching for nesting spots and the wild flowers are starting to emerge from the cold ground. Come on Spring!

I noticed that two large sycamore trees fell recently. They are right next to the trail as you walk toward The Frank Davis Grill and growing so close together that I think it made them weaker. When they fell, they didn't reach all the way to the ground and one is leaning on a big silver maple at about 45 degree and the other is at about 80 degrees with its branches speared into the ground. They did a lot of destruction to the other trees on their way down but they don't seem to be dead yet.

I received the good news from our eagle-watching neighbor up the hill, Jack Caldwell. Three young eagles in the nest this year! How were the adults eagles able to incubate those eggs through all of that snow and cold? Amazing! Thanks for the update Jack!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



Spring Wildflower Walk

John Parrish and RG Steinman will again lead this Spring's Sycamore Island wildflower walk on Saturday, April 4th, from 10:00 to 2:00. RAIN or SHINE! Bring a lunch or snack, water, and dress for the weather. Meet at 10:00 at the Mac Arthur Blvd. parking lot (across from the Sycamore Store).

We will explore our own Sycamore Island. Weather and conditions permitting, we will take the canoes out and also explore Ruppert Island, which is sure to harbor some surprises.

We hope to encounter a variety of Spring Wildflowers such as Spring Beauty, Toothworts, Dutchman's Breeches, Trout Lily, BlueBells, Trilliums, Golden Ragwort, and others. Given the wintry weather, no telling what else we might see in bloom.

Hot chocolate in the clubhouse will await the intrepid wildflower walkers.

Questions: Call 301-565-2025 or e-mail lfeonurth@gmail.com

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Saturday Relief Caretakers April/May 2015					
APRIL	10 A.M.–3 P.M.		MAY	9 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK
APRIL 4	Please volunteer!	David Holdridge	MAY 2	Richard and Alison Burns	Please volunteer!
APRIL 11	Lauren Bauer	Miriam and Alan Pemberton	MAY 9	Please volunteer!	Please volunteer!
APRIL 18	Meredith Griggs	Barry Lynn and Anya Schoolman	MAY 16	Please volunteer!	Parker and Molly Moore
APRIL 25	Jennie Rabinowitz and Dan Jamieson	Please volunteer!	MAY 23	Please volunteer!	Please volunteer!
			MAY 30	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 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 May issue is May 1.