



The Sycamore Islander

AUGUST 2015 | VOLUME 94 NUMBER 8

Sycamore Island Club
A Gathering of Members

Attendees: Richard Young, Jody Benjamin, Ned Goddard, Drew Walsh, Jim Drew, Tryon Wells, Star Mitchell, Joe Hage, and Ann Marie Cunningham.

As the heavy rain kept members from the meeting, we did not have a quorum, and so did not conduct any formal business. However, we enthusiastically discussed several items of concern. Two were sparked by the discussion last month concerning an adult child of club members, who is not a member in his own right, but

who hosted a large party on the Island.

The first of these items was brought up by Richard Young, who believes that there should be a way for the adult children of members to become members. Even if they apply to the lottery at every opportunity, it is possible that they would never become members. He would like there to be a window of opportunity for them to apply and get on the waiting list. The opportunity would expire at a certain age. Tryon Wells explained that the current definition of family was actually developed to specify who could vote, and is defined as those “living under one roof” without regard for age. Jim Drew explained that when the current system was developed, the subject of children of members was thoroughly discussed in committee and during club meetings. It was decided that the club should be open to all individuals equally, that it should not operate like an exclusive private club, so a legacy path to membership was rejected. Richard will consider the points raised during the discussion, and then write a proposal that will be published in *The Islander*. The proposal will be discussed and voted upon in subsequent meetings.

The second item was the summary of “must-know” rules mentioned at the last meeting. Jared Farber, who is on the waiting list, wrote a list of rules concerning safety, children, parties, and other details. His effort is greatly appreciated, and will be reviewed further. Tryon Wells thought it would be helpful to have a “Do You Know” article in *The Islander* regularly. This could be a means of highlighting rules, and perhaps explaining how they came to be.

Drew Walsh said that Steve Newman has resigned as the deputy captain, but will continue, on a special proj-

ect basis, to use his engineering, woodworking, and electrical skills to design and implement solutions to problems the club may face. Steve has been a great boon to the club. He was instrumental in leading the design and installation of workshop electrical; creating the new mooring for the swim float; and procuring, assembling, and launching the new canoe dock. He also conducted a safety review of the facilities and was instrumental in addressing issues that were found. We are very grateful to all that he has done for us.

Ned Goddard reported that there is a change in the manner he which he issues checks. He has begun using the bill pay service the bank offers, which will be less-expensive and less time-consuming, as regular checks can be automated and federal and state forms are coordinated. There is a seven day turnaround time on checks being issued.

Jody Benjamin reported that Avi Garbow (Anderson), Stan Fowler, John Cunningham, Rebecca Benyon (Borek), Louis Boorstin and Alyssa Stern, and Meredith Griggs served as relief caretakers. She’s especially grateful to those who braved rain and high water in service to our members.

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-Recording Secretary

To All Members with Children

Your children may never be able to become members of Sycamore Island according to the existing rules. To become a member, your child must compete against all

Sycamore Island’s

Annual Old Timers, Good Timers Potluck Lunch

Just a reminder of the potluck lunch on the Island

Wednesday, September 24th, 11:30.

Bring a dish to share. . . and also (not mandatory) sing or play a song, tell a story or joke.

Please note: you don’t have to be old or a longtime member to enjoy this event. . . just a Good Timer.

RAIN DATE October 1st

CONTACT Lucky Marmon, 301 654 7893

other applicants in a lottery and win. I have proposed an amendment to Rule 12 and which creates a window of opportunity for membership for your children. If you want to secure your children's access to the Island, please come to the September meeting and vote in favor of the amendment.

RICHARD YOUNG

Notes from the Island

Wednesday, July 8, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 80

The rope swing is fixed! Dave Winer was here before the holiday weekend to make sure that the swing was back in working order in time for the crowds last weekend. Thanks Dave. The hammock, on the other hand, has not been replaced yet, but one club member did threaten to bring one down.

The jewel weed keeps growing so I keep on cutting it back from all the trails around the Island. The kudzu is starting to show up but I'm pleased that there isn't much of it this year. I guess all my weed-pulling is starting to pay off. I've been rooting out the poison ivy also, and I'm happy to report that there isn't a whole lot of that nasty stuff on the Island either. I'm not saying that you can't get poison ivy on the Island but you would have to try pretty hard.

The river is starting to clear up so I hope that this is the week when the fishing picks up. It's been such a bad fishing year around the Island.

I was shocked to find that the ping pong table got broken. That table seems so unbreakable, but somehow the hard plastic base just snapped. How do these things happen? I guess I'll order a replacement part to fix it.

Thursday, July 9, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 80

I was hoping that the river would clear up and that the fishing would improve by this weekend but no such luck. After yesterday's rains the river has turned foul and is over four feet again.

I had to have the plumber down here on Tuesday. Nothing serious, but the ring seal on the men's room toilet needed to be replaced to keep the water from leaking onto the floor.

The Park Service's tree crew was working above the



MARY KEARNEY

ferry yesterday. I had put in a request for tree work through the Volunteer Canal Steward Program and they came the next day! I wish they had cut more but they did clear a bunch of limbs that were interfering with the ropes and cables for the ferry.

No quorum last night. I guess the rain kept them away, but we did have a meeting until about 9:30.

Monday, July 13, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6 Water Temperature: 82
Rain, Rain go away, the river's too muddy and we want to play.

This is the first July, in all my 13 years here, that the river has been above four feet for more than a day or two. Actually, we've been well above four feet for the entire month so far?!



MARY KEARNEY

It's not all bad though. I do like to watch the thunderstorms, and all this rain has kept it from getting too unbearably hot. There was one summer when we had no T-storms at all, so this is better than that.

Hopefully I can get some grass cut in between the downpours.

Friday, July 17, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8 Water Temperature: 82
Well the river finally dipped below four feet but we could still set a record for the first July when the river did not get below 3.5 feet. Just two weeks to go.

All of these ants and spiders are making me wish for winter, not a winter like the last one we had, but maybe some cold weather to slow down all these pests. The sugar ants seem to appear out of nowhere when even the slightest of food spills happens, and the spiders are ubiquitous. When we sweep and vacuum, it's more about evicting all the tiny spiders than about cleaning up the dirt. The flying insects are abundant as well and I got stung by a wasp before I realized that there was a nest next to where I was painting; so glad I wasn't up on the ladder when it happened.. There was another wasp nest in the switch box at the tool shed, but both nests were heavily sprayed with wasp-killer today. And don't forget those big, hairy wolf spiders that hang out around the docks and canoes.

But not all insects are bad. We have an abundant variety of dragonflies and butterflies, and the katydids and the yearly cicadas are making themselves known. I love hearing the summer sound of the katydid chorus filling the night air.

The grass-cutting and trail clearing are keeping me pretty busy and I found a small patch of kudzu that had to be attended to. I started the painting of the clubhouse exterior but between running the ferry and doing the grass, I haven't made much of a dent in that project yet. I did finally scrape and prime two of those old casement windows; what a joy it is to get rid of all that rust.

Sunday, July 19, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6 Water Temperature: 82
Hot! Like summer should be.

Wednesday, July 22, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 82
What a beautiful day! I was so happy last night when



MARY KEARNEY

Tiger Swallowtail on Button Bush

the humidity dropped and I was able to open the windows and turn off the AC.

The river continues to drop and we're finally getting closer to normal July river levels. Soon I'll have to dredge the silt out of the ferry channel. The river is less muddy too and I can see the ferry chains even after they dip under the surface of the water.

There is a huge oak tree that fell across the trail at the very top, near MacArthur Boulevard. We were for-

tunate though, the tree did not fall all the way to the ground and stopped falling in time to leave us plenty of room to walk under it. The 90 year-old monster fell about two weeks ago and I did see Pepco talking to a Tree Service Company but so far no action on removing that tree. There was another tree that dropped its limbs across the path but that was due to a truck slamming into it. It seems that someone lost their brakes and flew down Walhonding, straight across MacArthur



MARY KEARNEY

Marsh Mallow

and into a tree, right by the old trolley right-of-way. Luckily, for the driver, the tree was there. If he had missed it he would have ended up on the parkway. I took the hand saw up there and cleared all the oak and locust branches from the trail.

Mary took some good pictures of a big, fat mommy beaver lounging at the foot of the Island. Mary was paddling by, and this big female didn't run. It just lay there on it's back watching Mary as she clicked away. These beaver are getting way too tame.

Dave Winer just brought down his new canoe. It's a

custom, hand-made wooden canoe, 13 feet long and shiny blue with natural wood finish inside. This has to be the nicest boat on the Island right now, The Pride of the Fleet! The next runner-up in Mike Tilchen's restored Oldtown wooden canoe. That one is bright red and very shiny too.



JOE HAGE

Persimmon Tree fruit

Thursday, July 30, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 88

Summer is in full swing now and the Island is hopping, despite the occasional rain shower. The hot weather has brought the swimmers and sun worshipers out of the woodwork and now that the fishing is improving, I'm getting a lot of late afternoon bell-ringers as well. I brought out the archery set on Sunday and everyone wanted to take turns shooting arrows into the target. It was great fun, even for the grown-ups.

There are a lot of trucks and other pieces of large

machinery in the upper parking lot lately. They are still working on the water mains, and yesterday they started clearing trees from the old trolley right-of-way, where the power lines are located. No one seems too worried about the oak tree across our trail though; I guess it will be there for a while.

The geese have finished fledging their new feathers and are off somewhere else. They don't seem to hang around very long after the mulberries are gone. Most of the other nesting birds from the spring are all gone as well. We do still see osprey, green herons, great blue herons, and king birds.

Most of the nature action right now is with the late summer wildflowers. One of my favorites is the button bush with its perfectly spherical, white blossoms. No cardinal flowers yet but we do have many others, like sun flowers, marsh mallow and Joe-Pye-Weed. I just learned that Joe Pye was an herb doctor back in colonial times and that this "weed" was used to treat diarrhea with a tonic made from its roots. Another, more fitting, name for this beautiful plant is "queen-of-the-meadow".

I'm slowly getting caught up on the grass-cutting and I even managed to get some primer on the clubhouse siding. I also had to do some work on the old picnic tables. I put a bunch of screws into the table on the dock to hold it together but soon we'll need a new table out there. The other table that's rotting-out is the one up by my quarters. The other, newer tables should probably be cleaned and stained to help them last longer. I also had to sink some extra screws into the new decks on the docks, the new plywood was starting to buckle from lack of screws.

Friday, July 31, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 88

The river is down to 3.1 feet at the Little Falls gage. That's about 3,000 cubic feet per second rushing past the Island. 3,000 cfps is right at the 85-year median for this river. Though we are at the median flow right now, the rest of our July was far above it. Normal median flows for July run from 3,000 cfps to 4,000 cfps. This July ranged from 3000 cfps all the way up to 50,000 cfps!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Saturday Relief Caretakers August/September 2015					
AUGUST	9 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK	SEPTEMBER	9 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
AUGUST 1	Paul Hagen	Sara Deshler	SEPTEMBER 5	Please Volunteer	Penny Mitchell
AUGUST 8	Meredith Griggs	Mary Ellen and Peter Levine	SEPTEMBER 12	Please Volunteer	Eric Simpson
AUGUST 15	Julia and Peter Smith	Michael Petrilli	SEPTEMBER 19	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
AUGUST 22	Sara Deshler	Luca Anderlini	SEPTEMBER 26	Phoebe Hamill	Barry Lynn and Anya Schoolman
AUGUST 29	Robert and Barbara McCartney	Fred Pinkney and Pam Sommers			

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

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 September issue is August 30.

Masthead photo by Joe Hage