



The Sycamore Islander

MARCH 2016 | VOLUME 95 NUMBER 3

Minutes for the February 10th Meeting

Vicki Judson welcomed us into her home in Glen Echo for the February meeting and provided substantial and delicious food and drink.

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order sometime after 8:00 p.m., when it was determined that we had a quorum.

Attendees: Tryon Wells, Bill Marmon, Karen Possner, Jim Drew, Drew Walsh, Stan Fowler, Vici Judson, David Gustafson, Kathy Carroll, Marianne Ross, Sherry Fizdale, Kathy Carroll, and Jane Winer. Also in attendance were David Gustafson and Rodolfo Castro and Lisa Catalone, who entered the meeting as prospective new members and left it as members.

Minutes of the January 2016 meeting, as printed in *The Islander*, were approved by unanimous vote.

Membership: Bill Marmon announced the death of long-time member Charlotte Brewer in January, and noted that her obituary in *The Washington Post* suggested that those wishing to make a memorial gift con-

sider a donation to the Sycamore Island Club, among others of her favorite organizations.

In the absence of chair John Noble, copies of his written membership report were passed to the attendees. There were three resignations since the last report: in addition to Charlotte Brewer, Sara Clark, who is more often in Michigan than D.C., and George Malusky, a senior member who joined the club in 1977.

John Noble's membership notes were emailed to the editor for inclusion in *The Islander* and are as follows: "As of February 28, there were 37 applications from 40-and-overs and nine applications from 39-and-unders to be considered for the waiting list lottery. It will be conducted at the April monthly meeting. We expect there will be 25–30 vacancies in the waiting list roster."

Tryon Wells noted that when past illustrious members who resigned, such as George Malusky, a former club president and "an august figure from an earlier time," they have been honored for being a credit to the club. A motion was made and passed to add George Malusky's name to the roll of Honorary Members.

Next on the membership report was the proposal of three families for regular membership:

Rodolfo Castro and Lisa Catalone and their two children, sponsored by Dave Winer
Robin and Florin Kogelnik and their two children, sponsored by John Noble
Sharon and David Gustafson and their four children, sponsored by Andrew Umhau

Attendance: David Gustafson, and Rodolfo Castro and Lisa Catalone introduced themselves and spoke about their reasons for wanting to join. After a brief discussion, a motion was presented to admit them all, which passed in a unanimous vote.

Archive: Karen Possner reported that her appointment to deposit club records at the DC Historical Society were hijacked by the snowstorm in January. A discussion followed about why we deposit records there, why paper records, why print any newsletters at all—a topic which has been discussed many times in past and likely future meetings.

Captain's Report: Drew Walsh first expressed thanks to our Caretaker Joe Hage for taking care of the Island in the high-water event in early February that followed the January blizzard. The Little Falls gauge showed a flood level of 9.92 feet.

Old Business: Vicki Judson said that she will head up the June Solstice party efforts, depending on response to the notice she plans to submit to *The Islander*.

New Business: Drew Walsh expressed the club's thanks to Steve Newman for serving as Deputy Captain. He then proposed newly-minted member Rodolfo Castro as Deputy Captain, and this proposal was immediately met with a vote of approval.

The date of the Spring Workfest was changed to April 17, with a raindate of the 24th.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
SHERRY PETTIE FIZDALE
Substitute Recording Secretary

Potomac Watershed Cleanup

This year, on April 16th, the Alice Ferguson Foundation will be hosting the 28th Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup. Each year, thousands of volunteers from all over the Potomac Watershed come



out and help pick up trash in their local area. Last year, between Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, there was a total of 23,898 volunteers and 1,203,543 pounds of trash collected! Since the C&O Canal is a large part of the Potomac Watershed, the C&O Canal Trust is helping to organize different groups along the towpath to volunteer and help clean up the watershed. If anyone at the Sycamore Island Club is interested in participating this year, please contact Ned Goddard at MSICTreasurer@yahoo.com. Thank you, and we look forward to you participation!

NED GODDARD

Get a Fishing License

I have just come from the Bass Pro Shop and this reminded me of something. I want to encourage everyone who fishes to get a license. This may sound odd for a couple of reasons. First, fishing is so easy and convenient on our Island that you may wonder, why would I need one? Second, if you only fish a few times a year you also might wonder, why would I need one?

I'll skip the obvious legalities of the issue and just go straight to the guilt trip. The money you spend on your license supports many fishing conservation areas throughout the state. The total budget in 2015 for the Department of Natural Resources in Maryland was \$13,715,565. The money is distributed as follows: 3% Data Management and Research, 4% Education and Outreach, 4% Policy Development and Planning, 10% Customer Service, 14% Administration, 19% Reforestation, 22% Enforcement and Public Safety, and the majority of the money, 24%, goes to Conservation and Management. Simply put, your fishing license dollars helps stop people from illegal fishing, helps promote fishing, and helps the lands surrounding the fishing habitat.

So who needs a license and how much is it? I skip the major exceptions like a soldier on leave from active duty or the free fishing days in Maryland (the first 2 Saturdays in June and July 4). Anyone over age 16 needs a license. Slight exception involving the owner or tenant (Joe!) residing on property and fishing from the property's riparian shoreline. The license is \$20.50 for a non-tidal resident license. A trout stamp, which I recommend as it helps support trout stocking, and if you ever get really lucky... is \$5 extra. Seniors age 65 or over only pay \$5. So you see it's not expensive and is a great help to the fishing health around us. So go to www.dnr.maryland.gov and get a license!

With my research on this I now need to go get a Bay and Coastal license (\$15) because in checking the regulations, it says non-tidal is from Little Falls manmade dam and above. If I ever want to Shad fish at Fletcher's...

JOHN BUTLER

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 32

I'm back. It took a little bit of ice breaking in the canoe but I finally made it back to the Island yesterday evening.

Everything looks fine. It's cool to know that no other human being has been here for close to two weeks. Just birds, squirrels, and a fox or two.

The ferry is still locked in ice but most of the river is now ice-free. It is such a relief to have the snow and ice melting so gradually; sometimes, when things melt too fast, it can be hell.

Not to say that there won't be any inconvenience. The river will exceed five feet today and the river is expected to reach near flood stage on Friday, so I will have a bit of flood prep to do between now and then.

Thursday, February 4, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 8.5 Water Temperature: 38

We haven't seen the river this high in a while. Thankfully, it looks like it will crest tomorrow morning, just barely hitting flood stage at 10.2 feet. It looks like the ferry will be closed until next week some time.

I did most of the flood preparation yesterday and

Wildflower Walk

John Parrish and RG Steinman will again lead the

SYCAMORE ISLAND WILDFLOWER WALK

Sunday, April 3rd, from 10:00 to 2:00

RAIN or SHINE!

Bring a lunch or snack, water, and dress for the weather. We will be exploring the area in the vicinity of Cabin John Island near lock 7.

We will be meet at Lock 7 at 9:50 and depart at 10:00. The nearest lot is along the southbound lane of Clara Barton Parkway. The access from the parking lot to the towpath is at Lock 7. If the parking lot is full, drive to the next lot—about ½ mile father up the road. This is the parking closest to Sycamore Island. One of us will be there to meet you, and we will walk north on the towpath, about ½ mile, to Lock 7 to meet up with the rest of the group.

The winter snows will finally have given way to the Spring Wildflowers, and we hope to encounter such delights as Spring Beauty, Toothworts, Dutchman's Breeches, Trout Lily, Bloodroot, Golden Ragwort and maybe even Golden Alexanders and TwinLeaf.



the day before but right now I'm heading out to tie down the last of the boats and canoes.

Friday, February 5, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 9.92 Water Temperature: 38

The river just crested, yea! I'm so relieved that the river is on its way back down and that it didn't get too high or cause too much damage.

Most of the Island is under water but you can still walk from the rope swing to the zip-line on dry land. There is a small sliver of snow-covered land extending along the canoe shed where the zip-line ends; there is water in the canoe shed but just barely.

For whatever reason, this flood did not include a lot of trash and forest debris. Normally I would expect a lot of fallen trees to be bouncing down the river but not this time. The big trees make me worry the most; I'm always afraid that they will get hung up on the ferry rope and pull it down.

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.8 Water Temperature: 40

The ferry is still closed and it looks like it might not open again until the weekend.

I've been using the canoe to come and go while the river is high and it got me to thinking about when Davy Hearn was arrested back in '96 for doing just that, paddling on a flooded river. (NPS vs. David Hearn) Of course, I'm not battling any big waves and whitewater, but I started to wonder about the legality of my commute. I also started to wonder about the legality of crossing through the national park when it is officially closed like it was during the snow storm.

Thankfully I have the law firm of Longman and Van Grack (Adam Van Grack is a member of this Club) to answer my question.

The charges against Davy Hearn were all dropped because Maryland has no laws regarding high-water paddling of the Potomac River (or any other river). Thus, NPS cannot fine/arrest any individual for high-water use of the Potomac River (or any other Maryland-controlled river). This fact is true even though NPS is permitted to fine/arrest individuals for entering C&O Canal National Historic Park when NPS closes certain park areas for safety reasons (such as high water).

So, I was safe once I was on the river but I could have been arrested for cutting through the National

Park while it was closed during the snow and the flooding. I surely hope that the enforcement of these closings remains low. Maybe they could make an exception in my case?

Friday, February 12, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9 Water Temperature: 36

Finally, after over three weeks of being closed, the ferry is open again!

Now I have to get out there in the cold and string the bell rope across the river and set up the pull rope. It'll be nice to have the ferry working again.

Very cold weather is predicted for Sunday but my hope is that it will be too windy for the river to re-freeze. I have my fingers crossed.

Happy Birthday to Abraham Lincoln! I wonder if he ever strolled past the Island or maybe he floated past in a canal boat one summer's day.

Monday, February 15, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 33

Nobody here at all on Saturday but there was one person that visited on Sunday. Winter duldrums.

The snow is nice and so pretty but be aware there is potential for some minor flooding by the end of the week.

We saw the white flash of a cottontail rabbit on Friday. I'm surprised that there is still a rabbit on the Island.

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 33

It's pretty yucky out there right now, cold, rainy and icy. I'm glad we did our cross-country skiing on the towpath yesterday before all the snow disappears today.

It looks like the ferry may close as soon as tomorrow afternoon. Suddenly I find myself wishing for spring.

We're expecting the resident geese to start staking out their nesting spots soon, but so far there have been no territorial ruckuses.

I'm not too happy about the rain but I've been waiting for a good rain to test the roof patching that I did. The small leak near the pool table has been an elusive problem to solve, but I think my last attempt with the roof caulk was finally successful. I'm so happy to report that I must have pin-pointed the problem and that the floor in the clubhouse is nice and dry.



Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.6 Water Temperature: 33

The ferry is closed and it looks like it may be closed through the weekend. Too bad I didn't get the trash out and bring down some groceries while the ferry was operating.

Monday, February 22, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.7 Water Temperature: 42

The ferry is closed for now but it's hard to tell what the river is going to do next. Lately, our local river gauge has looked like a roller-coaster ride, up and down and then up again.

"Waves of rain" is the catch phrase that was used to describe the weather tomorrow. I guess the roller coaster is going to go up. It's a saturation situation.

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.8 Water Temperature: 43

The river might be a little high by Friday but nothing

like the Friday of two weeks ago. That minor flood was high enough to be recorded on our "recent floods" river gauge here by the boardwalk, 9.92 feet!

I forgot to mention George Washington yesterday, in honor of his birthday. We all know that old George passed by here all the time so it's pretty certain that the Father of the Country slept here on Sycamore Island.

There have been a lot of winter waterfowl around this week, which reminds me that the 8th Annual Sycamore Island Bird Walk was last Saturday (sorry Paul). With all of this high water and ferry closings, it totally slipped my mind. Hopefully some people got together to look at the birds, even if there was no access to the Island.

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 7.3 Water Temperature: 44

Wow, that was some strong storm that passed through here yesterday evening. I was on the screen porch enjoying the weird and balmy 63-degree weather. The



JOE HAGE

rain had started and I wanted to watch the storm as it approached. Soon it turned really dark, dark as pitch, and the white-caps were blowing upstream across the river.

The rain got heavier and then, all of the sudden, a huge gust of wind came across the Island. Everything on the porch took flight and the ferry bell started ringing wildly as the tree limb and branches started sailing everywhere outside. I could hear sheet metal and buckets being blow around and I instinctively dove for cover. Then the rain got serious and our country gutters looked like fire hoses gushing from the roof; wow!

The storm subsided and the Island isn't too worse for wear, but I can tell you anecdotally that the weather patterns have changed since I moved here. Not only is it weird to get a thunderstorm in February but many of the recent storms have come from the south or southeast, where before most storms came out of the west or north west. The screen porch used to be a nice sheltered place to store things but this last rain soaked

everything. During our last snowstorm the screen porch had a layer of snow on the inside!

Whenever we have a hard rain like this I go out to look for arrowheads in the newly eroded spots. While I was out there I noticed that the erosion is getting pretty severe over near the rope swing. It's getting bad enough so that now the pipe to the septic tank is becoming unburied.

Monday, February 29, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.6 Water Temperature: 44

The ferry is closed and it looks like another week of crossing in the canoe. It's beginning to get lonely out here. It's kind of nice not having to listen for the ferry bell but monitoring this fluctuating river seems to require just as much attention

I fixed the gutter that was damaged by the heavy snowfall last month. The work was pretty straight-forward but took longer than I thought it would. I had to do a little carpentry from on top of the tall ladder to



JOE HAGE

rehang the gutter support and then I had to drill and rivet the new gutter extension to the existing gutter. Then I caulked it all up real tight. I was going to have to buy a new rivet gun to do the job, since I couldn't find mine, but our nice friends at Glen Echo Hardware let me borrow one of their personal rivet guns and thus saved the club \$25! Thanks Steve, we owe you.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



Sycamore Island mugs, available for \$10

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 Madeleine Carter, madeleinecarter@gmail.com.

Saturday Relief Caretakers March/April 2016					
MARCH	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK	APRIL	10 A.M.–3 P.M.	3 P.M.–DUSK
MARCH 5	Avi Garbow	Eric and Amy Aaserud	APRIL 2	Please volunteer!	Please volunteer!
MARCH 12	Meredith Griggs	Jim Drew	APRIL 9	Please volunteer!	Story and Josiah Jones
MARCH 19	Rachel Rudy and Nat Reid	Mary Ellen and Peter Levine	APRIL 16	Please volunteer!	Please volunteer!
MARCH 26	John Cunningham	Please volunteer!	APRIL 23	Please volunteer!	Please volunteer!
			APRIL 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 April issue is March 31st.