



The Sycamore Islander

APRIL 2016 | VOLUME 95 NUMBER 4

Minutes for the March 9th Meeting

Attendees: Lucky Marmon, Bill Marmon, Suzette Risachek, Joe Hage, Tryon Wells, John Membrino, Jared Farber, John Noble, Gerry Barton, Marianne Ross, Jim Drew, Sherry Fizdale, Ann Marie Cunningham, Ned Goddard, Drew Walsh, Sarah Fraidin

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order.
The February Minutes were unanimously approved

Membership Report: Attendees welcomed and elected to membership Sarah Faidin and Stephen Roggie, along with their three children. The family has been using the club as waiterlisters and are enthusiastic about finally becoming members.

Julia Strasser requested by letter an extension of her family's waitlist status due to "extraordinary" circumstances." Members voted 9 to 1 to allow a one-year deferral from the date of the decision.

Waitlisters Nichole Fraser and Harley Feldbaum have come to the top of the Waitlist, but are on assignment in Geneva. They propose to pay their dues and apply for inactive status until their return. Gerry Barton and Bill Marmon volunteered to act as their sponsors in absentia and communicate with them via email.

The youngest applicant for the 2016 membership lottery is 10-years-old. He was advised that his parents must be the applicants.

Relief Caretaker's Report: Madeleine Carter has taken over for Jodi Benjamin, who did a wonderful job scheduling relief caretakers for the past several years. This is certainly one of the most important jobs. Thanks for stepping up to the plate, Madeleine.

And thanks to the following who served as relief caretakers during February: Joe and Tammy Belden, Ned Goddard, Lisa Hemmer, and Eric Simpson. We couldn't do without you.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard reported that the club's finances are solid at this time of the year, due to the annual influx of member dues, waitlist fees, rentals, etc. He will have a more detailed report at the next meeting after discussing the 2016 income report with Financial Secretary Lisa Kleifroth.

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh announced that the Spring Workfest is Sunday, April 17th, starting at 9:00 a.m. The raindate is Sunday, April 24th. If anyone has a specific task he/she would like to do or see done, please contact Caretaker Joe Hage.

Gerry Barton pointed out several areas on the Island where there are serious drainage problems and said that a discussion of how they might be resolved is ongoing. Three windows in the caretaker's apartment need replacing. There is a sink hole which will require some professional engineering input to remedy.

Old Business: None

New Business: Long-time Sycamore Island Club member, Charlotte Brewer, passed away in February. She was an enthusiastic participant in Sycamore Island activities and an avid environmentalist. She had left instructions that her friends not commemorate her life with flowers, but with donations to various organizations, one of which was Sycamore Island.

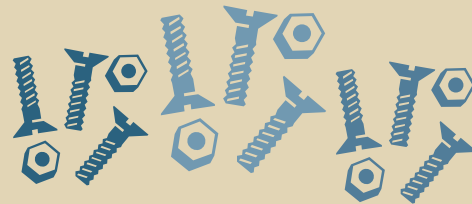
Jim Drew reported that he had taken advantage of the unseasonably warm and sunny weather to visit Rupert's Island. It was a "magical experience," he said, "very beautiful, and no poison ivy."

Sherry Fitzdale has observed that members' adolescent children, who visit the Island unchaperoned, often throw caution to the wind and take few or no safety precautions while on the water. She has seen some of them paddling canoes while standing up and wearing no life vests. Her observations prompted a discussion of how best to enforce the club's safety rules. Several suggestions: a special event or Safety Day, reporting those indulging in unsafe behavior to the club president. Bill Marmon noted that it is every member's responsibility to enforce the club's safety rules. If you see something, say something. Don't hesitate to speak up.

Potomac Watershed Clean-up: Ned Goddard announced that this event is scheduled for April 16th. Just show up at 11a.m. at the ferry and help fill garbage bags of trash on the Island, above and below on the tow-path, and path to MacArthur Boulevard. As a precaution, make sure to wear gloves. All are welcome; please email Ned at MSICTreasurer@yahoo.com if you plan to come.

WORKFEST

Sunday, April 17th



Celebrate the end of winter and help Sycamore Island welcome the Spring! It is time to prepare our Island for the busy season so join us on Sunday, April 12th, starting at 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!

Green Energy for the club: Ned Goddard introduced waitlister Jared Farber of Ethical Electric, who proposed a plan for the club to switch from coal-generated power (dirty energy) to wind-and solar-generated power (clean-sourced energy), and thereby reduce the club's carbon footprint. Since 2012, all consumers and businesses in Maryland have a choice of energy providers. Ethical Electric is a mission-based, for-profit company that has a small budget set aside for non-profits. The company buys green/clean energy from regionally sourced solar and wind energy providers. Pepco transmits power to customers along its transmission lines, but generates electricity from coal-fired sources. The proposal would retain PEPCO's transmission services, but the club would contract with Ethical Electric for clean/green energy generation services. The cost of switching to clean power would increase the club's electricity cost by an estimated \$300–\$600, based on last year's bills, as green energy is currently more expensive than dirtier sources like coal. Ethical Electrical is willing to make a donation of "energy credits" for the club to offset the increased cost of green energy for the club's electric bill. No change in hardware would be involved, and Ethical Electric would handle the paperwork involved in switching. A proposal to try the clean energy program for one year was accepted by a vote of 9 to 2. Thank you Ethical Energy.

The next meeting: Wednesday, April 13th, on the Island at 8:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-recording Secretary

Sycamore Island Wildflower Walk, April 3rd, 2016

The winds and cold weather did not discourage seven hardy and intrepid wildflower walkers—Renee and George Dunham, Kathy Carroll, Jody Benjamin, and Barbara McCartney, and the hike leaders, John Parrish and RG Steinman. Fortunately we did have mostly blue skies to warm us up.

We had long wanted to visit Chautauqua Island, the southernmost island in the Cabin John complex. This island is seldom visited since it is usually isolated by water in the channel thus making it less accessible to



RG STEINMAN

Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*)

traffic. But during this unusually dry season, the channel was easily passable. Since the group was small enough to avoid trampling the Island's dense vegetation, we decided to explore Chautauqua.

We were rewarded with a bountiful and relatively invasive-free display of wildflowers—exceptional Bluebell vistas, large colonies of the uncommon Blue Cohosh, Twin Leaf (though they were past bloom), and Golden Alexanders. Other bloomers we saw included Toadshade Trillium, Golden Ragwort, Wild Ginger, Wild Blue Phlox, and Spring Beauties. The extensive expanses of May Apples, just about to bloom, were lovely to see, as were the patches of the delicate Brittle Fern and the newly emerging Black Cohosh (different family than the Blue Cohosh). After lunching on the sunny southern end of Chautauqua island, we continued on with a stroll on Cabin John Island, where the Toothworts and Dutchman's Breeches and Squirrel Corn were all abloom!

We are already thinking about next year's walk, which is sure to include some botanical rarities!

RG STEINMAN and JOHN PARRISH



Bluebell vista from southern end of Chautauqua Island



White Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

RG STEINMAN

wildflowers



Trillium (*Trillium Sessile*)

RG STEINMAN

MARY KEARNEY



Cutleaf Toothwort (*Dentaria laciniata*)

MARY KEARNEY



Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

MARY KEARNEY



Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*)

MARY KEARNEY



Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum*)

Notes from the Island

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9 Water Temperature: 44

The ferry is actually going to open today! Between the ice and the flooding, the ferry has been shut down for over a month, basically since January 20th!

Yesterday must have been geese migration day. I counted more than three hundred Canada geese flying high over the Island, heading directly north.

There have been some other encouraging signs that Spring is on the way. The tiny bluebells are beginning to push through muddy ground and I saw my first wood ducks and cormorants this week. It's hard to imagine right now, but in about a month the Island will be covered in bluebells and the trees will be full of budding leaves.

It's been quiet down here but I've been keeping busy. I've been working hard at eradicating some early invasive weeds and vines. The last flood brought a lot of trash with it so that's been a job. The storms littered the Island with sticks and branches, so I've been doing a bit of raking too. There were a couple of days that were even warm enough to do some exterior painting.

Monday, March 7, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 44

Well it looks like it's safe to open the valves and send the water over to the clubhouse kitchen and bathrooms. They say it's going to be 70 degrees this week, so I guess the danger of the pipes freezing has passed.

Spring is coming! The red-winged blackbirds have arrived and I saw a bluebird too. The spring beauties are blooming near the screen porch and the trees are starting to bud. It's almost time to go down to Fletcher's Boathouse and do some shad fishing!

I want to tell everyone about the great work of our local environmental group, The Little Falls Watershed Alliance. I attended their annual meeting yesterday and I was very impressed with all that they have accomplished. I urge all of you Sycamorians to check out their web site and to help them to improve the health of our local streams. LFWA.org.

Thursday, March 10, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 52

The weather is warm but remember that no one is to use the club canoes when the river temperature is

below 55. I think that by the end of today the water in the river will be warm enough to use the club canoes.

I took down the insulating walls in the men's room so things are getting back to normal now. I also installed a new cabinet bottom to the cabinet under the club kitchen sink. The old one was sagging from water damage. I still need to redo the shower head in the outside shower.

At the club meeting last night there was a proposal to shift to clean energy and to get all of our power from wind and solar. I don't have all of the details right now but I think this is a great idea that fits in well with the mission of the club.

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 52

It's getting very busy down here and I don't mean members and guests on the ferry. What I'm referring to is the incredible explosion of animal and bird activity that is taking place.

The frogs are singing their chorus in the canal. The geese are laying their eggs, and the air is filled with birdsong. Blackbirds, cardinals, wrens and bluebirds, all making their voices heard. The squirrels are busy and there have been some sightings of those elusive creatures. We hear the owls at night, and we see the hawks soaring during the day. The cormorants have arrived and taken their place on top of the rocks in the middle of the river. The most exciting animal news of all is that Mary saw another fox on the Island! This one was seen in broad daylight so Mary could easily identify it as a red fox.

It's cool to think of a fox sniffing around the Island looking for rodents, but how did it get here and how



JOE HAGE



JOE HAGE

long has it been around? Is it still here or did it swim away last night? Mysterious.

So far there is only one goose nest with eggs in it. There are definitely fewer nesting geese on the Island this year. The number of nests has been declining over the years and now we're down to one, maybe two. The saddest thing to see was a lone goose sitting near the bank, seemingly waiting for a partner that would never show up to mate. I guess our resident geese are reaching the point where they can no longer reproduce. There are other nests up on Ruppert's, I'm sure, but this might be the end of the era of geese nesting on Sycamore Island.

Speaking of goose nests, I was walking by our one successful nest when I noticed that there was one freshly-laid egg sitting about six feet from the nest. It looked like it had been laid a little off target and rolled down the slope away from the nest. I risked being attacked by the protective parents but I reached down and placed the stray egg very close to the sitting hen. I didn't know what might happen so I was kind of sur-

prised when the mother goose immediately got up and walked over to the egg and proceeded to slowly push it back into the nest. Incredible.

In the old days I might have used that egg for a nice big one-egg omelet.

Monday, March 28, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9 Water Temperature: 56

The bluebells and redbuds are reaching their peak. I predict that the bluebells will peak on April 4th. Maybe a little earlier than years past but just in time for the flower walk that is on Sunday April 3rd.

We have a total of two goose nests on the Island so far. There is one more pair around the Island that has yet to build a nest; we'll see.

I bought a new answering machine for the club. The old one wore out and made a terrible humming noise when you tried to leave a message.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

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Trillium (Trillium Sessile)

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 April 29.

Masthead photo of rare white Trout Lilies by Joe Hage