



The Sycamore Islander

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Another Friendly Gathering, July 13th

For the second month in a row, a quorum was not reached, so there was no official business conducted. However, our Vice President Richard Bertaut led us in a friendly discussion of Island matters as we sat on the deck, munched shortbread cookies, and watched the sunset.

Attendees: Meredith Griggs, Karen Possner, John Noble, Tom Umhau, Jim Drew, Bill Marmon, Cindy Bertaut, Richard Bertaut, Sally Strain, Jerry Barton, and Ann Marie Cunningham.

Membership Report: It was very unfortunate that there was not a quorum, because John Noble introduced Tom Umhau, who has reached the top of the waiting list and would have been considered for membership. Please come to the August meeting so that he will be able to join the club before the summer is over. John also reported that Linda and Gordon Phillips are moving to new Hampshire, and will change their membership status to inactive. He expects one more vacancy next month, and so Benjamin Robinson and Deborah Rosenbluth may be nominated to membership. The roster of members and wait list applicants will be distributed with the next *Islander*.

Relief Caretaker Scheduler's Report: Madeleine Carter reported by email on the wonderful volunteers who served as relief caretakers in the last month. Meredith Griggs, Chris Maggio and Liza Karlin (twice!), Topaz Terry (also twice!), Story Jones, Andy Malmgren, Mike Savage, David Lyles, and Avi Garbow drew the ferry across so that we all could enjoy the Island. She still needs volunteers in August so email her at madeleinecarter@gmail.com.

Old Business: Archivist Karen Possner researched services and secured competing bids to scan the two patents (deeds) for Sycamore (known at that time as Barry) and Rupperts Islands. Dodge Chrome, which was recommended by the D.C. Historical Society, has been selected. The large patents will be scanned and printed on quality paper. The printed versions will be framed and hung in the clubhouse in the near future.

Captain's Report: Richard reported for Captain Drew Walsh that the painting on the west side of the building

is being completed. Richard, Joe, and Drew are working on the junction boxes on the trail so that we will again have lights when we walk up the hill after a meeting. A canoe pole has been installed on the downriver side of the canoe float. Sally Strain said that the ground next to the steps from the towpath down to the ferry is bare of grass, and is concerned that it may erode. The area has been used to chain bikes. Might a wooden platform be constructed? Since some screens are in bad shape, a project to install new screen doors and windows is on the list of upcoming projects. As this is insect season, some thought the work should be done now. Sally volunteered to talk to Tove Elfstrom about the work.

Jerry Barton has made contact with the Corps of Engineers about the condition of the signs and buoys that are intended to warn of the dam. Two of the signs are gone, and the remaining two are broken and hidden by trees. Most of the buoys are gone. The Corps has indicated that it will address the situation.

At this time, there is no date for a fishing derby, canoe classes, good-timers lunch, or regatta.

Jerry Barton said that he, George Malusky, and Star Mitchell helped with the 60th annual Potomac Downriver Race. The race was started by Sycamore Island, and later, the Canoe Cruisers Association ran it. CCA dedicated its 2016 Roster and Handbook to Star this spring because of the many years she organized the race and volunteered in so many other capacities.

The next meeting will be held at 8:00 on August 10, on the Island. Please be there!

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-Recording Secretary

Canoe Cruisers Dedicates Roster and Handbook to Star Mitchell

The Canoe Cruisers Association dedicated the its 2016 Roster and Handbook, 60th Anniversary Edition, to one of our members. Star Mitchell has been a dynamic member of the Sycamore Island Club for 40 years and a great advocate for the river and kayaking. This dedication is reprinted with approval of the author and the CCA.

The Potomac Downriver Race was dwindling like the shad in late June when Star Mitchell revived it under



JOE HAGE

Topaz Terry takes relief caretaking to a whole new level

CCA direction in 2004, during the 49th year of its run. “Wouldn’t it be nice if all sporting events in the region got the same attention as the Washington Redskins” she told the Washington Post a few years later, not the first time the eminently quotable Tennessean helped keep the CCA in the public eye. With a teacher’s instinct for leadership and a name you only need to hear once, Star has been a force of nature within the club for over four decades, leading countless paddling trips including the uniquely DC “Fourth of July Fireworks From The Potomac River.” When Fletcher’s Boathouse added kayaks to the longstanding Introduction to Paddling sessions in 2007—boosting attendance from an average of six to over 50 people every Tuesday evening—she led several dozen often rowdy students through paddling techniques and safety procedures, and made sure they had a good time doing it, with rarely a swim and with no more of a prop than a joker’s hat. From organizing races, to paddling picnics out on

Sycamore Island, to service on the board, there is not a club need that has gone unfilled if Star knew that the need was there. No matter what she touched, the emphasis was equally on safety and on fun, and with some good fried chicken, ice cream—solid on 90-degree days—and even some genuine racing medals. But for many it is her big heart and her values off the water for which she is most warmly known, for paddlers, like regular people, also go through tough times like illness and accidents and family tragedy. And it is then that Star Mitchell shows how a club really works, parting the waters faster than Cecil B. DeMille to bring help to those in need.

It is with deep appreciation for decades of her membership and her service that the 2016 issue of the CCA Roster is dedicated V. Star Mitchell.

JANICE WOLF



JOE HAGE

Storm clouds

Notes from the Island

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 85

It's those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, and Sycamore Island is the place to enjoy them! It's been another predictably hot and steamy July down here in Island land, but it's been a lot of fun as well! The river level dropped below three feet, making it easy to run the ferry, and the clear water makes the river so inviting for swimming. Some people complained that the water was too warm, but I don't mind the 90-degree water, too warm is better than too cold if you ask me. The warm clear water seems to be helping the fishing too, and I finally caught my first bass of the year from the Island.

Speaking of fish, there was a very large blue catfish caught from the captain's float this month. It happened so effortlessly that it was almost as if it had been staged. One of our new waitlist members had heard at

his orientation that it was possible to catch catfish off of the dock on the Island. So, on his first visit to the Island, he tossed in his fishing line and just like that, he caught a twenty-pound catfish. We aim to please.

It's been great seeing many of our new waitlist members coming down recently. They really seem to be enjoying the Island experience and I'm glad to see them all getting familiar with the club, and this great river. Sometimes July can be a relatively slow month, with many people going out of town on vacations, but not so much this year. Despite the fact that it feel like a tropical jungle down here, Sycamore Island is now becoming the favorite destination for many of our members, from teens and youngsters enjoying their freedom from school, to older folks having a "staycation."

Not to go against the trend here but I took a vacation away from the Island this month and I went to the beach. Mary and I are not big on sitting on the beach so it's been years since we took a vacation to the shore in July. It was



Twenty pound catfish caught off the captain's dock

hot, windy and sandy but it was a blast hanging out on the beach with most of my 12 siblings, parents, kids, in-laws and nieces and nephews. It was funny, even though I was all the way over in Delaware, I couldn't escape Sycamore Island. When I was walking out of the water in Dewey Beach one day, I ran into club member Carl Kosok and his daughter and son in-law. Then later, after I got back on the Island, another member, Garth Ross, said he saw my van, with canoes on top, cruising through Bethany Beach on Rt 1. So funny.

The warm weather hasn't kept us from our chores and it's been a full-time job keeping the grass cut and the walking trails clear. I also had to rebuild part of the kayak rack and I had to build a new bench for the ferry, the old one wore out and people were asking about it. When I first installed a bench on the ferry it seemed like such a luxury item, but now everyone is so used to it that they can't imagine the ferry without it.

I had to do some river dredging as well. Every year the sediment builds up at the ferry dock and every year when the river gets this low I have to stand out in the river and dig out the sediment. This year was especially bad and I was afraid that we might have to extend the dock a few feet in order for the ferry to reach the Island, but then we got three inches of rain and the problem went away.

July is also the time for thunderstorms, and near the end of the month we got some doozies. The storms are a welcome relief from the humidity but they make the river all muddy and the high water makes it more difficult to run the ferry. One storm had so much rain that it over burdened my gutters and soaked my floors.



Lilies blooming on the Island

Another storm caused a giant branch to break and fall directly onto our ferry cable and snapped the back-up cable that holds the ferry. It's never a good thing to wake up after a storm and see that the river is dirty brown and full of litter and that your ferry cable is dangling in the water.

It was a little nerve wracking to use the ferry without any back-up chains attached, but with the help of Gerry Barton, I was able to fix the broken cable and reattach it to the utility pole on the mainland.

Gerry also single-handedly tracked down an official from the Army Corp of Engineers and brought him down to the Island. He was concerned that the warning signs for the dam had fallen into such disrepair that anyone floating past the Island would not realize that there was a dangerous dam ahead. The Army Corp guy agreed with Gerry and it looks like we may get a few new warning buoys in the river and some new warning signs along the banks. Thanks Gerry!

July may be hot but the forest canopy is at its fullest, the summer flowers are at their peak, and the katydids are comforting us with their night time chorus. It's hard to imagine now, but soon the signs of autumn will be trickling in and another summer will be behind us.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



SHERRY PETTIE FIZDALE



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Labor Day Regatta

On the island - Waitlisters and Guests are welcome!



Monday, September 5th 1:30pm - 6pm

2 - 4 pm - Games and Races for all ages

5 pm - Dinner and Awards:

Burgers/dogs & fixin's provided by the island

Bring a salad or dessert to share if you can

Any questions contact Mia Holland holland.mia@gmail.com

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL



SHERRY PETTIE FIZDALE

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 31.

Masthead photo by Sherry Pettie Fizdale