

The Sycamore Islander

July 2017 | Volume 96 Number 7



Photos by Joe Hage (with daughters Kelsey and Kaylen on Fathers' Day)

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Dates to Remember

July 12: Next Club Meeting, 8 pm at Clubhouse (Potluck before weather permitting)

July 23: Islander Deadline (send contributions to markdfriedrichs@gmail.com)

August 9: August Club Meeting

August 26: Fishing Derby

Large Parties

July 9: John & Diane Noble are hosting about 20 people from 2-6:30

July 10: Maya Lodish is hosting her book club of about 12 people during the evening

Relief Caretakers' Schedule

Contact Madeleine Carter at madeleinepcarter@gmail.com to volunteer

JULY

July 1

9 am – dark: Margaret Barry

July 8

9 am – 3 pm: Kevin Haley
3 pm – dark: Elizabeth Taylor

July 15

9 am – 3 pm: Hayley Holdridge
3 pm – dark: Alissa Stern & Louis Boorstin

July 22

9 am – 3 pm: Meredith Griggs
3 pm – dark: Catherine Grothus

July 29

9 am – 3 pm: Kim & Dirk Suringa
3 pm – dark: Julie Saulnier & Mark Friedrichs

AUGUST

August 5

9 am – 3 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
3 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

August 12

9 am – 3 pm: Meredith Griggs
3 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

August 19

9 am – 3 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
3 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

August 26

9 am – 3 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
3 pm – dark: Chris Maggio
& Elizabeth Karlin

Editor's Note: The Future of The Sycamore Islander?

I have volunteered to be the new editor. I recently retired from the US Department of Energy and our family (Mark Friedrichs (me), Julie Saulnier, and 26-year-old twins Matt and Melanie) have enjoyed spending time on Sycamore Island for many years, either as members or guests.

The Islander currently provides all members with a monthly update on the club, including key upcoming meetings or events, the Relief Caretaker schedule, the Caretakers Log, and minutes of the most recent club meeting. Some newsletters include articles on significant Island happenings, like last month's report on the 62nd Downriver Race, or on topics likely to be of interest to a substantial number of club members. In the past, the Islander seems to have included more of these articles, authored by various club members – or others.

I would like to hear your ideas on how to make the newsletter even more useful to club members. As I am learning, The Sycamore Islander has a VERY long history and many members who have previously contributed to or served as editor of the newsletter over the years. I have talked to or heard from a few members already and but look forward to communicating with many others over coming weeks and months.

Based on my initial conversations, I think it might be helpful to add more content to The Islander that touches regularly on the different interests of club members. Some of the topic areas that I am considering trying to touch on regularly include:

- Canoeing, kayaking and possibly other boating (both local and regional)
- C&O Canal and other local park activities and developments
- Natural environment on or near the Island (birds, fish, flowers, trees, wildlife, etc)
- Island and other local history (possibly excerpts from old Islanders)
- Youth-oriented outdoor activities

Do these topics cover the main shared interests of club members? Should I add others (or focus on fewer)?keeping in mind that I will be relying mainly on club members to provide the content for these entries.

I am hoping that the regular entries that touch on such topics will both tell short stories of general interest AND provide information (and links) that help club members that are interested in learning more.

Please provide me with your thoughts about how I might try to make The Sycamore Islander even more interesting and helpful to members of the club. I would especially like to know whether you have a particular interest in one or more of the identified topic areas and might be willing to provide relevant content (text and photos) on a semi-regular basis! Please send me an email at mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com or give me a call at 301-320-9030. Thanks!

Mark

CARETAKER'S LOG



The wild side of Sycamore Island, by Kerri and Joe

Friday -- June 2, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9 Water Temperature: 68

The ferry is open. Yea!

The poison hemlock is growing well this year and we had several large plants that were flowering here on the Island. I knew they were a neurotoxin and that all parts of the plant could kill you if you ate them, but I never bothered to eradicate them until now. I saw something on facebook that made me worry that a child could accidentally become poisoned simply by picking the flowers and getting the residue on their hands and into the mouth. I carefully removed the four-foot plants that were growing near the captain's float, just in case. After all these year of weed whacking, it's a miracle I didn't get poisoned.

Sunday -- June 4, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 72

Reminder about the Club's rule. There is no trash pick-up on the Island. You must take all of your trash with you! There is no longer a courtesy trash can in the kitchen. Please use trash bags provided and take all of your trash with you. Don't leave your trash for someone else to carry up the hill!

Also, we had a problem with some high school sophomores staying out in canoes until after dark yesterday. We love having your kids down here but please, be sure that they are aware of all of the rules. Thanks.

Wednesday -- June 7, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8 Water Temperature: 72

The river is going down and warming up, and it is slowly clearing up too, so maybe some bass fishing this weekend!

Speaking of bass, I caught a nine-inch bass on Sunday with my bare hands. I was pulling the ferry toward the Island when I saw a fish near the surface of the water. It wasn't dead but it seemed to be in distress. I pulled the ferry up close and reached down to grab it. That's when I noticed what was wrong with the fish. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that there was another, smaller fish wedged, head first, in the bass's mouth. The smaller fish was too big for the bass to swallow and it's barbed fins prevented the bigger fish from spitting it out. So

basically, the bass was suffocating from having his would-be meal stuck in its gills. I did my best to try and pull the small sunfish out of the basses mouth and eventually I separated the two. The little sunny was obviously dead but the bass seemed to have a little life left in it. I thought about eating it but it was a little small so we put it back in the river and hoped that it would revive itself.

The fish sort of floated toward the muddy shore of the Island with one tiny side fin flapping. I went to tell Mary about the drama and she came back with me to see how the fish was doing. That's when we saw something else that we couldn't believe. In the short time that I was gone, a northern water snake had come along and was now trying to swallow the bass! I did not think that the snake had a chance at swallowing a fish that was at least four times as wide as it was, but for thirty minutes that snake sat on the shore and slowly stretched its body and consumed that entire fish! Unbelievable!

Saturday -- June 10, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6 Water Temperature: 72

The lawn mower has broken again. I'm not too thrilled with this machine. Last year I replaced the cable and belt and it looks like the same problem is back this year. Back to the drawing board. I hope the grass doesn't grow too much while I'm fixing it.

I had to reinstall the sink in the men's bathroom. It was very poorly installed during the renovation and it was slowly leaking out of the drain. I had to take the whole thing apart and recaulk the seal in the bowl. Seems OK now.

The mulberries are ripe and that means that every morning the young geese are here with their parents, earnestly gobbling them up. The turtles in the channel are enjoying the berries too and it's rare if a mulberry manages to float as far as the ferry before a turtle grabs it from below. It's funny though, I only see the turtles in the morning when its sunny in the channel. Once the shade hits, they head to the other side of the Island.

I ran across two deer by the canoe dock the other day. I could tell that one was a male because he already had some small antlers growing out of his head. There also seems to be a fox on the Island. I'm guessing that it's a grey fox. We've seen its tracks in the mud and I think the fox is responsible for the mysterious holes dug along the trail at the bottom of the Island. My guess is that the fox is digging up the voles for dinner.

Tuesday -- June 13, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 80

The Island is hopping! All day Saturday and Sunday and even yesterday, there has been a steady stream of bell-ringers. Can't say that I blame them, the weather is hot and the river is cool. It just make it hard to get anything done around here. I did, however, manage to launch the swim float.

BTW, some of the comments that I have heard from new members and waitlisters make me think that we need to emphasize more that this is a volunteer club. I'm the caretaker, but I can't take care of everything by myself.

I saw a chipmunk on the Island on Sunday. I'm pretty certain that I've never seen a chipmunk on Sycamore Island before. Makes you wonder how it got here. Maybe a hawk dropped it by

accident.

The humming birds are regular visitors to the feeders now, so cool. We also see the prothonotary warblers regularly. It's great to have them here nesting on the Island but it may be coming to an end. I saw that the young prothonotaries have already left the nest.

Wednesday -- June 14, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3 Water Temperature: 84

Three cheers for Club member Jody B. for painting all of the exterior doors of the Clubhouse!! Jody started her project during the Spring workfest and has been coming down off and on since then, painstakingly preparing and painting a total of 12 doors! I think her hard work is going to pay off and we will all be able to enjoy the beautifully painted doors for a long time! Thank you Jody thank you! I think that we should nominate Jody as the Volunteer-of-the Year!

Minutes for the June 14, 2017 Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club



Attendees: Jim Drew, Karen Possner, Ned Goddard, Meredith Griggs, David Winer, Richard Bertaut, Lucky Marmon, Bill Marmon, Rebecca Beynon, Maya Lodish, Louise Meyer, Mark Friedrichs, Ann Marie Cunningham, Cecily Abram, Sherry Fizdale

President Richard Bertaut called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves.

The May Minutes were approved unanimously. David Winer suggested that the future Minutes encourage those attending the meetings on the island to bring a picnic beforehand, rather than the current wording of "participate in a potluck," which may not convey the same meaning.

Communications: None

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard announced that he will present a Quarterly Report at next month's meeting.

The island coffers will receive \$1200 reimbursement plus interest from the IRS. Apparently, there was a mistake made about taxes we had already paid.

Financial Secretary's Report: Financial Secretary Sherry Fitzdale has updated the club's registration with the State of Maryland, giving them two addresses for the Club. One is Treasurer Ned Goddard's address. The other is the actual physical address for the Club, which is 703 MacArthur Blvd. A third address was deemed as not necessary.

Sherry says that all members have paid their dues for 2017. There are no more delinquent accounts. Joe now has a list of the Waitlisters who have bought island passes. Fewer than

half of those on the Wait List have done so. It was suggested that this option be publicized in the next *Islander*, as it could be a valuable source of revenue.

Captain's Report: VP John Noble reported that the Captain is tackling issues involving our septic tank and septic field.

It was suggested that there be better recording of “unusual happenings” on the island, such as non-members trying to come aboard to the island, the sighting by members or caretaker of dangerous behavior or situations, or members bringing dogs to the island. Whether such events should be recorded in Joe's log or in an actual log kept on the island was discussed. Ann Marie Cunningham suggested that anything of a hazardous nature should be sent out to members in email blast.

It was suggested that weekend caretakers should remind people: “no dogs, no liquor.” Dave Winer requested that no signs be put up without membership approval.

Editor of the *Islander*: Rebecca Carroll, who was granted a “service membership” in return for assuming editorship of the *Islander*, has found that that the job required more time than she had to spare. All attendees expressed their appreciation for the job Rebecca had done over the past several months.

Mark Friedrichs has stepped up into the job. It was suggested that there be a brief bio on Mark in the next *Islander*. Pres. Richard Bertaut noted that the deadline for the *Islander* would be the 25th of the month, and that the *Islander* is meant to be published no more than 10 days and no less than 5 days before the monthly meeting.

Membership Secretary's Report: The Club is at full membership.

Archivist Report: Archivist Karen Possner reports that all archives are safe and sound at the DC Historical Society.

Relief Caretaker's Report: A big thank you to Ned Goddard, Eric Lieberman, Pam Sommers and Fred Pinkney for serving as relief caretakers in May.

The ferry was closed due to high water on 5/6, 5/13/ and 5/27.

The Calendar: Dates have not yet been set for the following:

- **The Fishing Derby:** Jim Drew will check to see if George Malusky will organize it once again.
- **The Summer Regatta**—usually Labor Day.
- **The Old Timers/Good Timers Potluck Lunch.**

New Business:

River Levels. Lucky Marmon suggested that the Large Party Chairman inform members

scheduling large parties that they should be sure to check Potomac River water levels prior to coming to the island. Otherwise they could discover that the ferry wasn't operating.

This suggestion provoked an interesting discussion of how to check water levels. Answers ranged from checking the Sycamore Island website under "river conditions," to checking Joe's daily blog, to signing up with the Geological Survey. [Editor's note: Tryon has made a change to the sycamoreisland.org "Weather and River Conditions" list of links: the "River Forecast for the Potomac River Basin" link now goes directly to a NOAA webpage that provides both the current river level at Little Falls and a 3-day forecast!]

Bylaws Update. VP John Noble suggested that a committee be formed to update some of the archaic and no longer pertinent language in the Club's bylaws. Karen Possner, who some time ago attempted this on her own, advised against the project.

Park After Dark: Karen Possner encouraged Sycamore Island members to support The Park After Dark, the Sept. 16th fundraiser for the C&O Canal Trust to be held at Great Falls. She noted that it was fun and worthy event.

Thanks to Karen for the delicious cookies.

July Meeting: The next meeting of the Sycamore Island Club will be held on the island on Wednesday, July 12. Weather permitting, bring a picnic to the island before the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Lucky Marmon
Co-Recording Secretary.