

The Sycamore Islander

September 2017 | Volume 96 Number 9



Photo by David Winer

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Dates to Remember

September 4: Labor Day Regatta: 1:30 to 6 pm

September 13: Next Club Meeting, 8 pm (at Clubhouse - potluck dinner before, for those interested)

September 24: Islander Deadline (send contributions to markdfriedrichs@gmail.com)

October 11: Club Meeting

Relief Caretakers' Schedule

Contact Madeleine Carter at madeleinepcarter@gmail.com to volunteer

September 2

9 am – 2 pm: Robert McCartney
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

September 9

9 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
2 pm – dark: Gary Slayen

September 16

9 am – 2 pm: Hayley Holdridge
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

September 23

9 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
2 pm – dark: Tom and Barbara Lott

September 30

9 am – 2 pm: Meredith Griggs
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

October 7

9 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

October 14

9 am – 2 pm: Meredith Griggs
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

October 21

9 am – 2 pm: John Cunningham
2 pm – dark: Gary Slayen

October 28

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

Thank you to the August Relief Caretakers: Meryl Silverman; Topaz Terry; John Cunningham; Chris Maggio & Elizabeth Karlin

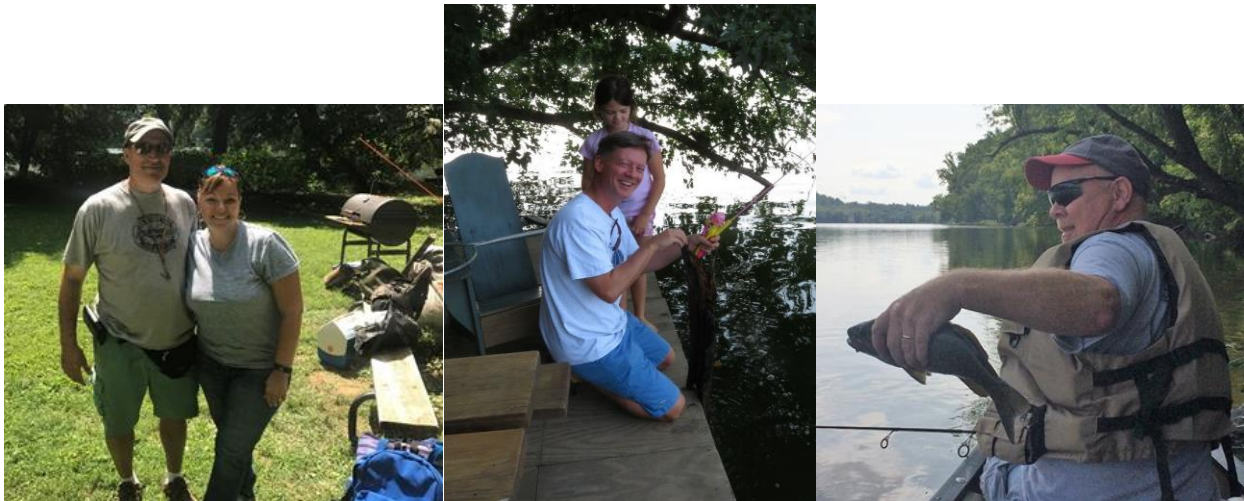
Annual Fishing Derby

by John Butler

The Sycamore Island Annual Fishing Derby commenced at 9AM on Saturday, the 26th of August. The continuing string of many nice days with unusually low humidity made for a beautiful day. George and Shelly Malusky (as usual) exemplified the wonderful members that we have, in encouraging, coaching, and assisting all derby participants. For us older folks, the donuts they bring are tantalizing. For the younger set, worms, chicken livers, and a prepared rod with coaching instructions are a gift. What a great job George and Shelly do for the club.

So, the results: ... not a day when your rod got bit every 3rd cast. The clarity of the water was unreal. What appeared to be a rock 6" down, was really a foot and half deep, but the water was so clear. But this clarity didn't translate into many bites or much luck.

The biggest fish award went to Katherine Wales who caught a 17" catfish with chicken liver. For the most fish award (see lack of luck above), there was a tie between the writer and Jim Drew. John B won it and he promises it wasn't because he volunteered to write this article. It was because he actually caught a decent sized (15") smallmouth bass. Jim caught a 15" catfish. It was the one who got away...a 36" cat that outsmarted Jim. After 4 minutes of struggle, the cat decided a down tree would offer refuge (and tangle) and tangle it did, with Jim losing the trophy. Sophia McCormick, William Wales, and Matthew McCormick earned the minnow awards and had a great time.



No derby is complete without the older set sharing their fishing stories. Fred Pinkney taught us all, with input from George about Tenkara poles. For the uninformed, these are like fly rods without the reel.



Thanks again to George and Shelly for sponsoring a great day on the island!!

[Annual Labor Day Regatta](#)

Regatta, regatta, regatta! What a raucous time was had on the Island on Labor Day. Just like last year we had an amazing turn-out, I counted between 80 and 100 people on the Island. Everyone had a fabulous time and we have Mia and Steve Holland to thank for doing another excellent job of hosting the biggest day of the year on the Island. They brought the food, the drinks, the ice, the eggs for the egg toss, the ping pong balls for the canoe pick-up, the water balloons, the bullhorn, and anything else you might need for an A-plus type of regatta, incredible. And then they cleaned everything up before they left! Thank you Mia and Steve!



We started with the three-legged race, then we did the egg toss and then it was time for infamous race around the Island. There were so many racers that we ran out of boats and we had to have two separate heats of 15 boats each. What a sight it was, canoes everywhere and spectators on the mainland, on the ferry and on the Island, all cheering and waving. After the ping pong ball pick-up we started the grill and the kids started the water gun battle. The members pitched in to work the grill and to get the food out while I pulled the ferry back and forth all day. Luckily, there were some kids that wanted to help with the ferry, I don't think I could have done it without them. We all had such a good time that I didn't even mind scraping all of the mud off of the bathroom floors and doing all of the other cleaning up that I had to do this morning. Lets hope that Mia and Steve volunteer to run the regatta again next year! Joe (adapted from the Caretaker's Log)



CARETAKER'S LOG



Wednesday -- August 2, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 78

The river is muddy and running fast but that didn't keep people from coming down here for a swim yesterday. It has been surprisingly busy for the last two week days, considering how ugly the river looks right now. The river has been going up and down like a roller coaster but thankfully it never flooded or even reached five feet from all of that rain from last week. It's very rare to have the river this high during what is normally the season for drought.

The giant tree that had fallen across the trail has now been cut and the path is no longer blocked. We're not sure yet who was responsible for cutting the tree. I called the county and Stan called the park service but I have a feeling that it may have been our friends and neighbors from Rembrandt Builders that live at the Sycamore Store. Those guys can do anything.

Sunday -- August 6, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 78

It is a wonderfully quiet Sunday morning. It's cool (I'm wearing a fleece in August), cloudy, and no trace of the strong winds that we've had to endure recently. The river is calm and low too, compared with last Sunday's volatility, and we're back down to normal summer water levels. There is a Club member hosting an all-day board meeting in the Clubhouse but other than that the bell has been quiet too. What a difference a week makes.

But I'm afraid it won't last. Soon everyone will catch on that this is the nicest weather that we've ever had here in D.C. in August and they will be marching down the hill in droves.

We had fun here last Thursday. One of the new waitlist members brought his extended family down for the first time and they really made an afternoon of it. One of the fun things they did was to catch minnows from the captain's dock and put them into one of the aquariums that I have stashed here. I was glad to have an excuse to bring out the aquarium again and the kids

really enjoyed watching the minnows up close. I decided to leave the aquarium out there so that it will be ready to use during the Fishing Derby, which is only three weeks away.

I repaired the toilet in the ladies room. It was leaking at the bowl so I removed it and installed a new wax ring to seal up the leak. Then, with the help of waitlister Chris M., I reinstalled the toilet. I think it's good now.

Monday -- August 7, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 80

Busy day on the Island yesterday. After a very slow start, the ferry had to kick into overdrive to get through the afternoon and evening. It was a fun day though, and we were entertained by the members of the Outta Scope Band, fiddle, bass and drum. It was really magical to hear the instruments with the sound of the cicadas keeping the rhythm. We also had more fun with the aquarium. Young Caleb had the good fortune to catch a tiny catfish and we kept it alive in the aquarium all day for other kids, and adults, to look at. It looked exactly like an adult catfish but it was only an inch long! I know that some members thought that my aquariums were just junk lying around, but I'm so glad that I resisted the push to have them thrown away.

The story today is RAIN. It seems rather unusual to have this kind of rain at this time of year. This day totally reminds me of an early Autumn day in September. The rain will mess up the swimming and fishing but it doesn't look like it will flood the river and cause the ferry to close.

Friday -- August 11, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6 Water Temperature: 78

Warning, no one has volunteered to run the ferry tomorrow afternoon, so if you come down be prepared to pitch in.

It turns out that I was wrong and it wasn't Rembrandt Builders that cut the tree on the trail. My next best guess is that it was cut by the park service. It's nice to have a Club Captain with connections to the park service.

Sunday -- August 20, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2 Water Temperature: 84

The river is clearing up and it's the clearest it has been in a week. The temperature of the water is creeping up but the recent rains have helped to keep the river water from getting up into the 90's like it usually does in August.

Waitlister, Jared F., brought me a baseball cap from his company Clean Choice Energy. It's a really nice hat, but what's important is the noble mission of the company, helping people switch to renewable energy for a cleaner world with less greenhouse gasses! Jared and his company are so committed to this cause in fact, that they are actually helping this Club by paying the small difference in costs for renewable energy. I'm so proud that the Club is using renewable energy and it only seems right to do so since our mission is to enjoy and protect the Potomac River. Check out their website: <https://cleanchoiceenergy.com> and help save the planet! Thanks Jared!

There was a large snapping turtle in the canal on Friday. It was cool to watch it from the bridge above. Amazingly, it's head and neck were almost as long as it's shell. I paddle up to Ruppert Island at sunset the other night. There was a heron and some mallards and, surprisingly, a little fawn feeding near the bank. It seems really late in the season to see a young deer but maybe they can have multiple litters in a summer. Makes me wonder just how many deer are over there at Rupperts at any given time.

Monday -- August 21, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 84

The deadline for the September Islander was yesterday so I'll have to make this quick. I didn't want to send in my log until I had a chance to write about what it was like to watch the (almost) total solar eclipse from Sycamore Island. There were about twenty of us on or around the Island when the eclipse started and luckily nobody came or went between 1:30 and 3:30. Mary and I were down at the bottom of the Island trying to stay in the shade yet still able to see the sun. We didn't notice any changes in the behavior of the birds and animals and the fish were definitely not biting. The light began to change and we watched it through a viewing box made from a cereal box. Thankfully, someone had two extra pairs of safe-viewing glasses and we were able to get a very clear look of the moon passing in front of the Sun. Soon afterwards, the wind picked up and a sudden thundershower blew in. Some folks made a run for it and left the Island when they heard the thunder. Others waited it out and soon the sun was shining again and we saw a small rainbow as I took them across on the ferry.

I don't think it has anything to do with the eclipse but there are a lot of spider webs on the Island right now. Some of them are huge, 36 inch diameter, webs, spun across the trail one after the other. They are amazing structures and I felt bad destroying at least big webs on my way to the bottom of the Island with the mower.

Our resident Canada geese have vanished. They were here everyday for several months and now they seem to be keeping their distance and staying off of the Island. It's funny, it took me over a week to realize that they were no longer underfoot.

The paw paw fruit are just about ripe and there are still a few of them on the Island. Some of the fruit have been harvested by members but I saw a remaining few next to the swim dock while I was swimming. They were near the waters edge, right next to the deep purple blossoms of a NY iron weed.

I replaced a missing grab rope on one of the blue kayaks and I took another stab at repairing the other red Club kayak. I used some plastic weld that was recommended to me and then I'll cover that with some epoxy for rigidity. We'll see. I also installed two new signs. One for the Women's room and one for the men's room.

Informal Notes from the August 9, 2017 Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club

Attendees: Richard Bertaut, Gerry Barton, Karen B. Possner, Audrey Lieberman, Eric Lieberman, Tryon Wells, Lawrence Heilman, Bill Marmon, Jane Winer, Dave Winer, and Ann Marie Cunningham gathered on the Island, but did not constitute a quorum.

Although no official business was conducted a number of topics of interest were discussed while nibbling on chocolate cookies that Karen Possner had made and brought for us to share.

Caretaker's Report: Gerry Barton talked about a very large tree that was over the path near the trolley trestle coming down from the Sycamore Store. It had fallen some time ago, back in May, and for some time it was possible to walk under it. Three weeks ago, it dropped to about 18 inches above the ground. Subsequently, Joe reported in his log, that the tree had been cut up and removed, probably by the Park Service.

Swimming Report: Larry Heilman reported that there is mutual understanding with regards to the swim recommendations that were approved several years ago. Implementation has begun, and will continue into 2018.

The movement of swim rescue gear to the appropriate locations is underway, in order to place them as close to where they may be needed. It is important that the equipment not be moved except when necessary, and should be replaced quickly.

Swim safety signs will raise awareness of issues. We discussed erecting a sign at the swim dock that spells out more guidelines and swim safety procedures. An article in the Islander started the process of building awareness in our community. Training sessions have been held on the Island in the past, with limited attendance.

Two new record books with instructions, "Daily Check of Swim Safety Equipment" and the "Dangerous Swim Incident report", are available to all members to record detailed entries. Another relevant issue that was discussed is the occasional contamination of water from upriver farms and other run-off sources following heavy rains, which can make the river water unsafe for swimming. While all agreed that it was important to make members aware of polluted conditions when they occur, there appears to be no authoritative source for such information.

Locations for "no swimming" signs were discussed, which led to further discussion about potentially standardizing the look of signs, ensuring that signs and their text were approved in order to ensure that important information was presented succinctly so that members and their guests would read them in their entirety, and that the signs did not become "clutter."

Archivists Report: Karen Possner reported that the Island's archives are being moved from their present location due to the renovation of the Carnegie Library in Mt. Vernon Square. The DC Historical Society, which holds our archives, is moving to a temporary location while it finds a more suitable permanent home.

Island Seal: Dave Winer repaired the Club seal, and has returned it to Joe Hage.

Caretaker's Report: Joe Hage reported that many chairs have broken lately, due to being outside in the UV, and that there are only 15 remaining. He also noted that the kayaks are more popular now, and that there often is more demand for the kayaks than supply.

After devouring Karen's cookies, and expressing our gratitude to her, we concluded our gathering and headed to the ferry.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ann Marie Cunningham
Acting Recording Secretary



Islander Editor: Mark Friedrichs; suggestions or contributions of content or photos welcome to mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com