

The Sycamore Islander

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Photos by Joe Hage

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January 10: Monthly Club Meeting, 8:00 pm at home of Meredith Griggs, [6505 78th St., Cabin John](#)

January 28: Islander Deadline (send contributions to markdfriedrichs@gmail.com)

February 14: Club Meeting (home of John and Susanna Membrino, 5305 Tuscarawas Rd)

Relief Caretakers' Schedule and New Online Sign-Up System

The Club has recently initiated a new, online method for managing the scheduling of Relief Caretakers (Saturdays throughout the year). The new system uses an online app called "Sign-Up Genius". You can access the app by going to the SycamoreIsland.org scheduling webpage:

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/sysched.htm> (or click on the Relief Caretaker Schedule and Instructions icon on the Club's home page). There you will find a link to the app and simple instructions for signing up to be a Relief Caretaker (through March 2018, at the moment). The app will also send you reminders. [Of course, if you prefer to sign-up the old-fashioned way, just contact the Relief Caretaker Coordinator, Madeleine Carter, at madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com to volunteer.] The app provides a calendar that indicates ALL of the Relief Caretakers that have signed up online (or, with some delay, through Madeleine). The Newsletter will continue to provide the schedule for the current month and acknowledge those that served the previous month.

January 6

11:00 to dark: Meg Jones

January 20

11:00 to dark: **Need a Volunteer**

January 13

11:00 to dark: Meredith Griggs

January 27

11:00 to dark: **Need a Volunteer**

Still Need Volunteers for most February and March Saturdays

Thank you to the December Relief Caretakers!! Eric Aaserud, Cora Shaw & Bernard Veuthey, Tom & Betty Gibbon, Ned Goddard, Rodolfo Castro (plus Lisa)



December Club Meeting – Photos by Mark Friedrichs

President's Message

Welcome all to the New Year, and a brisk new winter season, which finally got underway just after Christmas! It is now colder, but the river water level continues to be quite low, and visiting the Island yields access to shoreline and trails that are usually too muddy or under water – this is a great time of year to enjoy the solitude and beauty that we have on our precious Island (as long as you remember to bundle up)!

I thoroughly enjoyed our wonderful Holiday Party at the December club meeting, and am grateful that so many of you could make it to help us celebrate another successful year at the Island. We had energetic Spring and Fall Workfests, plenty of great weather in the summer, a Fall that lasted almost forever, and now brand new and quite beautiful wicker furniture to grace our clubhouse. It took a big team to make this all happen, and I very much appreciate the support of the caretaker, the club's officers and many volunteers, and I look forward to seeing all of you on the Island this year!

Richard Bertaut

C&O Canal Maintenance, Rewatering and Resurfacing Projects

Various Club Members have been following the progress of National Park Service projects, with the support of the C&O Canal Trust, to improve the maintenance of the C&O Canal and Towpath. A \$6.77-million federally-funded project will get underway shortly to rehabilitate the structures – locks, waste weirs, etc. – needed to control the flow of water down the canal from Lock 22 (Pennyfield) to Lock 5 (Brookmont). This project will help support the rewatering of the canal, first from Violettes Lock (23) to Great Falls Tavern at Lock 20, then from Lock 20 to Brookmont. The NPS has chosen to do the Violettes Lock to Great Falls Tavern section first because Lock 23 is an inlet lock from the river where severe silting currently undermines the ability of the Park to keep the canal watered and the Charles F. Mercer boat operating during periods when the Potomac River is low.

The NPS is also initiating a 5-year project to resurface sections of the towpath that are in the worst condition. The project will start on a section from Shepherdstown to Harpers Ferry, and eventually do sections in Georgetown and from Pennyfield Lock to Catocin Lock (29)

MONTGOMERY SYCAMORE ISLAND CLUB
OFFICERS AND SUPERVISORS
2018

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Warren Brown	Jeff Komarow	Jack Sanders
Ann Marie Cunningham	George Loeb	Tryon Wells
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Bill Eichbaum	Bill Marmon	

STANDING COMMITTEES

* = Safety Committee ** = Personnel Committee

The Wicker Furniture Project



Out with the Old – In with the New; Photos by Karen Posner

The wicker furniture project began with Archivist Karen Possner's suggestion, with the support of Ned Goddard, Treasurer, that the Club replace the worn, possibly bug infested, love seat with new wicker furniture. With club meeting concurrence, Karen ordered one love seat, four armchairs, a coffee table and a side table from Bed, Bath and Beyond.

After commercial delivery to John Noble's garage, Joe Hage and John unboxed the items and loaded them into Joe's panel truck. Joe parked it overnight next to the ferry. The next day, December 16 at 10am, volunteers recruited at the December party and elsewhere moved the furniture to the clubhouse in a couple of ferry trips. Then the challenging work began--assembly. After 2 to 2 and 1/2 hours our team was done. Congratulations to all!

The Team: Joe Hage, Stan Fowler, Karen Possner, Stan Wiggins, Mike McCormick and son, Marianne and Phil Ross, Richard Bertaut, Jeff Kamarow, Chris and Lisa Kliefoth

CARETAKER'S LOG



Photos by Joe Hage

Monday -- December 11, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 40

The river is nice and low right now but the water temperature is also very low so be careful if you get on the river.

Attention: The stove/oven in the Clubhouse is no longer working. Well actually, it works but it is unusable. When I turned on the oven last Sunday the entire kitchen began to smell like stale urine, like under the bridge type, strong urine smell. When I turned off the oven, the smell went

away and I knew then, what the problem was. Obviously some mice were nesting in the stove somewhere. The next day I took the stove apart, thinking I could remove the nest and all would be OK. Unfortunately, when I opened up the stove I found that the mice had made tunnels and nests all through the insulation of the stove. I began to clear out the soiled insulation but I soon realized that it would be impossible to make the stove sanitary enough to want to use it again. It was decided that we will need to buy a new stove/oven. It's too bad that we have to buy a new one since this one was working fine but I think we got our money's worth out of our existing stove since it was over 25 years old, before they had digital clocks. The funny thing is that even though the stove was a mouse hotel we don't seem to have an infestation of mice. There are no droppings or other evidence of the mice chewing into the food containers. I set up some mouse traps and I caught two mice the first night but none in the week since. The mice that I caught were white-footed mice, not the usual pest, the house mouse. That might explain why there are no other signs of infestation. These mice live on hickory nuts and are looking for lodging and that is all.

We had a nice snow cover here on Saturday. I'm so glad I was able to get up all of the leaves before our first snowfall.

I've also been working on installing the lights along the trail down the hill. I ran a new cable across the canal and I installed a junction box and three new light fixtures up in the trees. It was a lot of hard work, setting up the ladder on the steep hillside and fighting all of the branches, but the lighting has been restored on the trail! It's been a long road back to having lights on the trail and I'm quite proud of the professional-like job that I did reinstalling them.

I have some generous donations to report. First of all, The Potomac Conservancy was cleaning out the cellar at Lockhouse 8 and offered us a canoe so I went up there to retrieve a nice little Mad River 12 footer. Then, Club member Marc B donated two decent canoe carts and I went and picked those up at his house in nearby Mohican Hills. Finally, yesterday I drove out to Arlington and picked up a donation of two kayaks and some other gear from long-time Club members Amanda and Peter. Thanks people, I'm sure that this new/used gear will be put to good use.

I just learned that the Potomac Conservancy is abandoning their interpretive center at Lockhouse 8. They had a nice long run of welcoming visitors to the Park, the river and the canal. Many thanks to the Potomac Conservancy, we will miss our upriver neighbors.

Tuesday -- December 12, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 40

Good news! There is hope that the canal will be rewatered along our stretch of the towpath. The C&O Canal Park received nearly \$2.5 million for rewatering a stretch of the canal in Montgomery County. Construction to fix the locks and waste weirs is anticipated to begin on or about December 4, 2017 and extend until spring 2019 (weather dependent). Project work will focus on eight different areas between Little Falls and Swains Lock (Milepost 5-17). The exact time frame for work will be determined soon.

Friday -- December 15, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8 Water Temperature: 35

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes this morning was a sharp-shinned hawk perched on a branch outside my window, just above the bird feeder. It flew away when I went to the window and all the other birds, woodpeckers, doves, wrens, etc. returned to begin feeding again. I ambled into the living room to look at the river and there I saw a dozen hooded mergansers, also known affectionately as hoodies, one of my favorites. I love seeing our winter visitors on the river and it's so cool to be able to see 8 varieties of birds even before I have my coffee. Winter life on the Island isn't so bad after all.

There is a bit of ice on the surface of the river but I haven't turned off the water to the Clubhouse just yet. It's supposed to warm up next week so I decided to hold off for now.



Photos by Joe Hage

Tuesday -- December 27, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 35

It is about to get real cold and soon the river will freeze and I will have to close the ferry. It will probably be tonight, right about the time that the wind stops blowing.

I turned off the water to the clubhouse and the ladies room. I winterized the men's room and it is now the "Winter Restroom".

Sunday -- December 31, 2017

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7 Water Temperature: 32

Happy New Year everyone! The Island is keen, in 2018!

I may decide to abandon the Island for a couple of days and wait for the river to freeze nice and solid, coming and going has become an issue. And judging by the frigid forecast it looks as if we'll be able to simply walk to the Island before too long.

The canal and towpath are popular places when it gets this cold and we see a lot of people walking down here with their skates. The canal above lock seven is a good place to skate but you can also skate all the way from lock seven down to Sycamore Island. They'll be skating right on the river soon, if this cold continues.

[Minutes for the December 13, 2017 Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club](#)

Attendees: Phil Ross, Diane Noble, Stan Wiggins, Jeff Komarow, Sandi Komarow, Star Mitchell, Lucky Marmon, Marianne Ross, Michael Bergsman, John Butler, John Noble, John Membrino, Susanna Membrino, Jim Drew, Jody Benjamin, Madeleine Carter, Meredith Griggs, Cindy Bertaut, Scott Bertaut, Richard Bertaut, Karen Possner, Ned Goddard, Kathy Carrell, Larry Heilman, Ned Goddard, Gerry Barton, Vicki Judson, Sherry Fizdale, Anne Waidmann, Brian Waidmann, Renee Butler, Jennifer Hearn, David Hearn, Steve Newman, Judy Lent, Robin Richter, Rodolfo Castro, Lisa Catalone Castro, Andrew Walsh, Stan Flower, Tryon Wells.

Club President Richard Bertaut called the meeting to order. He began the meeting by honoring the memory of Jane Winer and acknowledging her many contributions to the island. She was a good friend and invaluable member of the club.

The Minutes of the November, 2017 Meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard reported that 2017 had been a good year financially. The 2016 budget of \$91,002 had been a 5% increase over the 2015 budget because of extraordinary expenses during that year. This year, there were no unexpected expenditures. The Club will have a good "financial cushion" heading into 2018. The 2017 CPI increased 2%, so the budget for 2018 will be raised accordingly—from \$92,000 to \$94,000. It is expected that 2018 revenues will cover that budget. More good news: a) We have retired the Club's construction debt, and b) There will be no dues increase this year.

The 2018 Budget was approved unanimously.

Any member seeking reimbursement for club-related expenses should submit their requests to Ned Goddard by Dec. 16th.

Cathy Carrell suggested that the Club might use surplus funds to purchase a paddle board or two. This item will likely be discussed at a future meeting.

Financial Secretary's Report: Sherry Fizdale announced that 2018 Dues Notices will go out soon. Members are advised to review the contact info on their notice and to make necessary corrections.

Captain's Report: The docks are out of the water! In fact, the Captain's dock was pulled onto the shore as a single unit, by using a "grip hoist" and cabling system introduced by Captain Stan Fowler. Fowler received a big thank you for coming up with this ingenious method, as it is efficient and spares the back muscles of some of the Island's aging members.

One idea still in the conceptual stage: a reconfiguration of the canoe dock pieces (with the possible purchase of a few more pieces) to create multiple docking stations.

The Captain is also looking at ways to replace some of the metal stanchions on the ferry.

The Captain is looking into acquiring eight new screen doors and has a good vendor in mind. He will order one first and see whether it is sturdy and whether it fits.

Stan, who is also a certified Weed Warrior, reported that one of his pet projects is the removal of invasive plants and vines growing along the path that leads from Macarthur Blvd to the Canal, which will open up sight lines to the Island during the Spring and Summer.

Purchase of furniture for the club house: Karen Posner generously accepted the task of replacing the club's old, mildewed, critter-infested upholstered furniture. Her thorough research led her to Bed Bath & Beyond, where she purchased seven pieces of outdoor weather-resistant wicker furniture with red cushions that will stand up to the heat, cold, and dampness of the island. The furniture was delivered to VP John Noble's basement, who solicited volunteers to help move the furniture to the island and into the club house on Saturday, Dec. 16th. Capt. Stan Fowler assured member that this would not involve "heavy lifting" as the furniture will be in pieces and assembled in place. Thanks to Karen for taking on this task. There is money in the 2018 budget for additional "club house décor" expenditures. [See report, above.]

A new stove for the club house: Caretaker Joe Hage discovered that the club's stove is mouse infested. It had already been noted that the stove's burners and oven were not well temperature regulated, making cooking difficult. A new, basic and inexpensive, mouse-resistant stove will be purchased and will be taken over to the island using volunteer labor.

The Work Fest: Hats off to George and Shelley Malusky who set out a marvelous feast at the November Work Fest.

Archivist Report: Archivist Karen Possner will be delivering documents to the archives after January 1st. Any member who has a club-related document that they feel should be saved should deliver it to Karen.

Relief Caretaker Scheduler's Report: Madeleine Carter, who has done a wonderful job

scheduling relief caretakers, announced that “Sign-up Genius,” a new system for signing up substitute caretakers, will be rolled out soon. Using this system, members will be able to sign up months ahead and easily trade caretaking dates with other members. Those unable to use the new system will still be able to contact Madeleine by email or phone.

Swim Supervisor’s Report: Larry Heilman announced that all the essential swim safety equipment will be ready to be installed by late Spring. Larry received a round of applause for his long-standing commitment to swim safety on the Island.

Nominating Committee Report: John Noble presented the slate of Officers and Supervisors for 2018. [See list of Officers and Supervisors for 2018, above]

The slate was approved unanimously. John is hoping that ways can be found to encourage new members to take on some of the responsibilities for the Club.

Membership Secretary’s Report: Anne Waidmann announced that the Membership Committee will accept applications for membership from January 1 through March 31st. The lottery, which will determine which applicants will move to the Membership Wait List, will be held at the April 11th club meeting. There has been some discussion of changing the dates for new applications and the lottery. For now, the system will remain the same as in past years. Anne encouraged those members who are willing to meet with applicants and possibly to become sponsors to contact her.

New Business: Jim Drew announced that the National Park Service, with a financial assist from the Canal Trust, is planning to “rewater” the canal. This is great news, but somewhat controversial because of the plants and critters that are now thriving in the empty canal.

A BIG THANK YOU to Vicki Judson and Michael Esch for hosting a fabulously festive December party!! Never was there a more gorgeous salmon or more delicious salads.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Meredith Griggs, 6505 78th St., Cabin John, MD 20818, on Wednesday, Jan. 10th at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucky Marmon
Co-recording Secretary



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