

The Sycamore Islander

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Photos by Joe Hage

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April 8: Spring Wildflower Walk, 10 am to 2 pm, rain or shine

April 11: Monthly Club Meeting, 8 pm on the Island (with John Noble's house as back-up)

April 15: Spring WorkFest and River Cleanup, 9 am to 3 pm – with April 29 rain date

May 9: Monthly Meeting (second Wednesdays): 8 pm on the Island

May 12: Potomac Downriver Race

Relief Caretakers' Schedule and New Online Sign-Up System

To sign-up to be a Relief Caretaker (any Saturday and when **Joe is away May 14-27**) access the "Sign-Up Genius" app from the SycamoreIsland.org/scheduling_webpage (or by clicking the Relief Caretaker Schedule and Instructions icon on the Club's home page). Click on the link to the app. There are simple instructions and the app will send you reminders. [You can also sign-up by contacting the Relief Caretaker Coordinator, Madeleine Carter, at madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com] The app provides a calendar that indicates ALL of the Relief Caretakers that have signed up (through June). Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

April 7

10 am to 3 pm: **Volunteer Needed**
3 to 8:00 pm: George & Shelley Malusky

April 14

10 am to 3 pm: Lisa Hemmer and Chris Savage
3 to 8:00 pm: Audrey and Eric Lieberman

April 21

10 am to 3 pm: **Volunteer Needed**
3 to 8:30 pm: Chris Maggio

April 28

10 am to 3 pm: **Volunteer Needed**
3 to 8:30 pm: Sara Deshler

Still Need Volunteers many days in May, especially during Joe's vacation, and most June Saturdays

Thank you March Relief Caretakers!! Eric Aaserud, Anya Schoolman, Mike Petrilli, Kerri Cox, Peter & Mary Ellen Levine, Sara Deshler, Howard Weiss, Story Jones, Miriam & Alan Pemberton, Jim Landfield



Photos by David Winer

[Spring Wildflower Walk on April 8](#)

Spring is coming! John Parrish and RG Steinman will once again lead the annual Sycamore Island Spring Wildflower Walk on Sunday, April 8, from 10:00 to 2:00- RAIN or SHINE! Bring a lunch or snack, water, and dress for the weather. We will be exploring the area in the vicinity of Cabin John Island near lock 7. We will meet at Lock 7 at 9:50 and depart at 10:00. The nearest parking lot is along the southbound lane of Clara Barton Pkwy. The access from the parking lot to the towpath is at Lock 7. If this parking lot is filled up, drive up to the next lot - about 1/2 mile further. One of us will be there to meet up with you, and we will walk north on the towpath, about 1/2 mile, to Lock 7 to meet up with the rest of the group. The winter snows will finally have given way to the Spring Wildflowers, and we hope to encounter such delights as Spring Beauty, Toothworts, Dutchman's Breeches, Trout Lily, Bloodroot, Golden Ragwort and maybe even Golden Alexanders and TwinLeaf.



[Spring WorkFest and River Clean-Up on April 15](#)

Please join us on Sycamore Island for the Spring WorkFest and River Clean-Up on Sunday, April 15, 9 AM- 3 PM. [Rain date is Sunday, April 29]

Bring your gloves, drills, hammers and side-dishes and join us for a day of Island maintenance and beautification!

The Club will provide main dishes [burgers, hot dogs, chicken and sausages], plus lemonade.

It's Fun!

Potomac Downriver Race, Saturday, May 12

The Potomac Downriver Race is co-sponsored by the Canoe Cruisers Association (CCA) and the Potomac Whitewater Racing Center, and is hosted by Sycamore Island. It is one of the longest running whitewater races in the nation.

This is a race for any whitewater paddler from the pros to parent/child tandem teams, but this is NOT A NOVICE RACE. All participants should have experience in, and be comfortable with, Class III rapids. Participants may enter with any type of a boat provided it is properly outfitted with adequate flotation (air bags) and all occupants of the boat are wearing a helmet and a PFD (life jacket).

This Maryland Canoe & Kayak Racing Series event begins at Rocky Island on the Potomac River just above Wet Bottom Rapid and continues for 7.5 miles to Sycamore Island. At the end of the race, a free T-shirt and a free lunch will be given to all workers and racers, and there will be a ceremony with awards and prizes for the winners.

Get more information on the race and find the link for online registration at:

http://canoecruisers.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=394800&module_id=205240. Advance registration is \$20, day of race the registration fee will increase to \$25. Note also that \$5 per paddler must be included in the fee for insurance unless the paddler is a member of the ACA (American Canoe Association).

VOLUNTEER helpers are needed for safety boats and for helping at the registration at Great Falls and at the finish at Sycamore Island. Volunteers will receive the gratitude of the racers, a sense of participating in an important annual river event, a race T-shirt, and lunch. Anyone interested in helping out with this year's race should contact Howard Morland at 703-525-1429 or e-mail hbmorland@aol.com. DO JOIN THE FUN!!

Adventure and Fundraiser for The Canal Trust!

Support the Fifth Annual Canal by Canoe, Potomac River Trip



Go to canalbycanoe.com to follow our trip and learn how to support CanalTrust.org and their Canal Classrooms program!

We put in at Spring Gap Md. on May 14 and arrive at Hancock MD on May 27!

Love the Canal, Support the Trust!

CARETAKER'S LOG

Friday -- March 2, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.0 Water Temperature: 48

Shuuuwee that is some serious wind out there today. Not a good day to be doing a lot of ferry crossings, especially since the river is high as well. The gauge read five feet but it's hard to get an accurate reading with this tremendous wind. The wind is so strong the bell rope is bowed like a sail across the channel and every once and a while a gust will come along that is fierce enough to actually ring the bell.

I was prepared for the wind so we haven't lost anything. Some of the canoes and kayaks in the higher racks were blown down inside the canoe shed. We lost one tree so far, but of little consequence. It was an old gnarly mulberry that was half dead already anyway. Plus, it fell safely away from any buildings or other healthy trees and only skimmed one nearby box elder. It looks like it will be a good source of fire wood once we get it all cut up.

The ferry will be closed tomorrow, March 3, but we'll have to wait and see about Sunday. Between the wind and the high water, I'm not too hopeful that the ferry will be running.

Monday -- March 5, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 48

The river has finally gone down and the wind has quieted a bit so the ferry will be running today. There area couple of locust trees that have fallen over the trail. I'll be up there later to cut them up but thankfully they are small enough to step over.

Sunday -- March 25, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8 Water Temperature: 44

It's been almost three weeks since my last post so I have a lot to catch you up on. Back on March tenth we had our second open house for possible new waitlisters. It was pretty well attended and it also was very helpful for one family that was on the waitlist but needed another sponsor to become a full-fledged member.

We had the monthly meeting here on March 14th but sadly, there was not a quorum so the families that showed up hoping to get voted in were forced to go home without a membership in hand. They were given hope that they would be voted in at the April meeting since attendance at that meeting is expected to be high. That's the night when we draw the lottery winners.



Big news! The Sycamore Island CANOE Club now has a club-owned stand-up paddle board! [see photo, by Joe, above] I was able to sell some of the unwanted canoes that we had here and I purchased a SUP board and a SUP paddle. We have broken from our canoe tradition and I hope that our die-hard canoe enthusiasts don't roll over in their graves, but the times they are a-changing and the new members were calling for a paddle board.

The new range for the Club kitchen is here! You may recall that the old range had to be discarded after it was discovered that mice had infested it. I'd like to send a great big THANK-YOU to Stan our Club captain and to Davey and Jennifer Hearn, who helped with the big job of getting the stove down the hill, onto the ferry and up into the clubhouse. I was a little concerned about delivering the stove since we had so few volunteers, but with the help of Stan's professional-grade hand truck, not to mention his experience in moving very heavy things, we were able to move the bulky thing without much trouble. I then drove to Rockville to take the old stove, along with some old grills and other scrap metal to the scrap yard.



New Range Transport Photos by Joe Hage

Well, even though it was snowing on our first full day of Spring, there is no denying that Spring is coming to the Island. The first indication that winter was loosening its grip was the call of the male red-winged blackbird. Then I saw my first wood ducks, looking for nesting sites around the Island. Then, right on the first day of Spring, I saw my first cormorant of the year. Now our resident Canada geese have built their nests and are sitting on eggs. The kingfishers are back and yesterday I saw a yellow-rumped warbler!

The trees are beginning to bud too and it won't be long before the Island is completely green again. The bluebells, of course, are getting taller every day and soon they will be in full bloom. I predict that the peak blue bell viewing will be April 1 through April 15.

On a sad note, the eagle's nest across the river that has consistently produced offspring for the last 15 years seems to be quiet this year and there doesn't seem to be any activity over there at all. I witnessed some eagle courtship behavior last month so I was hopeful, but eagle sightings around the Island are now rare and I'm not holding out much hope of a breeding pair this year. Maybe next year.

We did see the fox again. Running across the top of the Island one early morning. I guess that it is somehow making a living out here by itself.

I turned the water back on so there is running water in the clubhouse and in the ladies room.

Happy Spring!

Tuesday -- March 27, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 46

I just learned that the Potomac river has been given a B in its latest report card from the Potomac Conservancy. Check out their awesome website at <http://potomacreportcard.org/>

It's cool to think that the river is the cleanest and safest that it's ever been since this Club started.

I had to climb the ladder and change out the pulley that holds the ferry chains to the cable, always a dicey job. The other chore that has kept me busy is picking up all of the sticks and branches that fell during that horrific wind storm earlier this month. Actually, this entire month has been exceptionally windy. It will be nice when we finally get some Spring weather.

Thankfully, I got the chain saw to work. Gerry brought me a new spark plug and that seemed to do the trick, so we'll be able to start chopping up the mulberry that fell. Maybe at the workfest, which is in three weeks.



Pulley Repair photos by Joe Hage

The other big job I want to complete, probably before the workfest, is rebuilding the ferry landing on the Island side. It's going to be tricky, rebuilding the dock without disrupting ferry service but we'll just have to hope for the best.

[Notes from the March 14, 2018 Club Meeting](#)

Only nine members attended; thus, the meeting did not have a quorum. Waitlisters present will be voted in at the April meeting, and February minutes will be approved then.

Participants: Story Jones, Richard Bertaut, John Membrino, Stan Fowler, Meredith Griggs, Star Mitchell, John Noble Bill Marmon, Gerry Barton, Adam and Caleb Van Grack, Jim Drew.

President Richard Bertaut called the meeting to order at 8:00.

Membership report: John Noble presented a written membership report (see below). He then introduced two candidates for membership: Story Jones and Adam & Caleb Van Grack, who described their families and their interest in the Island. Caleb Van Grack explained his interest by showing his drawing.

Treasurer's report: The first quarter report will be ready for the April meeting. Treasurer Ned Goddard has moved to Denver but will continue to serve as treasurer until a replacement is found.

Financial report: President Bertaut distributed a written report from Sherry Fizdale showing income at \$99,000 for this year, which is favorable. All but about five members have paid their dues. Joe Hage commented that several waitlisters have paid for passes along with their dues.



Captain's report: Captain Stan Fowler highlighted recent and upcoming activities. These include his rearrangement of cubes on boat dock to make it more functional and installation of new kitchen stove, with help from Joe Hage, Davy and Jennifer Hearn. Only two people showed up for an ad hoc workday. Before the scheduled April workfest, Stan will try out new screen doors to select ones to be put up and continue to work on dock installation, repair of ferry rails, and welding of handgrips for both ferry docks. John Noble suggested cables or trimming to prevent tree over captain's dock from falling.

Caretaker's report: Joe Hage thanked Alexandra Edsall, Lynda Martin-McCormick, and Norman Metzger for donating kayaks or canoes. Joe has also obtained a stand-up paddle board for the Island and is still testing boats for seaworthiness and refinishing others.

Other & new business:

- Jim Drew applauded Joe's work on the new kayak rack.
- Gerry Barton showed Kent Magazine with a cover story profiling him along with many pictures of the Island. He also explained that new warning signs and buoys will be placed on the river by the Corps of Engineers.
- Richard Bertaut reported that a member has used the Sycamore Island mailing list to advertise his business. The club does not allow its lists to be used other than for members to contact each other about Island affairs, which Richard will explain to this person.
- Meredith Griggs and Star Mitchell proposed that in future March and November meetings be held off the Island because of the cold and dark and in an effort to reach quorums.

The meeting was closed by Richard Bertaut at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Griggs
Co-recording secretary

[Sycamore Island Membership Secretary's Report, March 14, 2018](#)

Submitted by Anne Waidmann, presented by John Noble

1. We had our second highly successful Open House on Saturday, March 10 in lovely weather. Many, many thanks to John Noble, Dave Winer and John Membrino, as well as new member Jared Farber, for their help escorting potential applicants around the Island and answering their questions. We received 17 applications as a result of the two open houses.
2. Tonight five Qualified Applicants are presented to be voted into membership. They will fill places in the Regular membership of families that have resigned, moved to Senior status or become Inactive. They are:
 - a. Mia and Steve Holland and their children Ethan, Catie, Eloise and Clara, sponsored by John Membrino, recommended by Cindy Bertaut and David Winer. As Waitlisters, the Hollands have run the annual Labor Day Sycamore Island Regatta and impressed many with their hard work and enjoyment of the Island.
 - b. Story and Josiah Jones and their children Abel, Gwendolyn and Mercy, sponsored by Andrew Umhau, recommended by Brian and Anne Waidmann and Whitney Pinger. Story and her family “know how to love and enjoy the island,” and have been to work fests and served as relief caretakers.
 - c. Jared and Reyna Farber and their children Nadia and Shane, sponsored by Rachel Singer, recommended by Anne Waidmann and Ned Goddard. Jared has often served as a relief caretaker, and worked closely with Ned, contributing his company’s energy credits to purchase clean energy for the club’s monthly power provider.
 - d. Robin Richter and her sons Zach and Michael, sponsored by Gavin Bloch and recommended by Lynda Slayen and Ned Goddard. Robin has been very active leading social efforts for the Club during her time as a Waitlister, and often kayaks and paddleboards from the Island.
 - e. Adam Van Grack and his son, Caleb, sponsored by Star Mitchell, recommended by the Hearn and the Thorntons. Adam is an avid waterman, serving as the president of Potomac Whitewater Racing Center, the US Olympic Center of Excellence for canoe/kayak competition, and is a board member of the Canoe Cruisers Association of DC.

The final step in accepting these new members is for them to submit their initiation fees and 2018 dues (a total of \$850 less dues already paid for 2018) by the time of our next meeting in April. If they choose not to submit these amounts, we will offer their spot to the next family on the Waiting List.

We have additional openings and are awaiting recommendation letters for Jonathan Noble, Peter Stork, and Shannon and Heather Kraus. We will vote these families into membership at the next meeting, assuming the recommendation letters are received.

3. Next month we will hold a lottery to choose the families to be added to our Waiting List to bring the number back to 60 waitlisters. As of tonight, we have 79 applications, and we will continue to accept applications through the end of the month. If the three Wait Listers to be voted upon at the April meeting fall off the Waiting List, we will have places for 26 new Wait Listers to fill in the lottery.
4. After tonight’s actions, we will have the following numbers in all categories of membership: Regular 157; Senior 78; Inactive 20; Waiting List 37; Honorary 13



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