

The Sycamore Islander

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Photos by Joe Hage

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October 10: Monthly Club Meeting, 8 pm on the Island

November 11: Fall Work-Fest (rain date: November 18)

November 14: Monthly Meeting (second Wednesday), 8 pm

Relief Caretakers' Schedule and Online Sign-Up System

To sign-up to be a Relief Caretaker (any Saturday), you can access the "Sign-Up Genius" app from the [SycamoreIsland.org scheduling webpage](http://SycamoreIsland.org/scheduling) (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. [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 August, but September will be added soon) and provides reminders. Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

October 6

10 am to 2 pm: Stephanie Lai
2 to 7 pm: Stephanie George

October 13

10 am to 2 pm: Ida & Vasilis Konstantopoulos
2 to 7 pm: Andy Malmgren

October 14

10 am to 2 pm: Jenelle Dennis
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 15

10 am to 2 pm: Laura Higday
2 to 7 pm: Lisa Hemmer

October 16

10 am to 2 pm: Margaret Barry
2 to 7 pm: David Nassar

October 17

10 am to 2 pm: Eric Simpson
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 18

10 am to 2 pm: Topaz Terry
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 19

10 am to 2 pm: Molly Carr
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 20

10 am to 2 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**
2 to 7 pm: John Sager & Catherine Commander

October 21

10 am to 2 pm: Peter Levine
2 to 7 pm: Luca Anderlini

October 22

10 am to 2 pm: Lisa Hemmer
2 to 7 pm: Debby Cooper

October 23

10 am to 2 pm: Topaz Terry
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 24

10 am to 2 pm: Wayne Limberg
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 25

10 am to 2 pm: Meg Jones
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 26

10 am to 2 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Still Needed**

October 27

10 am to 2 pm: Christy and Garth Ross
2 to 7 pm: Mike Petrilli

Still Need volunteers for October (to cover for those days when Joe and Mary are honeymooning) – and one more for November.

Thank You to all those few who able to serve as relief caretakers during September: Angela Hirsch, Jenelle Dennis, Kevin Haley, Jeffrey Komarow

Guided Canoe Trips – A Way Into the Wilderness

By John Cunningham

As a follow-up to my recent article in the Islander about Ann Marie’s and my canoe trip on the San Juan River, I thought it might be interesting for Islander readers to describe our general experience with guided wilderness canoe trips. Sycamore Islanders might really enjoy these trips because they connect to the Island’s canoeing roots. A wilderness trip on a remote river can only be done in a canoe, not in a kayak (unless you have other boats carrying your gear for you) and certainly not on a paddleboard. In the words of our paddling friend Phil Moss:

“River travel is seductive, and wonderful, if you know what you are doing, have the right gear, and plan carefully. It is one of several ways to experience nature intimately. A canoe ‘leaves no track.’ as the saying goes. . . . Travel in the wild brings you back to basics. It focuses your attention on the weather, your supply of food and drink, how many miles you covered that day. Your universe contracts and you live in the present and in the immediate future. Thoughts of politics, ambition, the stock market recede and disappear. Easing aching muscles, ensuring a dry tent and sleeping bag are more important. Food tastes better, because strenuous effort has sharpened your appetite. But your universe expands too, under a canopy of stars at night, or the big sky by day.”

Over the years, we have paddled canoes through desert river canyons, the subarctic country of the Yukon, and the deep woods of Maine and Quebec. These experiences have been made possible by river guides. Professional guides have an extraordinary range of skills. They provide gear and logistics, they teach canoeing, they maintain river safety, they provide first aid if that’s needed, they plan and cook delicious meals, they keep



you as comfortable as they can – and they tell great stories around the campfire. As Phil wrote, “Each of them is an expert, a master of his craft, as skilled and as knowledgeable in his field as a doctor or lawyer in his.” Phil wrote that before our most recent trip on the challenging

Bonaventure River in Quebec, where the lead guide was a woman and she was certainly a master of her craft.

The trusted guide services we've used recently, led by Jason Cross at smokingrivers.com and Dave Conley at canoethewild.com, offer trips to such far-flung places as Baffin Island, the Yukon, the American Southwest, and of course Maine and Quebec. Either would be happy to talk to you about trips that might be suitable for your particular level of skill and experience. These include family trips – children as young as 5 can be taken on a river trip (we've inquired on behalf of our granddaughter; whose name happens to be River).

They provide canoes, paddles, life jackets, waterproof river bags to keep your clothes and personal effects dry, cooking and eating utensils, camp chairs, and a tent and sleeping pad if you need those. You're responsible for providing a sleeping bag. You'll get a good packing list, with tips on what to bring. Transportation will be provided from the group rendezvous spot to the beginning ("put in") of your river trip, and then back to the rendezvous from the end ("take out") of your trip. It's up to you to get to the rendezvous. We've driven to driveways and parking lots in Maine and we've flown to Midland/Odessa, Texas; Grand Junction, Colorado; and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

Instruction is provided on and off the river as needed, depending upon your level of skill and the demands of the river. On the narrow and twisty Bonaventure, we got useful tips on how to execute some strokes to get us around some of the bends and obstacles. If you need help packing your river bags properly or tying everything into your canoe at the start of each day, help will be provided.

The job of a river guide is, first and foremost, to keep you safe on the river. They will make decisions on whether a rapid can be run or whether it's necessary instead to portage around the rapid or "line" the boats through (that involves scrambling along the shoreline while holding onto bow and stern lines). These decisions are functions of water level, hazards in the river, and the skill of the paddlers. A conservative approach is taken – if there's any doubt at all, the rapid is not run. The guides are certified in back-country first aid. A first-aid kit is carried on the river, and so is a two-way satellite phone.



I haven't talked about the food yet! All meals are provided on the river. And these are full-on meals, too, cooked over a campfire. The food is kept fresh in coolers. Every canoe carries some group gear as well as personal gear, and your share of the group gear could be a cooler.

Coffee or tea is available at about 7:00 a.m. and breakfasts will feature eggs, bacon or sausage, English muffins, pancakes with real Maine blueberries and syrup, fried potatoes, and so on.



After clean-up and breaking camp, you're on the river by 9:00, perhaps a little later. Lunch on the river is more of a picnic – sandwiches and wraps, dried fruit, cookies, and so on. Generally, you're off the river by 4:00. While you set up your tent, explore, relax, read, and perhaps take a well-earned nap, the guides are getting dinner ready. We've had salmon, spaghetti with homemade sauce and garlic bread, pork loin, grilled chicken, and tenderloin steaks. Vegetarian options can be provided. Sometimes wine is included, but if it's not, wine and beer are certainly permitted – the only rule is no glass containers. Water is usually provided by filtering river water. Save room for fresh-baked dessert!

Besides the camp chairs, an important amenity is the group tarp. This is raised by tying the high anchor points to canoe poles and trees and the low points to canoes or large rocks. It provides shade from the sun and shelter from rain.

Here's a story that illustrates how a river guide takes care of his or her clients. Several years ago, we did a trip on the Liard River in the Yukon which had a lot of wet weather. One afternoon, the sun suddenly disappeared, the temperature dropped sharply, and it started to hail. It was miserable, and at least some of us were really starting to feel cold. The guides had us pull over and we scrambled out onto a rocky shore. The tarp was set up within minutes, which got us out of the hail. The guides hauled some firewood out of the woods and got a fire going (which I really didn't think they'd be able to do, since the wood was so wet). In short order, water was boiled and tea or hot chocolate was available. An instant miracle cure! We felt much better right away, and it became quite jolly shoving the accumulated hail off the tarp. The wilderness lesson is that if you feel cold, give your body some fuel. Our guides already knew that, of course.



After dinner (accompanied by a beverage of your choice) and after clean-up is done, it's campfire time. The day is reviewed, stories are told, "I really didn't see that rock" excuses are offered, jokes and genial insults are exchanged, and the next day is previewed. The sun sets and the stars come out. Eventually, usually not late, everyone heads for their tents. The guides do too, but of course they'll be up first to get breakfast ready.

We've had wonderful experiences on these trips, and we hope to do a good many more. Come join us!

John Cunningham

CARETAKER'S LOG

Wednesday -- September 5, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9 Water Temperature: 86

Holy Cow! Another unexpected storm hit yesterday afternoon, around 3:00, and what a doosie! It was like a mini derecho.

I wasn't here when it hit but when I got back here I knew something big had happened. The first thing I noticed was that there were fallen branches and leaves littered everywhere. When I looked across the field, every chair was on its back as were the Weber grills. Everything that was on the shelves in the screen porch was scattered all over the floor and, it's hard to believe, even the screen was ripped by the wind. All of the jewel weed and even the stout pokeweeds were lying flat making it easy to tell from which direction the wind came from. I walked down to the swim dock to discover that the large branch that had fallen last month had blown across the field and destroyed one of the Adirondack chairs when it landed. Walking further toward the top of the Island I realized that we had lost another big tree. This one was a hackberry that was about 40 feet tall. It fell toward the Maryland shore and damaged a couple of other trees on its way down. It is now blocking the trail near where the old mulberry had fallen.

If you weren't here on last Monday. Labor Day, you missed a great event. Mia and Steve really know how to bring it and we are so lucky to have them and all of their positive energy here on the Island on Labor Day. It was so fun to see all of the kids and how excited they were. Lots of kids means lots of dirt in the bathrooms but I didn't even mind the extra mopping, knowing how much fun they had. I didn't count the number of children that were here but I would guess over fifty. This year we had a bonus at the regatta in the form of a live band. Club member Geoff brought his electric band and they set up in the Clubhouse. Their drummer was late so I got to sit in with them for a few songs. Wow, what a talented bunch of guys. I think everyone loved having the music.

Sycamore Regatta 2018





Monday -- September 10, 2018
Water Level at Little Falls: 6.4 Water Temperature: 70

The ferry is closed.

Well, here we go again. The river is climbing and I'm crying. I will spend today moving the canoes off of the lower rack of the canoe shed, and tying them down along with the club canoes and kayaks. I started some prep last night but I still have to tie down the picnic tables and move all of the chairs. We're expecting ten feet by tomorrow morning. I just hope and pray that we don't get hit too bad by hurricane Florence. That storm could eclipse all the other terrible rain storms that we've already had this year.

Some new dam warning buoys were installed last Wednesday. They installed seven new buoys and left the old rusty one there. Thanks to Gerry Barton for contacting the Corp of Engineers and pressing to have these buoys installed. The river is a slightly safer place thanks to you.



Wednesday -- September 12, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 9.0 Water Temperature: 65

The river is receding now and there doesn't seem to be too much damage, although it looks like the ramp to the swim dock took a hit. It was nice to have Mark, our editor down here on Monday to help me move all of the boats from the bottom rack and to help tie everything down.

The river crested yesterday at about 2:30. Sadly, that was right when I had to leave the Island to go to the dentist. Under any other circumstance I would have just rescheduled but this was different. This appointment was to finally install my crowns for the teeth that I have been missing for over a year. I didn't want to cross the river when it was so high but I didn't want to put off getting my teeth any longer, especially since it's only a week until my wedding.



I pushed off from the island and paddled upstream until I was past the low-hanging bell rope and then made my dash for the opposite shore. My main fear was that I would get hung up on the bell rope and get flipped, so I had my pocket knife ready to cut the rope if need be. All of the lower steps and the landing were submerged. My hope was to shoot right into that opening without getting bashed into the giant sycamore there at the steps and land at the upper steps. It was a thrilling ride but it was over in an instant. I took a deep breath and started to lock up the canoe when all of the sudden, I heard a load rushing sound. I turned to look and saw a small whirlpool right behind me as the water rushed past that big sycamore. Freaky. The awesome news is that I got my crowns done and I got my old smile back!

So now we're in hurricane prep mode. All yesterday I was busy packing up my store room and moving all of my stuff up to the living room. I decided not to wait and see. I think we'll just plan that the river will reach 20 feet, like in '96. I'll probably organize a hurricane prep day on Friday and Saturday. Prepare for the worst, hope for the best.

Friday -- September 21, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 6.3 Water Temperature: 65

The ferry will be closed all weekend due to high water, and maybe Monday too.

Wednesday -- September 26, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 6.6 Water Temperature: 65

The ferry is closed and could possibly be closed until after the weekend, again.

Friday -- September 28, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 8.9 Water Temperature: 65

The ferry is closed and will be closed for the foreseeable future.



The river reached close to 11 feet on September 11, but we got lucky and did not get a direct hit from hurricane Florence. I was really preparing for the worst and I had already cleared out the lower tool shed and moved my dressers before we realized that the flooding was only going to be minor. Thankfully, I did not spend any time moving things back because there is another minor flood headed for us right now, 11 feet by Sunday morning. This is not what I signed up for, constant flooding. If this is the new normal I'll have to re-evaluate my living/employment situation, especially if the

flooding continues into the cold months ahead. The rope holding the swim float to an anchor broke under the pressure of the rising river, but luckily, I had it attached with a second cable to a tree, so it did not get away. And the anchor is not lost either, the yellow buoys are still there attached to the sunken anchor.

Speaking of buoys, the new buoys that were installed a couple of weeks ago did not fare well during this last flood. We started with seven new buoys, but they are all drifting downstream. They are spread out all over and all but two of them are very close to the dam.

I set up a little painter's workshop up in the clubhouse behind the drum set. I've got all of the brand-new screen doors lined up in there ready for my assembly line of priming, painting and installing hardware. Sadly, with all of this flood prep and recovery, I haven't been able to work on them too much. Plus, since I'm coming and going in a canoe, it's darn near impossible to deliver the supplies I need.



And finally, this was a really big month in my life, Mary and I got married at the Bumper-Car Pavilion on last Saturday, the 22nd of September. It was a spectacular time and I'm so thrilled to be able to introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Towpath!



Minutes of September 12, 2018, Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club

Attendees: Steve Newman, David Winer, Carole and Richard Schweiker, Eric and Audrey Lieberman (Wait List), Marianne Ross, Richard Bertaut, Carol and Dick Schleicher, Karen Possner, Sherry Fizdale, Alison Levine, Gerry Barton, Jim Drew, John Noble, Angela Hirsch (Wait List), Stan Fowler, Ann Marie Cunningham, Vicki Judson, Madeleine Carter, Tryon Wells, Joe Hage, Caretaker (By Telephone).

Actions and Observations:

1. July meeting minutes approved. August meeting notes approved (no quorum).
2. Many "Thanks" were extended to Dave Winer for responding to a last-minute request for hosting the meeting due to continued ferry closure at the Island. He not only hosted but supported the meeting with beverages and treats.
3. Gerry Barton noted that new warning buoys have been installed above the dam. Gerry was persistent in pushing the authorities to get it done.
4. Caretaker Joe Hage requested assistance to prepare for expected Hurricane Florence's very high water. Main job is to move materials from the ground level of the clubhouse to the second floor. (The work day was subsequently called off because the threat receded.)
5. Membership Secretary Anne Waidman's Report was distributed and it is to be included in the October Islander. Highlight is the completion of final round of orientations of wait listers, 59 of 60 are now oriented, the highest number on record. She is convening a subcommittee to review membership policies regarding the lottery and weighing past applicants and senior status.
6. Stan Fowler, Captain, recommends that we mine current Island attendance information, and learn more about the characteristics of Island users, by using the ferry sign-in form to gather such data.
7. Archivist Karen Possner continues to process the many boxes of Club information that had been stored in the Clubhouse until recently. The reestablishment of Club archives in the renovated Mt. Vernon Square library will be completed by December. Larry Heileman, a historian by training, has volunteered to assist with archiving.
8. Financial Secretary Sherry Fizdale said our bank is contemplating adding fees. Members recommended a number of banks that do not charge fees such as Capital One, Sandy Springs, Sun Trust and TD Bank.
9. Monthly Meeting Date Bylaws changes have been considered over several months. A vote of 8 No to 7 Yes defeated the following addition to Bylaw 23: The President at his discretion and with advance notice in the Islander and a blast e-mail to all members may schedule an alternate day for a specific monthly meeting.
10. President Richard Bertaut announced the appointment of Vice-president John Noble to head the 2019 nominating committee for Club Officers and Supervisors. Persons interested in further involvement in Club governance should contact John, (johnnoble@mac.com)
11. A number of members and waitlisters commented on the topic, "Reassessing Guest Pass Procedures." Waitlisters present urged retaining the weekend guest pass as an incentive to volunteer for ferry duty when the caretaker is off duty. The number of family members and guests permitted with a waitlist pass is presently nine. Reducing this number was recommended by some. Madeleine Carter, Relief Caretaking Scheduling Supervisor, will write recommendations for future consideration based on the discussion.
12. The Regatta on Monday of labor day weekend was a huge success, members reported. Mia and Steve Holland were thanked with hearty applause.

13. It was suggested that large party scheduling include a rain date. Should two parties fall on a rain date as a result, they would accommodate one another. No opposition was expressed. Bylaws will be reviewed to see if a change is required.
14. It was decided to schedule the next work-fest for Nov. 11, with Nov. 18 as the rain date.

Prepared by John Noble, substitute Secretary

Membership Secretary's Report, September 12, 2018

Submitted by Anne Waidmann



Photos by Anne Waidmann

1. We had our last orientations for this summer this past weekend. John Noble oriented two families on Friday and he and I had three more families on Saturday, bringing the total oriented families on the waiting list to 59 out of 60! The last family on the list is unable to get to the Island at this time, so we will keep in touch with them to get them oriented when it becomes possible for them again. As you know, attending an official orientation is one of the requirements for membership, so it is terrific that nearly all the waitlisters have checked this requirement off their list. Photos from the orientations will appear in the next issue of the Islander for your enjoyment.

Many many thanks to John Noble for all of his help getting this done!

2. We will convene a subcommittee to look into several issues that have been raised concerning the lottery and waiting list procedures in the next few months, and are continuing to consider changes to the rules for senior membership.
3. There have been no changes in membership over the summer, so our current totals remain as they have been since the lottery in April, to wit:
 - o Regular: 160,
 - o Senior: 78,
 - o Inactive: 21,
 - o Honorary: 13,
 - o Waiting List: 60



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