

# The Sycamore Islander

June 2019 | Volume 98 Number 6



Photos by Joe Hage

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**June 12: Monthly Club Meeting**, 8:00 pm, on the Island (if island is closed, the meeting will be at the home of Meredith Griggs, 6506 78th St., Cabin John, 301-229-4935); at the meeting:

- A new proposal regarding Senior Membership rules will be voted upon (see last entry in this Islander)

**June 22: Sycamore Island Summer Solstice Campout Returns**

**July 10: Club Meeting**, 8 pm, on the Island

## 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-webpage) (or by clicking the Relief Caretaker Schedule and Instructions icon on the Club's home page). Click on the link. There are simple instructions. [You can also sign-up by contacting the Relief Caretaker Coordinator, Madeleine Carter, at [madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com)]. **A reminder that Joe Hage will be on vacation June 9 – 20, so we had lots of relief caretaker slots to fill during June. Fortunately, just three slots are still open.** The app provides a calendar that now indicates ALL of the Relief Caretakers that have signed up through July and provides reminders. Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

### June 1

9 am to 3 pm: Meredith Griggs  
3 to 9 pm: Mark Del Bianco

### June 8

9 am to 3 pm: Russell Sturm  
3 to 9 pm: Chris Maggio

### June 9

3 to 9 pm: Mike Petrilli

### June 10

9 am to 3 pm: Linda Greer  
3 to 9 pm: Jody and Bobby Benjamin

### June 11

9 am to 3 pm: Jennie Rabinowitz  
3 to 9 pm: Alan Stone

### June 12

9 am to 3 pm: Ilya Fridman  
3 to 9 pm: Chuck Pill

### June 13

9 am to 3 pm: Linda Greer  
3 to 9 pm: Chuck Pill

### June 14

9 am to 3 pm: Topaz Terry  
3 to 9 pm: Anya Schoolman

### June 15

9 am to 3 pm: Susan Dunham & Dan Schember  
3 to 9 pm: Margaret Barry and Pat

### June 16

9 am to 3 pm: Hayley Holdridge  
3 to 9 pm: Thomas Stevens

### June 17

9 am to 3 pm: Adele Seifried  
3 to 9 pm: Topaz Terry

### June 18

9 am to 3 pm: Meg Jones  
3 to 9 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

### June 19

9 am to 3 pm: Joe Belden  
3 to 9 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

### June 20

9 am to 3 pm: Lisa Hemmer  
3 to 9 pm: Ilya Fridman

### June 22

9 am to 3 pm: Margaret Barry and Pat  
3 to 9 pm: Audrey and Eric Lieberman

### June 29

9 am to 3 pm: Gus Anderson  
3 to 9 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

**Thank You to all those that volunteered for May Saturdays, especially Eric Simpson, Sarah Beardmore and Mauro Martinell, Isabel Anderson and Jennifer Urquhart**

## Sycamore Island Summer Solstice Campout Returns: June 22



Celebrate the longest day of the year on Sycamore Island! Waitlister Angela Hirsch is taking the lead on relaunching the summer solstice campout with fun and games on water and land, a potluck feast, campfire songs and skits, and camping under the stars.

The campout is scheduled for Saturday, June 22 (rain date: June 29). Please sign up at the [Summer Solstice Campout Evite](#) so we know how many folks to expect (adults and kids). While there, consider volunteering to help with one of the activities (see the “what to bring” list, or leave a comment). We’ll need volunteers to

have a canoe safety demonstration and trip, souvenir t-shirts (and perhaps tie-dyeing?), a scavenger hunt, lawn games for kids and adults, and plenty of campfire fun.

This event is open to members, waitlisters, and their families. For more information, contact Angela Hirsch at [angela.h.hirsch@gmail.com](mailto:angela.h.hirsch@gmail.com).

## Potomac Downriver Race held on May 11

By Star Mitchell [with photos from Canoe Cruisers Association

May 11 was a beautiful sunny, light jacket day, but the river was 5’7”. Thus, as the ferry was grounded, we could only get to the Island via canoes. We decided to set up on the “grassy knoll” by the parkway. Previously, our Race Chair Howard Morland had already deposited all of our many drinks, side-dishes, ice-cream, and paper products in the Island kitchen. Never before had I ever seen Joe paddle a canoe. I was most impressed by his perfect angle as he swiftly solo paddled his canoe across the 5’7” current. Then Joe graciously paddled our volunteers over to the Island to retrieve our many picnic goodies.

This year the start of the race was a “mass start” of everyone at once. Thus, from Old Anglers Inn to Sycamore Island with a water level of 5’7” it was a very fast race. Forty-five racers entered the race. For the times and results of the race go to: [www.canoecruisers.com](http://www.canoecruisers.com).



Gathering at the start.....



...and they're off! [photo by Keith Edmondson]

When I arrived at the lower parking lot, the first volunteer to greet me was a CCA member Mark Eakin. He was most helpful (particularly after I locked my keys in the van)! I think Mark and Joe did most of the paddling across the river and hauling our “goodies” up to the “grassy knoll.” Those of us there swiftly pitched a tent, set-up chairs and two tables. The only things missing were BATHROOMS and WATER! I thought Sycamore Island found an Entertainment Chair, but I must be wrong—no such person showed up to give us water, lemonade, and cookies.

The only members that dutifully arrived to paddle safety boats up from Sycamore Island were Jim Drew, Cindy Bertaut, and Larry Heilman. However, that would have involved canoeing across the river with Joe, getting canoes, and then paddling up river in a raging current and trying to “stay put” in a river with absolutely no eddies. We decided that was not a good idea, so our Island safety crew remained on the “grassy knoll” to help. However, one of our brand new members, Gus Anderson entered the river at Anglers Inn put-in and served as a safety boat at Yellow Falls. Another brand new member, Adam Van Grack paddled the race in 39 minutes 12 seconds and won the award for Fastest Kayak in the race! [See photo by Barbara Brown of Adam and Sycamore organizer, Star Mitchell, right] Alas, we have some new “river rats” as members and I sponsored both of them! If by chance any other Island members paddled the race, I am sorry to say I missed them or do not know them.



Next year will be the 65th anniversary of the Downriver Race or 65 years ago that a group of Sycamore Island members started and founded the race! After founding the race, these Sycamore Island members went on to found the Canoe Cruisers Association (CCA). Thus, next year the CCA is going to feature Sycamore Island with a special T-shirt to celebrate the race and commemorate Sycamore Island for founding a race that will have lasted for 65 years! The race is the longest lasting race of which we know.

Despite the obstacles, it was a great race. My many thanks go to our members who came to help and most of all to Joe who always “goes the second mile.”

## CARETAKER'S LOG

**Sunday -- May 5, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 5.2    Water Temperature: 68**

The ferry is closed. No surprise there, after that hard rain on Friday night and another hard rain last night. So sad, I was really hoping that the river would finally drop below four for a change. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that the Club meeting will not be held on the Island this month.

The good thing is that I was able to get Colonel Josh's double neck pedal steel guitar off of the Island on Friday before the river got too high. I was also able to bring my mainland drum kit back down to the Island.

And, I remembered to get my bicycle off of the Island while the ferry was still running. I miss my bike rides when my bike is trapped on the Island during high water.

**Saturday -- May 11, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 5.7    Water Temperature: 68**

Well, we got real close to opening the ferry yesterday but alas, more rain, and the river is back up again. Ferry closed. What really sucks is that the Downriver Race is today and without the ferry it becomes a total fiasco trying to get all of the racers timed and fed. Saturday is normally my day to get away from the Island but since we told the relief caretakers to stay home, and since George will no longer be a part of this event, I decided I better stick around and represent for the Island. Sure do miss you George, but don't worry, I got the cookies and lemonade ready for the racers. I'm surprised that more of our Sycamore Islanders don't get excited about this canoe race that started a whopping, 63 years ago!

**Wednesday -- May 15, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 7.0    Water Temperature: 60**

The ferry is closed

The river crested at a little over seven feet. It's on its way down now but it could be Sunday before its below five feet again.

**Monday -- May 20, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9    Water Temperature: 70**

The ferry is open!



New Ferry Dock, whether open or closed; Photo by Joe Hage

**Wednesday -- May 22, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.6    Water Temperature: 70**

The website was down for a few days but it seems to be working now.

**Friday -- May 31, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1    Water Temperature: 78**

Wow, what a Spring it has been. So many times, if you're not careful, Spring can slip right by you and the next thing you know all of the trees are full of leaves, the birds are done singing and nesting, and the weather is hot and muggy. But not this year. This year I did all of those cool naturalist-type things that you can only do once-a-year between March first and May 31st.

I started my Spring by going to my first ever Trout unlimited meeting. There we learned all about the shad and herring migration and the Spring fishing on the Potomac. I never did catch a shad this year but on Easter Sunday I went to Pierce mill on Rock Creek and was blown away to see dozens of herring and hickory shad swimming upstream and spawning below the dam there!

The other inspiring event I went to was a talk by our local ornithologist and Club member, Bruce Beehler. His talk helped me to clue into what was happening all around us, on the Island and elsewhere, the migration of millions of tiny birds. While camping nearby at Little Bennett Park, I experienced first-hand the "fall out" of migrating birds. This is a phenomenon where hundreds of song birds descend from their lofty heights to refuel for their migration north. It was amazing to be there when, right at first light and after flying all night for hundreds of miles, the birds filled the trees of the campground and I was awakened by the overwhelming sound of bird song. While birding there we saw many colorful woodland warblers. What a treat! We also found the lesser ginseng in bloom while we were there.

Of course Spring is also about flowers, and seeing all of the Spring flowers coming up on Sycamore Island is a joyful event. But there are some flowers that don't bloom here, like the blood root. That plant I would have to seek out somewhere else. I took a hike on the Billy Goat Trail, I didn't see any blood roots there but the shad bushes were in full bloom and the trout lilies were everywhere.

Come late April, it was time to venture a little further a field to the Trillium Trail. There, along the Appalachian Trail, near Skyline Drive, the trilliums bloom by the thousands and you can walk through acres of pink and white flowers decorating the forest floor. While hiking there I found the elusive blood root, but not the lady slippers that we were hoping to see.

Near the end of Spring I went to the mountains and again experienced the overwhelming presence of song birds in the forest. While at this higher elevation I saw the remnants of a lady slipper, a kind of orchid, and I saw the first of the mountain laurels sending out their bushes full of bell-shaped flowers.

It has been an amazing Spring from the first dutchman's breeches to the extra-showy mountain laurel. Can't wait until next spring.

**[Editor's Note:** Since May 20, the river has remained below 5 feet and has been hovering around 4-feet since the last days of May. The Ferry has now been operational for more than two weeks, with no interruptions due to high water. And there is no major rain event in the two-week forecast! If this pattern holds, the Island is likely to be continually accessible for longer than any other period over the past year. Fingers crossed.....]

## [Minutes of May 8, 2019 Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club](#)

High water rendered an On-Island meeting impossible, and the meeting was moved to the gracious premises of John and Diane Noble.

Attendees: Steve Newman, Ann Marie Cunningham, David Winer, Florin Kogelnik, Anne Waidmann, Mark Friedrichs, Tryon Wells, Adele Seifried, Peter Levine, Jim Drew, Matt Goldman, Stan Fowler, Bill Marmon, Mary Ellen Levine, Fred Ohly, Meredith Griggs, Diane Noble, Gerry Barton, Karen Possner, John Membrino, Richard Bertaut, Vicki Judson, John Noble and Caretaker Joe Hage.

VP John Noble called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m., noted the presence of a quorum, and called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as printed in May Islander. Minutes were approved by acclamation.

**Clubhouse Supervisor:** Jim Drew sought authorization to purchase a defibrillator for the Club and after some discussion was so authorized by the Chair.

Karen Possner and Adele Siefried reported that the correct way to call in an emergency on the Island is as follows: ***“I am in Montgomery County calling from Sycamore Island.”***

**Treasurer’s report:** Florin Kogelnik. Expenditures on budget through April, with \$126,088 on hand.

**Legal Secretary:** The report was given by John Noble due to the absence of Rebecca Beynan. Rebecca’s revised liability release/waiver of claims form to be posted on the ferry boat was approved unanimously. Also approved was new Parental Liability Release form for parents with children over 15 years old who are on Island unsupervised. At the suggestion of Jim Drew, it was agreed that these forms also will be mailed with dues notices next year with notice of mandatory signature.

**Captain’s report:** Accompanied by words of praise and thanks, Captain Stan Fowler presented bonus check to Caretaker Joe Hage.

**Caretaker’s Report:** Joe Hage reported that the Spring workfest went wonderfully, with much help from members and waitlisters. (We all agreed that his leadership was instrumental as well!!)

Joe also informed the group that for any who missed the workfest, he still has a list of projects that can be undertaken by individuals in lieu of workfest days.

**Islander:** Editor Mark Friedrichs was commended for great work on Islander. Mark thanked the contributors, especially Sue Super for all her photos.

At this point, the business meeting was temporarily suspended to hear a presentation by Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks, after introductions by Mary Ellen Lavine and by Nancy Stoner, President of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. Naujoks, who has responsibility for the Potomac from Harper’s Ferry to the river mouth, reported the acquisition recently of a vessel with an onboard laboratory used to collect and monitor river samples.

Returning to the business of the meeting, with president Richard Bertaut in the Chair, Membership Secretary Anne Waidmann reported ongoing efforts to revise the definition of Senior Member. She reported that, as of tonight’s meeting, we have the following numbers of members in each category:

Regular Members: 160; Senior Members: 80; Inactive Members: 19; Honorary Members: 16; Waiting List: 52

The recommendations of the task force set-up to develop possible changes in the Club’s By-Laws regarding “Senior Membership” are presented below.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted by Bill Marmon—Co-Recording Secretary

## [Senior Membership Proposal\(s\)](#)

At our March meeting, a task force was established to explore whether to change the requirements for Senior Membership. Currently, a Regular Member in good standing for at least 20 years may elect to become a Senior Member and pay half the normal dues. **The Task Force proposes that we add an age requirement for Senior Membership, and that the membership vote on this proposal at the June meeting.**

### **Background**

The effect on the Club of a Member electing Senior Membership is to release a place for someone from the Waiting List to become a Regular Member. It was designed to help to bring younger members and families into regular membership, by giving an incentive to those who had been long term members to continue their

membership at a reduced rate. There is actually a financial gain to the Club when a regular member moves to Senior status, despite the Senior Membership dues being half the regular dues, because the new Member will pay their initiation fee plus the full regular dues.

Since 2012 when we initiated the two-part lottery, half of our new members are under the age of 40 when they join the waiting list, and we no longer have people spending ten or more years on the waiting list; the average wait is about 4 years. This means Members will qualify for Senior Membership at increasingly younger ages, when they are likely still in prime earning years and prime Island usage years. In addition, because we call this category "Senior", many of our older members feel they should qualify for Senior Membership even though they haven't had a full 20 years of Regular membership. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that we change this rule, either to give this membership category a new name, or to implement an age requirement along with the years of membership requirement.

The task force proposes that we adopt a Rule of 85, under which a Regular Member would be eligible for Senior Membership when their age PLUS their years of full dues-paying membership total at least 85. Members who are eligible to elect Senior Membership will be notified of this in the annual dues notice. [Note: a simplified method of calculating when you will meet the rule of 85 is to subtract your starting age (as of the first of the year your Regular Membership began) from 85, divide the result in half (rounding up half years), and add that number to your starting age, to arrive at the age you will be when your age plus years of membership equals 85.]

Rule of 85 Examples:

1. Membership begins in the year the Member reaches: Age 57  
85 less 57 is 28  
28 divided in half is 14  
They will be eligible for Senior status at Age 71 after 14 years of membership; this is 6 years earlier than under the current rule.
2. Membership begins in the year the Member reaches: Age 34  
85 less 34 is 51  
51 divided in half is 25.5.  
They will be eligible for Senior status at Age 60 after 26 years of membership (because the Member must have age plus membership years of at least 85); this is 6 years later than under the current rule.

The effect of this rule would be to shorten the length of time to become eligible for Senior membership for anyone who became a Regular Member at age 46 or older, and to lengthen the time for anyone who became a Regular Member before age 45.

A related alternative to the Rule of 85 would be an amendment that would permit members to elect Senior Membership when they are either: Age 65 with 20 years, age 70 with 15 years, or age 75 with 10 years of Regular Membership. All of these would satisfy the Rule of 85, but the concept is a bit simpler, although it does present anomalies for anyone who became a Regular Member at an age other than a 5-year increment. For example, someone who became a member at age 45 would be eligible after 20 years of membership when they are 65, but someone who became a member at age 46 would have to wait an additional 4 years to be eligible when they are age 70 (since at 65 they have only 19 years of membership). Similarly, someone who joined at age 55 would be eligible at age 70 when they have 15 years of membership, but someone else who joined at age 56 would have to wait to age 75 to be eligible, after 19 years of membership.

The Task Force further proposes that the By-Laws require that Senior Membership be reviewed every 5 years, to determine the effect on the Club of the opportunity to become a Senior Member, and to make appropriate adjustments if the effect on Island membership and use necessitates any change in these provisions.

## Proposed Amendment to Sycamore Island By-Laws

A. Members must first choose between:

1. Keeping the Senior Membership requirement as it is (20 years of Regular Membership), but changing the name from "Senior Membership" to "Gold Membership" to avoid confusion.

OR

2. Adding an age component to the requirement for Senior Membership.

B. If the first option is chosen, no further action is required of the Membership. If the second option is chosen, there will be a second vote to determine how the age requirement will be implemented. Members will choose between the following two amendments to the first paragraph of Section 18 of the Sycamore Island By-Laws (Senior Membership):

1. Rule of 85: A Regular Member in good standing whose age plus years of full dues-paying Regular Membership equals at least 85 may elect Senior Membership. A Member's age shall be the age they have attained as of the first of the year, and Membership shall be determined based on calendar years in which the Member qualified as a Regular Member. If the member is a couple, then the age to be used for this calculation shall be the age of the older member of the couple as of the first day of the year. Members who are eligible to elect Senior Membership shall be so notified with their dues notice each year, and their election will be effective with payment of Senior Dues.

OR

2. A Regular Member in good standing may elect Senior Membership if they have reached either:
  - a. Age 65 and have at least 20 years of full dues-paying Regular Membership, or
  - b. Age 70 and have at least 15 years of full dues-paying Regular Membership, or
  - c. Age 75 and have at least 10 years of full dues-paying Regular Membership.A Member's age shall be the age they have attained as of the first of the year, and Membership shall be determined based on calendar years in which the Member qualified as a Regular Member. If the member is a couple, then the age to be used for this calculation shall be the age of the older member of the couple as of the first day of the year. Members who are eligible to elect Senior Membership shall be so notified with their dues notice each year, and their election will be effective with payment of Senior Dues.

C. Finally, Members must vote to accept or not the following amendment to Section 18:

Senior Membership is to be reviewed every 5 years, to determine the effect on the Club of the opportunity to become a Senior Member, and to make appropriate adjustments if the effect on Island membership and use necessitates any change in these provisions.



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