

The Sycamore Islander

October 2019 | Volume 98 Number 10



Clockwise from upper left: golden astor; boneset flowers; red admiral; ripe persimmons

Photos by Joe Hage

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October 13: Monthly Club Meeting, SUNDAY, 4 pm, on the Island

November 10: Fall Work-Fest, 9 am to 4 pm on the island

November 13: 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]. The app now provides a calendar that indicates the Relief Caretakers that have signed up through November and provides reminders. **[Since Joe will be away for more than a week, there are still lots of slots open in October (and November)]** Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

October 5

10 am to 2 pm: Jenelle Dennis & Chris Wengerl
2 to 7:00 pm: Robert Hardi

October 12

10 am to 2 pm: Shira Stutman
2 to 7 pm: Edward Tilghman

October 15

11 am to 3 pm: Meredith Griggs
3 to 7 pm: Charles Pill

October 16

11 am to 3 pm: Joe Belden
3 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

October 17

11 am to 3 pm: Mark Del Bianco
3 to 7 pm: Linda Greer

October 18

11 am to 3 pm: Peter Fuchs
3 to 7 pm: Jennifer Urquhart

October 19

10 am to 2 pm: John Stiff
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

October 20

11 am to 3 pm: **Volunteer Needed**
3 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

October 21

11 am to 3 pm: **Volunteer Needed**
3 to 7 pm: Andrew George

October 22

11 am to 3 pm: Meredith Griggs
3 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

October 23

11 am to 3 pm: Joe Belden
3 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

October 26

10 am to 2 pm: Kevin Haley
2 to 7 pm: **Volunteer Needed**

Thank You to the many volunteers that served as Relief Caretakers during September!!

Notes from the Island Leadership

Sunday afternoon club meeting.

Over the last several months, there have been several requests by individual members for our club to try having a monthly meeting that occurs during daylight hours and on a non-weekday. Our current schedule, of course, is to have the monthly meeting on the second Wednesday of each month, at 8:00PM. It is held on the Island when possible; in a member's home when the Island is not accessible. There now appears to be enough interest to support testing the concept of an occasional monthly meeting that will be held on a weekend day.

Therefore, in accordance with our By Law provisions, I am calling for our next monthly meeting to be in the Island Clubhouse, from 4:00 – 5:15PM on Sunday, October 13, 2019. This meeting will be instead of our normal 2nd Wednesday at 8PM time slot, and will include all of the agenda items normally covered in our Wednesday evening club meetings.

For those members who are in favor of having a portion of our meetings at this time slot, please be sure to come to this October meeting. If there is sufficient interest, we will consider scheduling another weekend meeting in the Spring. Also let us know if you plan to do some grilling before this meeting, so that charcoal grills can be fired up, if necessary.

Fall Work-Fest, November 10, 9 am to 4 pm (Nov 17th rain date)

Please mark the date(s) on your calendars. There is lots of work to be done and, as always, the Club will provide the basics for lunch (although everyone is encouraged to bring sides):

Rake leaves from fields

Bring in all docks and secure them on Island

Replace ferry railing

Food

- Grill food for lunch
- Set up tables for side dishes
- Make lemonade and ice water in big jugs
- Set up buffet with paper plate etc.

Grounds

- Move grills, chairs table etc.
- Clear trails on Island and trail down the hill
- Replace rotted 4x4's for brick walkways
- Trim branches and trees
- Cut vines from trees
- Remove invasive plants and vines
- Wrap trees with chicken wire and unwrap trees that are too tight
- Regrade topsoil under canoe shed

Cleaning

- Clean out wood stove
- Clean Club kitchen
- Clean Club room
- Clean windows of Clubhouse
- Clean bathrooms
- Clean screen porch
- Sweep out tool shed
- Wash windows of tool shed
- Clean ceiling fans

Painting

- Scape and spot-prime wood siding.
- Paint siding
- Paint rusted metal in screen porch.
- Paint numbers and letter on canoe shed racks

Ladder work

- Clean gutters and clear leaves from rooftop.
- Clear leaves off of canoe shed
- Apply roofing caulk to duct work on roof
- Install wire mesh to eaves of clubhouse addition

Carpentry

- Repair old picnic table
- Repair Clubhouse bench
- Reinforce cross brackets in canoe shed

Cut logs and split for cord wood

- Collect kindling
- Stack firewood
- Cut and Clear fallen branches

Kids

- Clean and organized board games
- Clean foosball table
- Pick up trash on the Island
- Clean safety equipment

Electrical

- Install new outdoor light fixture near Island-side ferry landing.

Club boats

- Check canoes and kayaks for repairs

[CARETAKER's LOG](#)



Mist Flowers, Photo by Joe Hage

Tuesday -- September 3, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 81

I took another big bite out of that pesky log that's in the path of our ferry. I knew that there were going to be a lot of people running the ferry during the regatta and I was nervous about the ferry getting hung up. Also, the wind blowing from downstream was causing the ferry to run right into that log, so on Sunday I decided to try to make it better. This time I had some help and after rigging the come-a-long and tugging the tree out of the river as much as possible, Club member Garth and I set into cutting. Not only did we cut that same branch further back but we had to cut the smaller limb below it, since the river was all the way down to 2.9 feet and the ferry was now getting stuck on that branch too. Suddenly, it's almost a pleasure to run the ferry. Almost.

Speaking of running the ferry, there were over ninety people (mostly non-members) on the ferry yesterday. I lost count of the number of trips that I did but I must have pulled the ferry for over three miles!

The rain did not affect the event too much, but of course I got soaked pulling the ferry in the rain. I will never

understand why folks can't wait 15 minutes for the storm to pass before they ring the exit bell.

A great big THANK YOU to Steve, Mia and their two daughters for doing all of the hard work to put the Regatta together!!

Sunday -- September 15, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8 Water Temperature: 78

The swimming lately has been spectacular. I've been swimming every day for the last two weeks. Perfectly warm days and a cool, clear river that isn't in flood stage. It's so nice to get my river-side lifestyle back after last year's flooding. I'm tempted to take the biodegradable Camp-suds down to the dock and just take my bath in the river!



I was cutting the grass the other day when I came upon what looked like a rodent's burrow. We have many voles digging on the Island so it isn't unusual to see holes everywhere, but this hole was bigger, so I had to check it out. My first thought was a wood rat so I reached down into the hole to see which way the tunnel went. Maybe not a good idea to stick your hand blindly into a burrow, but as I felt around I realized that there was no tunnel. If there was no tunnel, who dug this hole and why? I started to scoop the loose dirt from the bottom of the hole, looking for clues. Interestingly, the hole was perfectly round and symmetrical, 6 inches deep and 6 inches wide, about the size of a small mixing bowl. The top of the hole curved inward like the dome of the Pantheon with its opening in the middle. The weird thing was that inside the hole I found pieces of a honeycomb and lots of bits that looked like shredded honeycombs. Could this have been a nest for a large colony of ground-nesting bees? My working theory is that the bees had to abandon the nest last year during the flooding, and that over time the roof of the nest dried out and caved in, exposing the amazing engineering of these tiny creatures within. I wonder how many times I ran over that nest with the mower without getting stung.

Our septic tank is buried, of course, but the access lid is very close to the surface. The latch is secure but since the consequences of falling into the septic tank are high, I decided to place two cinder blocks and a stout plank over top of it to keep people from standing directly on the lid, just in case.

Monday -- September 23, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.72 Water Temperature: 78

The river is all the way down to 2.72 so I had to look back and check the historical record about when it was last this low. We had some pretty low water in 2013, (it was 2.78 in November that year) but below you can read what I wrote on September 10, 2010.

"The river is really low right now. The rocks are exposed, and stained with mud, making it look as if our dam has sprung a leak. This is the lowest the river has been since my first September here, eight years ago! Back then it got down to 2.18 and it became necessary to release water from the u-river dams to keep the river at its minimum flow. If this drought keeps up we may have to do the same this year."

It's been so long since then that I'm finding it hard to imagine what the river was like back in 2002. What I do remember about my first Summer/Fall here was that the low water was short-lived and it seemed like it rained all of September and October that year.

Sunday -- September 29, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7 Water Temperature: 76

One of the cool things that you can do when the water is this low is walk along the shore of the Island. You can't quite circumnavigate the Island but it's fun, for a change, to walk along the "beach" between the river and the trees on the southern side of the Island. Lots of late summer/autumn flowers there too.



Another cool thing to do when the water is this low is to step back in history. If you paddle upstream for a couple of miles, past the first two ledges, you come

to a third rocky ledge. Here you can find a very long, man-made wall of piled up stones. This wall was built in the 1780's to help George Washington's Potomack Co. move cargo-laden boats up and down the river. These walls were built to impound and divert the river so that the boats could travel during periods of low water. Amazingly, the walls are still doing their job and they helped me find enough waterflow to get up past that third ledge just below Minnie's Island.

Sadly, I paddled all the way up to the beltway bridge and back and didn't catch, or even see (I wore my polarized glasses to see below the surface better), a smallmouth bass. What I did see were dozens of carp and a couple of gigantic catfish. Then, I was surprised to see the colorful orange, black and white markings of an 18 inch koi! What is going on?



Across from Plumbers Island, Photo by Joe Hage

[Minutes from September 11, 2019, Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club](#)

Attendees: Larry Heilman, David Winer, Richard Bertaut, Jim Drew, Stan Fowler, John Noble Florian Kogelnik, Gerry Barton, Anne Waidmann, Mark Friedrichs, Sherry Fizdale, Bill Marmon, caretaker Joe Hage.

Meeting on the Island was called to order by President Bertaut at 8:05 p.m. with a quorum present.

After introductions, the minutes of August meeting were approved by acclamation and President Bertaut reported a highly successful Regatta with 90 participants.

Later in the meeting there was a formal (motion and unanimous approval) expression of tribute and gratitude to Regatta organizer Mia Holland, and also to long-time (now former) Regatta impresario Cindy Bertaut and Vicki Judson for initiating and making the Regatta one of the Island's signature events.

Treasurer's Report—by Florian Kogelnik—Finances of Island are in excellent shape as we approach fourth quarter. Treasurer recently transferred \$93,500 into the Club's Merrill Lynch account, which will reconstitute a reserve fund of approximately one year's operating expenses.

Captain's Report—by Stan Fowler. Plans are underway to repair and expand the canoe shed with six newly restored spaces.

Caretaker Report—by Joe Hage—House siding project has been completed. Joe reported the unexpected presence of two paddle boards and requested and received authorization to purchase two paddle board paddles.

Fall Work Fest set for Sunday Nov. 10 with rain date of Nov. 27.

Entertainment Supervisor—John Butler will serve as “entertainment coordinator.”

New Website and Data Maintenance—Sherry Fizedale led discussion on plans for a new website and management of Club data. Sherry received authorization to engage Club Express for the new website. Management of Club membership and financial data is still under discussion.

Membership Secretary report — by Anne Waidmann. Current membership stats: Regular members—160. Senior Members—78. Inactive members—19. Honorary Members—16 Waitlist—52. Since adoption of new definition of Senior Member last month, two regular members have requested Senior Member status (age plus length of regular membership sums to 85).

Anne led discussion on whether the lottery, currently scheduled for April 2020, for new waitlisters should be delayed since current wait list stands at 52. Our By Laws limit the Wait List to 60 spaces. It was noted that the impact of the new Senior Member definition is not yet known. Nor is it known how many members will resign next year. Several members expressed opposition to outright cancellation of lottery in 2020. But there was support for moving the lottery until later in the year to be sure all dropouts are accounted for. Anne has established a committee to discuss this issue as well as several other membership issues, including affording applicants who were previously unsuccessful in a past lottery with a double chance when they apply again.

New Business—President Bertaut announced that, pursuant to earlier authorization, the October meeting will be scheduled for Sunday October 13, in the Afternoon as an experiment in response to Member requests that evening meetings were inconvenient for some, and the path more hazardous in the evening. Members will be notified by email blast.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Many thanks to Anne Waidmann for great cheese and crackers.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Marmon, Co-Recording Secretary



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