

The Sycamore Islander

January 2020 | Volume 99 Number 1



Photos by Lynda Slayen, John Butler and Mark Friedrichs

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January 8: Monthly Club Meeting, 8 pm, at home of Hans and Amber Rickhoff, 6510 Ridge Drive

February 12: Monthly Club Meeting, at home of Lynda and Gary Slayen, 6605 Rivercrest Court. **Please RSVP, lyndaslayen123@gmail.com**

[During 2020, we'd like to start meetings with a half hour of entertainment by members and wait-listers, followed by a half hour of Club meeting business. We are looking for engaging speakers on almost any topic, musicians, magicians, storytellers, birders, authors, filmmakers. Please contact our new Meeting Entertainment Coordinator: lyndaslayen123@gmail.com, 301-229-6605]

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](#) (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 outgoing Relief Caretaker Coordinator at madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com]. The app now provides a calendar that indicates the Relief Caretakers that have signed up through February 15 and provides reminders. **[Still one slot open in January and several in February]** Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

January 4

11:00 am to dark: Meredith Griggs

January 11

11:00 am to dark: Peter and Mary Ellen Levine

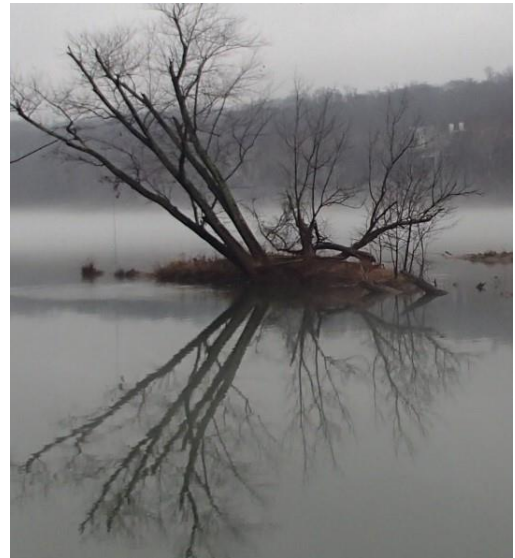
January 18

11:00 am to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

January 25

11:00 am to dark: Catherine Commander

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



Sycamore Island Accomplishments for 2019

Reported by President, Richard Bertaut, Dec. 31, 2019

The members, with the leadership of Supervisors and Officers, and the ongoing proactive initiative by and services of Caretaker Joe Hage, have accomplished a number of major improvements this year. Parallel with this is the ongoing enjoyment and maintenance of the Island by our members. In this, my third and final year as President, I am pleased to report the following accomplishments for 2019:

1. Replacement of the 20 year old member database and club web presence, through migration to a contemporary system hosted by the respected provider Club Express. Special thanks to the initiative and hard work of Sherry Fizdale.
2. Revised the requirements for Senior Membership to "the rule of 85," with leadership from Anne Waidmann.
3. Revised timetable for membership application period from three to one month, with the initiative of Anne Waidmann.
4. Improved the club's release of liability waivers and associated procedures, under the leadership of Rebecca Beynon.
5. Ferry sign-in form improvements, monitoring and data collection of island usage, thanks to Madeleine Carter.
6. Authorized the purchase of new sturdy composite Adirondack chairs, following the initiative and research conducted by Phil Goldberg.
7. Installed emergency resuscitation AED equipment in the club kitchen, with the leadership of Dan Jamieson and Jim Drew.
8. Replaced rotting siding on the Clubhouse, including installing new insulation on the outside, with precise workmanship and surface and color matching by Joe Hage.

9. Re-screened first floor, led by Tove Elfstrom, Roman Kulbashny and Joe Hage.
10. Accepted paddle board donations, and Mark Friedrichs arranged the purchase of paddles.
11. The renovation of our club archives facility in the Carnegie Library was completed and opened to the public. Visits can be made by reservation. Karen Possner was instrumental in organizing our materials and coordinating with archives staff.
12. Began reconstruction of canoe shed that was damaged by a falling tree in 2018. Karl Kosok and John Noble are leading this effort.
13. Approved in the 2020 Budget improved Caretaker compensation to reflect the wide scope of his responsibilities and leadership. Initiative by Madeleine Carter and Anne Marie Cunningham.
14. Acquisition and installation of new Clubhouse furniture. Purchase initiated by Karen Possner and the transportation to the island and assembling of all pieces was performed by a wonderful team of volunteers.

Attention all Members: Website Migration

As you have heard, the club is migrating from our existing web site at SycamoreIsland.org to a new web site, at SycamoreIsland.ClubExpress.com. All members should have received an email "Welcome" message from Club Express, giving them access to the new site, and providing them with their username and initial password. Please take the time now to log in to your new account and to make any changes to your information that are necessary. You will be able to change your password, and even your username if you wish. You can also add family members' emails to your account, so that they will also receive emails from the club.

One of the great new advantages is the quick customer support by the Club Express tech support staff. Feel free to contact them with any questions or issues in using the new system. They also have comprehensive help documentation available on the site.

The new web site will have two distinct sections: a "front page" that will be visible to the world, with general information about the club, its history and our application procedures; and a members only area (accessible by signing in) that will serve as our main club communications channel, and be the place for members to pay their fees and renewals each year.

We are also **looking for members and waitlisters as volunteers** to help with posting island photos, notices, and other useful information on this new site. Don't worry, no HTML experience is necessary and the Club Express platform is relatively easy to navigate. We can give volunteers access to subsections of the site, where they can post information about upcoming events, start discussion groups about club projects, and help us to transfer the many levels of club information from the old site to the new.

We expect that it will take several months for the new site to include the wealth of information from the current site. Please be patient with this transition as your volunteer officers work to integrate the new system and improve our workflows. And again, additional volunteers will expedite this process, so please sign up to help with this migration effort!

Report on First Winter Performance Festival, December 8

On Sunday December 8th, the normally quiet December version of the island came to life with the sound of music and poetry. For those that missed it, we celebrated our first Performance Festival on the island with some marvelous



entertainment. The weather was a perfect, sunny 45 degrees. Joe Hage and Jennifer Hearn began the afternoon by performing a really wonderful set with terrific harmony. Geoff Holdridge and his son Sebastian did some of Sebastian's originals, to great reviews. Geoff then allowed a few of us to jam with him on a rockin' blues number. Then John Butler's band played a set of well thought out covers. Many genres. Finally Russell Sturm's band who supported all the musicians throughout the day, played a great concluding set of all originals. If you missed it, you won't want to miss the next one. Sometime this spring. Schedule TBD, but sometime late March or April. See you there! [photos by John Butler]

CARETAKER's LOG

Monday -- December 9, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 44

We had a great time on the Island yesterday at the first ever Island Winter Performance Festival. John Butler, the new entertainment director, organized a wonderful event and the weather cooperated nicely. There were four musical acts and John read seasonably-appropriate poems in between the acts. Club member Jennifer Hearn and I started the show with a quick, 8-song acoustic set, followed by member, Geoff Holdridge on fiddle with his teenage son, Sebastian, on guitar. Then the rocking began with John Butler's four-piece band cranking it up with John on drums. Then we had the headliner, The 1519 Band from Capitol Hill, featuring Club-member Russell Sturm on Keyboards. Lots of high-quality music, and all originals! There was a pretty good crowd in the Clubhouse, but very few non-musician Club members bothered to show up. If they only knew what they were missing.

Wednesday -- December 11, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3 Water Temperature: 43

I had to laugh out loud yesterday morning. I was pulling the ferry close to the mainland, and there, in the middle of the pile of sticks and branches that the beaver had collected, was a big piece of CHICKEN WIRE! The chicken wire that we had so laboriously wrapped around the trees was now in a useless heap. I guess we'll have to up our efforts to beat the determination of these hungry beavers.

Remember folks, the sun may be shining but the water temperature is below 55. Once the water temperature drops below 55 no one is allowed to use the Club boats or paddle boards, for safety's sake.



Friday -- December 13, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2 Water Temperature: 40

Another Friday the 13th? We just had one back in September! So far we aren't too lucky with the weather. Don't forget to throw some salt over your shoulder for good luck.

A big "Thank You" to Vicki Judson and her husband Michael Esch for hosting the Club's annual Holiday Party/Monthly meeting. Not only did they host the event, but Vicki served her incredible salmon. A full fish with head and tail still attached, but instead of skin and scales Vicki layered the succulent flesh with thinly sliced cucumbers that looked like scales. WOW! If you can only make it to one meeting per year, the December meeting is the one to go to. Besides the salmon, Vicki made cheese cake and served drinks. And no Club holiday party is complete without Dave Winer's awesome eggnog. It was great to see everyone and I hope that next year the Club will find a way to discuss the annual budget without asking me to leave the room and wait in the garage.

The rain is pretty steady now and it looks like our docile river may start to do some bucking. It's been so nice to have the river at a steady 3 feet for so many weeks, but a river level of five feet is not out of the question for next week.

Friday -- December 20, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.6 Water Temperature: 37

It looks like the river is going to stay below five feet and the ferry will remain open all week. They always seem to overestimate the water levels. It's about to crest this morning at 4.66. It's been a long time since we've seen the river this high.

It's cold, and there is a little ice forming in the canal but so far I've been able to keep the water running in the Clubhouse. It's supposed to be warmer next week so I'll try to keep the water coming out of the spigots for as long as possible.

This recent cold blast has brought us some winter waterfowl to enjoy. I saw a group of hooded mergansers yesterday. Right outside my window!

Sunday -- December 29, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 40

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas! I know I did. Christmas Eve is my favorite. First we went the see

the Christmas pageant at the Brookmont "church" which gets me in the mood. Then we go to the main event at my brother's house, and the main event at the main event is eating Lefse. Lefse is a Norwegian, potato-based crepe that you slather with butter and wrap bacon inside, and it is heavenly. And for some reason, we only eat it once a year at Christmas time.

For Christmas dinner, I prepared a ham for the group. I bought a special ham from "PORK STORK" at the Brookmont farmer's market. It was like nothing I've had before, not smoked or cured, just fresh meat, and it was fantastic! It was strange not having my "Norwegian" Dad, the Viking, there for Christmas this year but having such a large, loving family helped to ease that burden.

I got the Club a Christmas present! Actually, I found it on the side of the road on Bradley Blvd., but regardless, I am presenting the club with a new croquet set! It's old but in good shape and it is definitely a deluxe set. All we need to do is make some wickets for it.

Not much beaver activity lately. I guess they are satisfied with the amount of provisional trees that they have collected.

The new year is around the bend and I have lots of things for us to do before the weather gets nice again. Most importantly, fix the zip line, so send me an email and let me know when you can come down to help me get things ready, thanks.

Happy New Year!

Monday -- December 30, 2019

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 42

They say it's going to get up to 68 degrees today! I doubt if it will get that warm down here, next to this cold river, we probably won't break 60 degrees. The cool thing about having warm air while the water temperature is so cold is that it forms a thick fog above the river. The fog creates an otherworldly feel down here and I'm looking forward to paddling into the foggy abyss.



Addendum: Wednesday – January 1, 2020

The sky was clear and air was cool, but not cold, as more than ten visited the Island...



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



Present: Vicki Judson, Anne Waidmann, Madeleine Carter, John Butler, John Noble, Diane Noble, Susannah Membrino, John Membrino, Phoebe Hamil, Karen Possner, Stan Wiggins, Mark Friedrichs, Ann Marie Cunningham, John Cunningham, Richard Bertaut, Gerry Barton, Phil Ross, Marianne Ross, Lucky Marmon, Bill Marmon, Dave Winer, Mark Del Bianco, Mary Del Bianco, Star Mitchell, Florian Kogelnik, Adele Siefreid, Alec Graham, Robin Richter, Tryon Wells, Linda Slayen, Gary Slayen, Cecily Abram, Renee Dunham, Mike Esch, Meredith Griggs, Joe Hage

November minutes were approved.

Caretaker's report: Joe Hage reported that because of considerable beaver activity, he has added wire around trees. Karen Posner, Stan Wiggins, and Jim Drew have also helped in this effort. Islanders are encouraged to wrap the trees Joe has marked and can charge any wire purchased to the club. Water is still on and bathrooms were operating for the December music performances.



Membership: Anne Waidmann introduced three new families, who were voted in to membership: James Landfield; Tom Holmberg and Allsion Southall; and Sierra Casillas and Tom Driggs. Fifteen places are now open for the 2020 lottery, and more are expected as dues renewal comes in. Applications for the lottery will be accepted only in January and can now be downloaded from the website. Membership status currently: regular 162; senior 84; inactive 19; honorary 16; wait list 48.

Entertainment: Following the successful music performances this month, John Butler intends to schedule events for late March or April, late summer, and winter 2020. He thanked George and Shelly Malusky for cooking for the work fest and for the downriver race.

Archivist report: Karen Posner needs any club documents for the DC Archives by December 31. In addition to Islander newsletters, these include financial, membership, and any documents of historical significance (anything that needs to be memorialized). Karen receives receipts for items the club gives the Archives, which then retains them as theirs.

Nominating committee: John Noble proposed the slate of officers and supervisors for 2020, which was unanimously approved. Members also suggested an honorary membership for Tryon Wells, in thanks for his years of service to the club.

Web development/web transition: Richard Bertaut explained that club members must register by December 31 to receive email blasts. All have received an initial email introducing the new system, Club Express, and outlining how to set up an account. The advantages of the new site are that notices can be sent out quickly; dues and payments tracking will be easier; and dues can be paid through the portal (online) with Discover, Visa, or Mastercard. No dues letters will be sent by mail; dues will not be raised in 2020. Each family will have one account, even with multiple email addresses. For three months the club will have both old and new sites. Then, in March, the old site will point to the new one. Anyone interested in building the website is welcome to participate.

Treasurer's report: Florian Kogelnik related that in 2019, the club budgeted \$92,000 but spent \$87,000, the largest expenses being the shed, supplies, and chairs, with less for insurance this year. Costs will likely stay the same in 2020, and the budget for that year was unanimously approved. Members thanked Florian for his work.

New business: Because of low turnout for the fall work fest (43 versus highs of over 70), a suggestion was made to have fixed dates each year for the work fests. But variable weather, especially flooding, may make this impossible. Another factor in the low turnout was the late email blast, which should be remedied by the new website.

The meeting adjourned with thanks to Vicki Judson for again hosting the holiday party and to Richard Bertaut for serving as President of the Club for the last three years.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith Griggs
Co recording secretary
[Photos by Lynda Slayen and Mark Friedrichs]

2020 Club Officers and Supervisors

Sycamore Island Officers and Supervisors, 2020

OFFICERS

President --John Noble
Vice-President --Madeleine Carter
Recording Secretary -- Lucky Marmon
Recording Secretary -- Bill Marmon
Recording Secretary -- Meredith Griggs
Treasurer -- Florian Kogelnick
Financial Secretary -- Sharon (Sherry) H. Fizdale
Membership Secretary -- Anne Waidmann
Islander Editor -- Mark Friedrichs
Archivist -- Karen Possner
Captain -- Alec Graham

SUPERVISORS

Finance -- Ann Marie Cunningham
Law -- Rebecca Beynon
Clubhouse -- Jim Drew
Grounds -- Alice Bullard
Carpentry/Painting -- Karl Kosok
Website -- Richard Bertaut
Entertainment -- John Butler
Meeting Entertainment Coordinator –
(to be voted on 1/8/20) Lynda Slayen
Camping/Parties -- Molly Newberry
Canoeing -- Joe Cecil
Swimming -- Vicki Judson
Relief Caretaker Scheduling—
(to be voted on 1/8/20) Sarah Fraidin and Chuck Pill

Caretaker — Joe Hage

Sycamore Island Membership Secretary's Report, December 11, 2019

Membership. As of tonight, prior to voting on our new members, we have the following numbers of members in each category:

Regular Members: 160 Senior Members: 84 Inactive Members: 19 Honorary Members: 16 Waiting List: 45

Introduction of members to be voted in tonight.

James Landfield

James was sponsored by John Noble, though he thought Star Mitchell was his sponsor, and she might have been, as she has worked with him for years in the Canoe Cruisers Association, of which he is the treasurer. He is a CFO who lives in a 250-year-old log cabin and raises goats and cattle. He has been involved in conservation projects for many years, and grew up canoeing in Minnesota. He is recommended for membership by Story Jones and Sharon Gustafson, who describe him as a “friendly community member with a gift for keeping people informed and bringing people together.” Anne Waidmann also recommends Jim for membership and reports that his organizational skills and enthusiasm will make him a great addition to the membership.

Tom Holmberg and Allison Southall

Tom and Allison’s application for membership was sponsored by Sandra Robinson, and they are recommended by Rachel Rudy and Nat Reid as well as by Tove Elfstrom. Rachel reports that they are kind and thoughtful people. They and their three children, Doug, Beatrice and Calvin, have lived in Brookmont for many years and have greatly enjoyed living so close to the banks of the Potomac. They value the nature of the Sycamore Island Club and will be good stewards of the Island as well as greatly enjoying access to the river. Tove says he has taught the Holmberg children at the Washington Waldorf School, and finds that the family is “the perfect fit for membership”. They live nearby, are oriented towards the natural world and have a strong affinity for our river and what it offers. They are warm and outgoing and very involved at the school and will likely be equally active at Sycamore. Their young family will grow with the Island and benefit the Club as they participate in the Club work.

Sierra Casillas and Tom Driggs

Sierra and Tom were sponsored by Whitney Pinger, and recommended by Story Jones and Sharon Gustafson. They have three small children (one newborn!) The family understands the importance of community and strives to be active participants in the communities of which they are part. Story says “the Sycamore Island Club will benefit from their contributions for years to come as their family grows. Sierra’s local roots run deep having been born and raised in Arlington. They have a deep appreciation for local opportunities for wholesome family fun, such as those that can be created and shared at Sycamore Island.”

Preparation for 2020 Lottery. Be sure to let your friends know this is the year for the membership lottery. Applications will be accepted only in the month of January, and must be mailed or hand delivered to the Membership Secretary. The application form will be available to download from the website.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Waidmann
Membership Secretary



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