



Belle Isle News

Newsletter of the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

No. 17

September 1987

Important: CLEAN-UP, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

TIME: 9AM - 3PM

PLACE: Belle Isle Park, Bennington Street, East Boston

CONTACT: MDC Public Information 727-5215 or 5350

Grab those old work clothes and come out for our annual clean-up. Crews will disperse throughout the marsh and collect all that fabulous junk we usually find on our clean-ups. (See "Clean-ups at Belle Isle Marsh" in this issue.) Free T-shirts, gloves, and cold drinks for all volunteers.

MDC and Friends of Belle Isle Marsh are co-sponsoring this clean-up.

LOMBARDO CONTROVERSY

The dispute over a planned two story building that would border on Belle Isle Marsh on the edge of the Osco Drug lot went through a critical stage when the long-awaited DEQE site visit finally occurred on July 1. (See "Watchdogs" in *Belle Isle News*, March 1987.) Conducting the meeting was environmental engineer James Sprague. Present were members of FBIM, officials of the MDC, and other concerned citizens opposed to the project. Also present was Vincent Lombardo, principal partner of Saratoga Realty and owner of the property, who came to defend his plans to the largely skeptical group.

"I don't want to hurt the land either," Lombardo stated, standing among the trash



Mr. Lombardo: This is your land!

scattered all over his property. He stressed that an addition to the present building would not damage the marsh.

FBIM attorney Ned Lawson countered Lombardo's assertions, questioning everything from the legality of the Order of Conditions from Boston Conservation Commission to the exact position of the 100-year flood plain as shown on Lombardo's plans.

John Kilmartin, President of FBIM, wanted to know: "If he can't take care of his property today, how does he expect us to believe he can do it in the future?"

A decision by DEQE either to stop, modify, or give the go-ahead to start construction on the site will happen by late summer. Whatever the outcome, the final say will probably come from the courts.

Franklin B. Tucker

TREASURER'S REPORT

In 1986 there were several positive trends compared to 1985: due to an increase in the membership, dues collected increased by \$304; unsolicited donations increased by \$696; postage expenses decreased by \$236. And for every \$1 in dues we received \$1.45 in donations, an increase of \$.33 over 1985. On the negative side, our printing expenses increased by \$489 over 1985.

Thank you for your financial support. I would like to encourage your increased support in 1987, because it enables FBIM to provide a quality newsletter and to continue its activities on behalf of Belle Isle Marsh.

Ann Lindsey, Treasurer

FINANCIAL REPORT

Income:		Expenses:	
Dues	\$1097.00	Printing	\$1446.40
Donations	1586.21	Postage	362.60
Fundraising	2175.20	Supplies	685.08
T-shirts	533.50	Speaker	50.00
		Fundraising expenses:	
		Printing	94.00
		Postage	75.00
		Membership	25.00
		T-shirts	515.00
		TOTAL	\$3253.08

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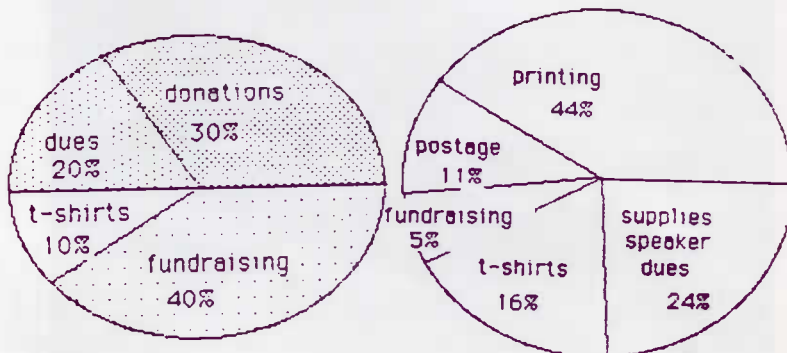
Beginning balance 3/1/86	\$ 493.56
Income 1986	5391.91
Expenses 1986	3253.08
	<hr/>
Ending balance 2/28/87	\$2632.39

CORING

On July 31, a 30-foot aluminum pipe was driven straight down into the marsh near Rosie's Puddle. It was stopped by a layer of loose gravel and removed with a 15-foot core sample of the marsh intact. Professor Paul Struthers and Ph.D. candidate Allan Saiz of Boston University's Geology Department, assisted by Chris Rodstrom of the MDC Interpretive Staff, planned and carried out this coring.

This project is an attempt to study the bottom sediments and layers of the marsh. The core is being analyzed at a private laboratory in Cambridge. Due to the high cost of this kind of analysis, other samples of the marsh will be studied at intervals as funds permit.

One of the analysis techniques used is Carbon-14 dating, which gives accurate ages for organic remains such as vegetation and pollen. Among other data, we should get a good idea of the age of the marsh, estimated currently at 5000 years.



Income—1986

Expenses—1986

CLEAN-UPS AT BELLE ISLE MARSH

The many sides of this marsh suffer from careless littering, deliberate dumping and tidal washings of plastic material hazardous to plants and animals. Plants are smothered by it; animals are choked internally by ingestion and externally by entanglement. And many of us gag at the sight of it. These hazards have been reduced in Belle Isle Marsh and nearby through clean-ups manned by our members and coordinated by MDC. Local public works departments and the National Guard also contribute heavy equipment and personnel.

EAST BOSTON:

A clean-up held in July 1985 was aimed mainly at the isolated marsh-meadow bordering Saratoga Street. Subsequently, the MDC placed a low, wooden barrier along the street and cleaned up the unpaved sidewalk and adjacent brush. The City of Boston now pays more attention to this border area. Occasional dumping over the fence is more easily spotted and removed by the city or, sometimes, by one of our more zealous members. (Unfortunately, littering, dumping and potential development remain a problem near Saratoga Street, behind Osco Drug. See "Lombardo Controversy" in this issue.)

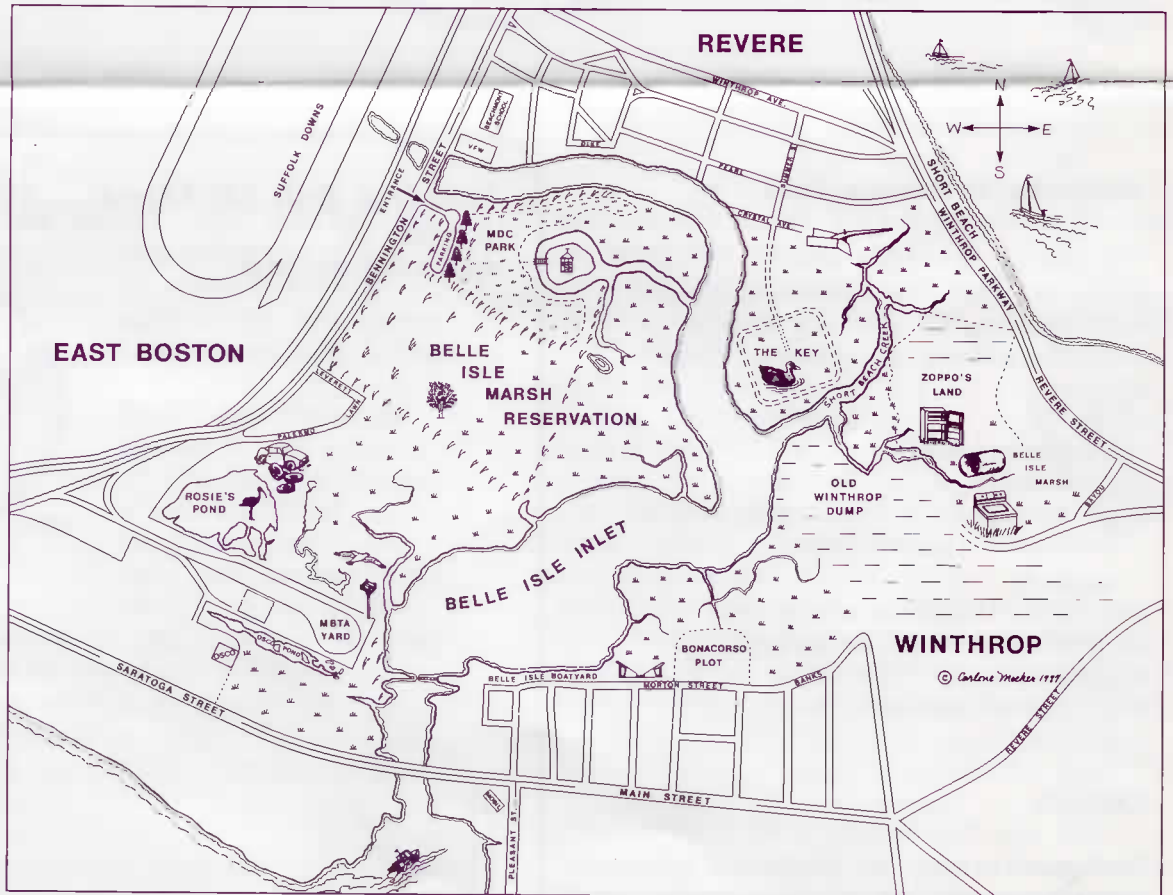
In its program to protect Belle Isle Reservation, on the East Boston side of Belle Isle Inlet, the MDC has also fenced along Bennington, Lawn and Palermo Streets. MDC and city crews

now attend to these areas as well as the new park grounds within the reservation. Abutters also watch out for dumping. These sites were the focus of our first clean-up (June 1983), in which many large items, including cars, were dragged out.

The main problem area left in Eastie lies between the MBTA yard and Belle Isle Inlet, where remnants of a defunct boat club comprise an ecological disaster and eyesore which await the settlement of legalities. Then, we will attack!

REVERE (BEACHMONT):

In October 1984, several truckloads of debris were removed from the Summer Street side of the marsh. Unfortunately the effect of all this labor was spoiled by dumpers driving down Summer Street into the marsh. Now, finally, a gate deters vehicles -- but not strollers -- from the embankment encircling salt ponds in which wading birds feed from mid-April to October.



Have you seen all there is to see at Belle Isle?

Map by Carlene Meeker

WINTHROP:

In our December 1986 issue we described the most recent clean-up on the Winthrop side (Short Beach-Zoppo areas). In October 1983 the Morton Street section was cleaned. Here, watchful neighbors help deter littering and dumping. (However, as reported in the June newsletter, boatyard debris has become a problem in this area. Also, the status of the Bonacorso property is still under litigation.)

* * * * *

Despite the storm-borne debris of this winter's high tides and the periodic dumping that still occurs, conditions have greatly improved over these four years of clean-ups. Everywhere in the marsh our efforts have resulted in marsh-meadows that are greener in summer, rosier in early fall, and richer in wavy blends of golden browns, tans and silvery green at other times of year. We trust that fewer creatures are choking on plastic and that Snowy Egret and other seasonal visitors will continue to find it worthwhile to grace an ever healthier Belle Isle Marsh.

Our next clean-up is on Saturday, October 3. Will you be there?

Esther Fich

BIRDFINDER

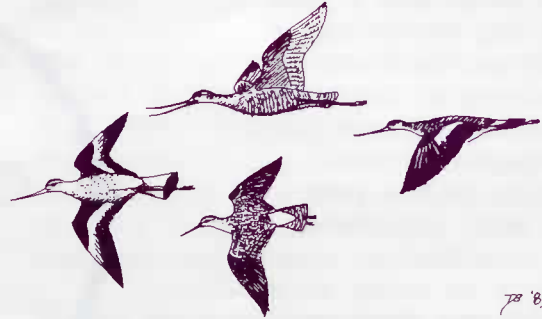
This summer has left us with an unsolved mystery: Did Blue-winged Teal nest at Belle Isle Marsh? This marsh duck, though not uncommon, has not been documented as nesting in the Boston area since the mid-seventies. For the past several summers at least one pair of Blue-winged Teal has been spotted at Belle Isle. This year, two pairs were spotted. They were here for most of the summer and seemed to prefer the ponds behind Osco Drug. I have also seen them in the Revere ponds.

Early in the season, we had a verbal report of some ducklings following a male Blue-wing, but none of the regular birdfinders have been fortunate enough to confirm a second sighting. There are several look-alikes to contend with. Female ducks and ducklings of many species look alike. Baby Black Ducks and Mallards

are indistinguishable except by determining the species of the mother that they may be following.

The mystery remains. Please report anything that you may have seen to us in writing.

Common Terns once again nested in Rosie's Pond. However, they appeared not to fledge any chicks -- another mystery of the summer. Perhaps crows or Black-crowned Night-Herons were the culprits.



All the marsh regulars returned in large numbers. One morning in late July, there were over a hundred Short-billed Dowitchers in the Revere ponds. On August 2, there were more than 150 Snowy Egrets in Rosie's Pond. Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpipers, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Green-backed Herons and peep have been present in great numbers.

There are some wonderful things to see in the fall. In September and October look for Northern Harriers and Ospreys. The harrier or Marsh Hawk is one of my favorite birds. It is large (17 to 24 inches long) and hunts low over the marsh. There is nothing quite like the russet browns of the young birds hunting against the setting sun. Usually one or two of them will stay around for a few weeks. In the past I have only seen reddish-brown immatures or females on the marsh; the male is mostly gray.

In late summer or early fall an Osprey or two might be seen fishing in the inlet or standing on a staddle or utility pole, eating the catch of the day.

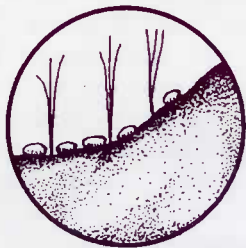
PS: On July 1, four swans flew into the marsh: My Christmas present in July!

Leo E. Rogers, Jr.

MUCH ADO ABOUT MOSQUITOS

During those long, cold winter months our thoughts may occasionally wander ahead to a perfectly warm and lazy summer afternoon. As we sit and smile, thinking about such a day to come, one character will inevitably be written out of this idyllic scene. This figure, the villain of such a story, is of course the salt marsh mosquito, sometimes an all-too-common inhabitant of Belle Isle Marsh.

Mosquitos at Belle Isle Marsh are a fact of life, appearing as early as March and remaining as late as October. Efforts to exterminate these insects in the past have been effective, but with deadly effects on other marsh residents. Such was the case with DDT, and with the ditching programs of the 1930's. So, are our options then limited to either constantly bathing ourselves with repellent, or losing blood with every visit to the marsh? Not really, and

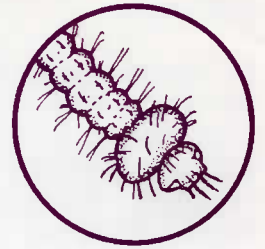


Eggs

the solution rests on understanding more about how these tiny marauders live. Every two weeks or so, with the coming of the spring tides, a new hatch of mosquitos emerges onto the marsh. The small larvae filter food from the water in the freshly flooded pools. Eventually the female adults emerge to fly in search of the blood they need to produce healthy eggs. But all is not safe for the mosquitos, for they have enemies as well.

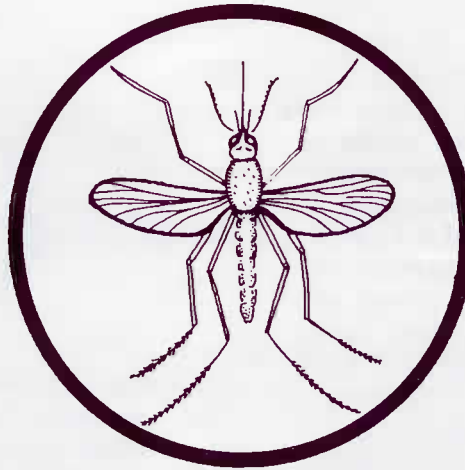
Birds and other insects prey on the adult mosquitos. There are the mosquito control professionals: county workers who use a

relatively safe substance known as BTI to kill the feeding larvae. Then there is the finger-sized mummichog, a fish which frequents the pools on the high marsh. A mosquito larva finding itself in a pool inhabited



Larva

by mummichogs is stuck in a literal dead end. For these seemingly innocuous fish are voracious eaters of mosquito larvae.



Adult

A form of mosquito control now being studied for use at Belle Isle Marsh Reservation incorporates some natural controls, such as mummichogs, into the battle against the mosquito. "Open Marsh Water Management," as this plan is called, is based upon an understanding of how

the entire marsh fits together, as opposed to programs which spray insecticides or dig ditches with wild abandon. The fact is, despite our winter daydream, mosquitos will always be a part of the marsh. But with some common sense, and a greater knowledge of the salt marsh as a whole, we can keep the mosquitos in check without causing harm to other marsh residents, or to ourselves.



Predation

Chris Rodstrom

[The author is a member of the MDC Interpretive Staff at Belle Isle Marsh Reservation. Illustrations by Alfred Ramage.]

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Please meet in the parking lot of Belle Isle Marsh Reservation off Bennington Street, East Boston (half-way between Suffolk Downs and Beachmont MBTA Stations).

Sunday, September 20 (MOMENTS IN THE MARSH)
Saturday, September 26 (SIX LEGS)
Saturday, October 10 (BOUNDARY WALK)
Sunday, October 18 (FALL)
Saturday, October 24 (BIRDS)
Sunday, November 1 (FOOTPRINTS AND TRAILS)
Saturday, November 14 (BORDERS)
Saturday, November 21 (MYSTERY PROGRAM)

For further information, call MDC Public Information at 727-5215 or 5350.

* * *

In addition to the regular field trips at Belle Isle Park led by MDC Interpretive Staff, FBIM is initiating a series of trips in Revere and Winthrop. For Revere trips meet at the south end of Summer Street, by the new gate. For Winthrop trips meet at the corner of Pleasant and Morton Streets.

Sunday, September 27 (REVERE)
Saturday, October 17 (WINTHROP)
Sunday, November 15 (REVERE)
Sunday, December 6 (WINTHROP)

For information about these trips call the following leaders:

David Desmond 324-7527
Soheil Zendehe 628-8990

Field trips are free and open to the public. All trips start at 1 PM.

SHOOT!

The deadline for entering the Fourth Annual Belle Isle Photo Contest is January 31, 1988. Winning entries will be displayed at our Annual Meeting in March. Prizes will be gift certificates courtesy of Hunt Drug Co., Melrose, "New England's most unusual camera store."

Please mail your entries to: Photo Contest, P. O. Box 575, East Boston, MA 02128. For more information call Barbara Bishop, 846-7418.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

All our activities and publications are financed by our membership. If you are not a member, please join now. Dues are:

Individual	\$3
Family	5
Seniors	1
Youth (under 16)	1

Any contributions above and beyond dues will be greatly appreciated. FBIM is a registered non-profit organization.

CREDITS

This newsletter is produced by Soheil Zendehe, with editorial assistance from Esther Fich.

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

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