



# Belle Isle News



Newsletter of the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

No. 30

June 1991

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1991 FRIENDS OF BELLE ISLE MARSH

*President:* Robin Snyder  
*Vice President:* Katie Durham  
*Secretary:* Barbara Gard  
*Treasurer:* Ann Lindsey  
*Members-at-large:* John Ribeiro, East Boston  
Suzanne Ryan, Revere

Also joining the Board is Sireen Reinstein of Winthrop.

## ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The Annual Meeting of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh was conducted on March 10, 1991. After the usual announcements, greetings and elections (see new Board of Directors listing) a serious musical skit by Karl Pastore, the new Park Ranger, was well received. The meeting was then turned over to Scott Hecker, tern warden for the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Mr. Hecker's talk and slide show were extremely edifying and entertaining. After the meeting he accompanied some members and Karl over to Rosie's Pond to inspect the current tern nesting platform and make suggestions for improvements. While there he spotted a Snowy Owl flying across the marsh -- one of the darkest Snowies any of us had ever seen, and also the first sighting of a Snowy Owl at Belle Isle for many of us.

*(cont. p. 2)*

## RANGER'S RAMBLINGS Karl Pastore

Spring is here! And what better place to witness its arrival than at Belle Isle Marsh. The willows in the Park turn pastel, the large glamorous buds on our big Eastern Cottonwood seem to burst at their seams, and the grass turns from brown to green overnight. But in the salt marsh the change is not as swift. The marsh grasses are still brown, though activity in the tidal creeks is beginning to perk up.

Marsh inhabitants like green crabs and sticklebacks are already active. A somewhat sad sign of spring this year has been the sight of at least four muskrats killed on roadways as they attempted to find new breeding territories. And of course, what would spring be without the arrival of Belle Isle's birds! The Redwings arrived early. As of this writing the first Snowy Egrets and Great Blue Herons have just arrived.

I am excited at the prospect of an enjoyable and productive spring and summer at the Reservation. I will list here a few important news items. On the back page you will find a listing of upcoming activities at the Reservation.

**Engineering Students Turned Gardeners:** Saturday, April 27th, was a great day to dig in the dirt. About 30 Northeastern School of Engineering students thought so too. They dug in

*(cont. p. 4)*

## Annual Meeting (cont.)

The meeting, as usual, concluded with excellent refreshments provided by generous volunteers; the whole thing was hosted graciously by Rose Corrado and Helen Brosnahan.

### CONAL'S FAREWELL

*[Former President Conal Foley made the following remarks at our Annual Meeting.]*

Thanks to all our supporters and Friends for their varied and indispensable assistance in protecting and enhancing Belle Isle Marsh and Reservation over the past year. Welcome to our new President, Robin Snyder, former MDC Supervisor at Belle Isle. Robin is now pursuing a graduate degree in Environmental Policy at Tufts University. Her previous work at Belle Isle, and in environmental affairs generally, will be invaluable as she takes over the reins of the Presidency.

The Friends' participation in the Earth Day walk in Boston last April was a big success. Tree plantings by students from the Bradley School at Orient Heights are much appreciated. The spaghetti dinner held at the Orient Heights Yacht Club last fall raised much-needed funds and our thanks go to all who assisted in making this event an outstanding success. We received many thanks from WGBH for the participation of some of our members in their telethon fund-raiser last August.

We had good turnouts for our June and September clean-ups, with mountains of trash removed from the marsh. We expect this problem to get worse as trash disposal and recycling become more expensive. Keep a wary eye out for dumpers and get license numbers!

The OSCO expansion is proceeding, with additional fencing which we hope will prevent the movement of trash into the marsh. Trash receptacles are still needed in the parking lot. The lower road at Short Beach between Winthrop and Beachmont has seen an increase in trash on the Beachmont side. Unleashed dogs continue to be a problem at Belle Isle. Please, if you own a dog,

leash it.

We appreciate the many contributions from the various writers, poets, artists, statisticians, proofreaders and copy editors of our newsletter, and we hope that Carlene can soon take charge of all of these responsibilities again. Just kidding Carlene; we'll help you now that we know what's involved. We can now appreciate completely all the work you've done in the past in preparing the newsletter.

Karl Pastore is our able Park Ranger, interpreting, coordinating programs and supervising as the MDC staff person. He is much appreciated. His concerns about adequate staffing for the Reservation are our concern too. We should maintain a watchful eye on the marsh and continue to support his programs for the local schools and the public.

The second tern-nesting platform at Rosie's Pond and the planned observation blind are exciting new additions. The Border Trail from Saratoga Street to the Reservation parking lot will greatly increase awareness of and access to the marsh. The abandoned Belle Isle Fishing Club (BIFCO) property at the end of the MBTA yard and across the Inlet from Duplin Marine is a diamond-in-the-rough waiting to become an integral part of the Reservation.

Finally, my last act as President is to present Gail Miller with the Golden Goose Award for her many years as the power-behind-the-throne in all of our successful operations. In tying up loose ends, and generally riding herd on the Friends, her prodding, pushy ways will be sorely missed as she takes a much needed break. We hope that the call of the wild won't let her get too far away. Thanks from all of us.

*[State Representative Robert DeLeo presented Conal Foley with a citation from the Legislature at the Annual Meeting.]*



## GUN-TOTING TEEN APPREHENDED AT RESERVATION

Thanks to the sharp eyes and vigilance of one of FBIM's board members, a local teenager was arrested by MDC Police on April 11th for carrying and discharging a BB pellet gun in Belle Isle Marsh Reservation. Luckily, no wildlife or people were injured. This incident and the recent fire next to Jimmy Magg's serves to remind members and park users to please report any suspicious or destructive activity at the park or on any of the borders in Winthrop, Revere or East Boston.

The following list of emergency contacts can be clipped and posted near the phone or kept in your wallet for reference:

### METRO POLICE 523-1212

for any emergency in park.

### FIRE DEPARTMENT 911 BOSTON POLICE 911

for emergency or fire on streets bordering marsh.

### RESERVATION MANAGER 727-5350

for any emergency after you call Metro Police.

### MDC REGIONAL OFFICE 322-2851

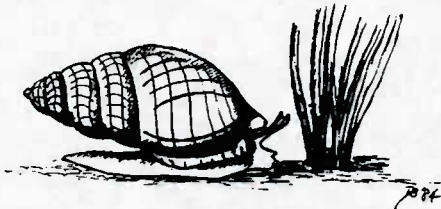
if problem requires you speak with someone immediately.

### FRIENDS OF BELLE ISLE MARSH 567-5072

to keep us posted.

### MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON 259-9500

for injured birds or animals.



## PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

At the Annual Meeting the 1990 Photo Contest winners were announced, and awarded their prizes from Hunt Drug. First place winner was Robin Snyder, and second place winner was Stephen Penta.

## FRIENDS DONATE TREES

Five beautiful Austrian pines were donated to Belle Isle Marsh Park/Reservation recently, honoring different people as well as Earth Day. The donations were made:

In memory of John and Yolanda Calla

In memory of Kathryn G. Parker

In memory of Millie Mathews

By the Pastore Family

and by the Boston Youth Network.

Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to all who made donations.

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME: 3/1/90 to 2/28/91

Dues:	\$1,272.00
Donations:	995.00
Events/Grants:	2,633.53
Fund-raising:	1,924.44
Interest Income:	68.14
Sub Total	6,893.11
On Hand	1,344.62
Total	<u>\$8,237.73</u>

## EXPENSES:

Printing:	\$2,653.65
Postage:	563.00
Events costs:	1,765.34
Fund-raising costs:	740.62
Donations:	175.00
Bank fees:	42.06
Total	<u>\$5,912.67</u>

Income:	8,237.73
Expense:	<u>5,912.67</u>

Balance 2/28/91: \$2,325.06

Ann Lindsey, Treasurer

## RED-WINGS

Come join the morning,  
where the Red-wing's song  
is passed  
from shoulder to shoulder,  
across the wind blown phrags.  
"Where's Spring?"  
the first verse goes,  
and though  
the marsh still frozen  
white with snow,  
still sings,  
"Where's Spring?"

Leo E. Rogers, Jr.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The March Annual Meeting and spring flowers have brought in a new slate of officers. I feel a bit odd sitting in the presidency. After all, following the dynamic style of Conal Foley isn't easy. He has not only offered consistent programming while the MDC has been constrained by staff reductions (let's hear it for Sunday morning bird walks), but he has also managed to keep FBIM focused on environmental issues around the reservation during tenuous times in the Commonwealth.

I am excited and thrilled to have the opportunity to give something back to FBIM after the energy and support I received as MDC Supervisor of Belle Isle Marsh Reservation. I hope that all of you in the membership will join me in thanking Conal Foley for his tenure as "fearless" leader. Now he can focus on winning a backgammon game and I will try to fill his boots, or at least try to get them on.

One of the reasons I look forward to this year as President is to renew our goal of preserving and protecting the entire Rumney Marshes ACEC. Belle Isle Marsh continues to need our love and attention -- the dumping and degradation of its boundaries is slowed but not stopped. However, the Saugus Marshes could also use a bit of help from us.

I believe that the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh have something valuable to offer other fledgling "friends" groups, and I encourage members to support the start-up of these other neighborhood

environmental organizations. There are so many new things we can do as well as boost creativity in our own on-going programs.

To do this we need active members. If you joined us originally to support a good cause, go a bit further now and get more involved. Adopt a tern egg, help the MDC with educational programming, pick up some trash, weed the flower beds, or plant a tree. Not only does the list go on, but there are as many different projects to help with as there are different kinds of members. We need all of your help and the marsh needs us as a group to continue.

Let me know what you would like to do this year and where you would like the organization to go. Thanks for your support. I hope to do your confidence justice.

Robin Snyder, President

## Ranger's Ramblings (cont.)

the dirt all day at Belle Isle Marsh Reservation, straightening, fixing, weeding, cleaning, pruning and generally helping the roses grow. Thank you for lending us your hands, knees and backs and your energy.

**Rosie's Pond Cleanup:** On Sunday, April 28, a few hardy and industrious souls removed over 30 tires from these salt pans. Many more remain. . .

**Massachusetts Bay Trust:** The \$100,000 grant for salt marsh restoration at Belle Isle is moving forward. As of this writing the Massachusetts Audubon study is complete and the Army Corps of Engineers is waiting for some final test results to determine the best area for restoration.

**Rosie's Pond Observation Platform:** Instead of a blind we will build a 12X6 foot graded platform, possibly with a bench and railing. If you can help out please contact me.

**Miscellaneous:** Volunteers carved two Common Tern decoys which have been placed on the tern platforms in hope of attracting a second nesting pair. A new kestrel nesting box has been placed on the pole at the entrance of the Park. Two picnic tables were placed at the front section of the Park. May 5 was Belle Isle Kite Day -- a great success. Barbara Gard presented a program on salt marsh flora at the Park on May 18.

## "SEA SWALLOWS"

On Shore, the winds of May bring aromas of seaweed and salt blowing off the ocean. On the marsh, a faint tinge of green deepens as *Spartina* grasses begin to send up new shoots. On the mudflats at low tide, there is a green and copper haze left by microscopic plants and animals. Silently, insistently, spring comes to Belle Isle Marsh.

In the shallow warming estuary, ripples reflect schools of minnows below. In the sky above, a slender predator hovers, beak pointed down, intent on supper. The bird dives straight into the school of fish and almost immediately flaps back to hover again with a hapless victim in its beak. This is the domain of the Common Tern (*Sterna hirunda*).

All terns eat live food only, unlike their scavenging gull cousins. Their aerial acrobatics have earned them the nickname "sea swallows". The graceful Common Tern has an impressive record of long-distance flying and is believed to winter mainly in the South American tropics. Some Arctic Terns, closely related to Common Terns, make a 25,000-mile round trip between the Arctic and Antarctica!

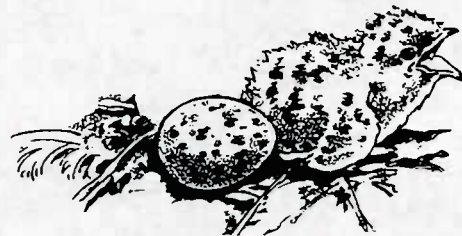
According to Massachusetts Audubon Society the four types of terns which breed in Massachusetts - - Common, Arctic, Roseate and Least -- all nest in colonies, obtaining some protection in numbers. Most of their nesting sites are on Cape Cod and its islands. Their small, brown and white, spotted eggs lying in shallow ground "scrapes" are vulnerable to dogs, cats and unaware strollers. Later the well-camouflaged chicks are in equal danger. If you happen to stumble into a tern "nursery" however, you will find that the extremely aggressive parents dive and screech to protect their young. Although they won't do much damage, you may want to bring a hat if you intend on visiting a tern nesting area.



The tern platform at Rosie's Pond at Belle Isle Marsh

North of Cape Cod, in our own Rosie's Pond, the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh have encouraged a small colony of terns to nest and raise their young. In order to raise money for repairing the nesting platform that was installed last year, and to build an overlooking bird blind, the Friends have created an Adopt-an-egg Program. Each donor who purchases an egg (\$5.00) will receive a painted wooden "tern egg", a brochure and certificate identifying the proud new adoptive parent(s). Later on the donor will receive a progress report on the adoptees. With this help, our tern colony will thrive.

Robin Snyder



For more information or to adopt-an-egg, please write to:

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh  
Adopt-an-egg Program  
P.O. Box 575  
East Boston, MA 02128.

**DATES FOR THE 1991 DAWN HERON  
CENSUSES AT BELLE ISLE**

DATE	SUNRISE	HIGH TIDE
Sundays		
June 2	5:10	3:00
June 16	5:07	2:30
July 7	5:14	7:30
July 21	5:26	8:00
Aug 4	5:39	6:00*
Aug 18	5:54	6:30*
Sept 1	6:09	4:45
Sept 15	6:24	5:00*
Sept 29	6:39	3:30
Oct 13	6:54	3:30

This is the ninth consecutive summer of Belle Isle heron censuses. Our focus is primarily on the "southern" herons: Snowy and Great Egrets and Glossy Ibis. To join in this count, just appear one half-hour before sunrise at Rosie's Pond, Palermo Street, East Boston, right by the big wooden Belle Isle sign; or call Soheil Zende, 863-2392.

\*Highest counts are expected when sunrise and high tide occur close together.

**SUMMER FIELD TRIPS**

**Saturday, June 6:** *Border walk.* Leader: Karl Pastore.

**Saturday, June 22:** *Border walk.* Leader: Barbara Gard.

**Saturday, July 13:** *Wildflowers at Belle Isle.*  
Leader: Karl Pastore.

**Saturday, July 20:** *Green shoots, salty roots.*  
Leader: Robin Snyder.

**Saturday, August 3:** *What's the buzz?* Insects at Belle Isle. Leader: Robin Snyder.

All field trips start at 10 AM at the Park parking lot. Please preregister by calling 727-5350.

**Sunday Walks:** Conal Foley will continue to lead bird walks in the Park every Sunday morning at 9 AM. Meet in the main parking lot off Bennington Street. For information call 846-0786.

**ARTS-IN-THE-PARK 1991**

Our Arts in the Park Festival will return to Belle Isle on Sunday, September 22 (rain date: September 29). Popular children's events, including art activities, story-telling and pony rides, will be repeated along with new events. Members who would like to help in planning the programs or in raising funds should call Mary Mitchell at 846-2389.

*Belle Isle News* is published four times per year by Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, a non-profit environmental activist organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of Belle Isle Marsh. We are staffed entirely by volunteers and funded only through generous contributions. Membership dues are \$8 (Family), \$5 (Individual), and \$1 (Seniors and Youth under 16).

If you haven't already done so, please use the enclosed envelope to renew your membership. If you have paid your dues this year, please pass the envelope on to a friend.

Each and every one of you is important to us. Thank you for your continued support.

Please note: Due to production difficulties, this is the first issue of *Belle Isle News* since December 1990. If you can help us with the production of this newsletter, please call Esther Fich (846-4071) or Robin Snyder (625-8679).

**Friends of Belle Isle Marsh**  
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