

Season's Greetings . .
Happy New Year!



Belle Isle News



Newsletter of the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

Number 32 December 1991

RANGER'S RAMBLINGS

Wildlife Management at Belle Isle

Many of us, perhaps unaware, have practiced wildlife management to some degree. For instance, have you ever scattered crumbs in your back yard, or put out a birdhouse or feeder? Have you planted an oak, aspen or fruit tree? Have you left grass and brush clippings in a pile? If so, you can consider yourself a practitioner of wildlife management. Simply put, wildlife management is the manipulation of animal populations through protection and improvement of their habitats.

Belle Isle has seen its share of management efforts, successful and unsuccessful. I would like to review some past efforts and outline some future plans.

Among the first management efforts at Belle Isle were the placement of nesting structures. Wood-duck boxes, although inappropriately placed here for these fresh-water birds, have attracted tree swallows for several seasons. The success (except for last spring) of the first tern platform put up at Rosie's Pond led the MDC to add a second one. Our kestrel boxes may lack kestrels, but starlings and grackles love them. The Osprey platform, alas, stands tall and empty still.

Two bat boxes were recently hung in the Reservation's tallest tree deep in the reeds. They should attract these nocturnal mosquito-eaters to feed nearby.

The creation of brush piles in some areas of the Reservation will provide cover for a variety of birds, as well as cottontails and other small mammals. The annual mowing of

the large hilly meadow will sustain this area as a habitat for small mammals who, in turn, will attract predatory birds: kestrels, short-eared owls, and harriers (marsh hawks).

Clean-ups are a very important management tool.

Although the Park itself stays quite clean, the Reservation's street edges catch litter on the wind while the marsh edges catch debris on the tide. Some of this is hazardous or toxic to marsh life; some smothers plants, and some clogs tidal flow. Maintaining debris-free creeks and ditches not only nurtures the marsh but also brings small fish in and out. Among them are mummichogs and sticklebacks which feed on mosquito larvae and then, in turn, are themselves important food for wading birds. We plan to continue our periodic small and large cleanups.

Tree planting and tree nurturing are important management activities. The cultivation of trees such as aspen, apple, cherry and Russian olive in the Park and in other dry areas of the Reservation will provide food to a variety of birds and small

mammals. And every tree not only provides food, shelter and perches, but adds shade, purer air, and beauty to Belle Isle.

These are just a few ways in which the MDC and the Friends are working to manage the Reservation's wildlife resources. If you would like to be involved in or learn more about our management plans, please give me a call at 727-5350.

Karl Pastore

A purple martin house has been constructed and donated by Frank Pastore of East Boston. The bat boxes were constructed and donated through Richard Vivolo, Industrial Arts teacher at the Winthrop Middle School.



Is this you? Call Ranger Karl for a color copy.

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER

Winter is a wonderful time to visit Belle Isle with children. Animal tracks can sometimes be spotted in the snow along the creek. Can you identify them? Or come admire the lovely winter view from the observation tower.

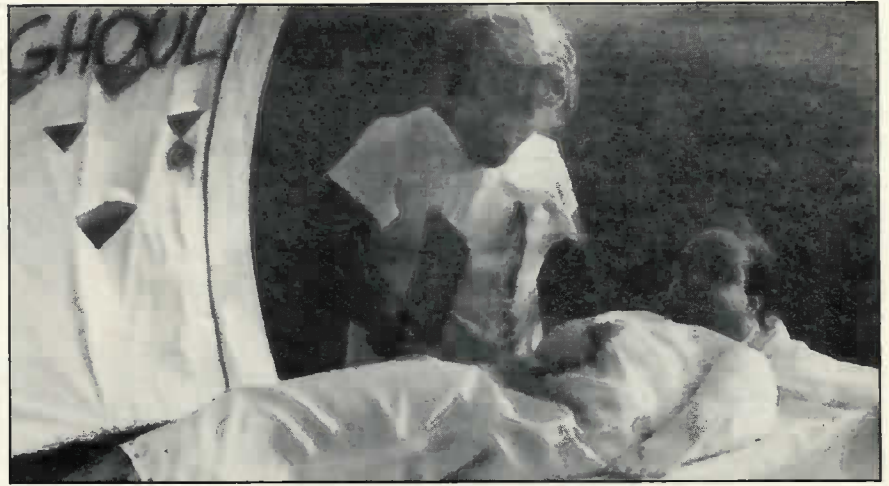
Book Review

Urban Roosts, Where Birds Nest in the City, by Barbara Bash; Sierra Club Books, Little, Brown and Co.; 1990.

This book would make a perfect holiday gift for any young nature lover. The detailed scientific information is beautifully written and illustrated and often resembles Boston's own urban landscapes. Finches living in tiled roofs, snowy owls roosting by the side of an airport runway, and peregrine falcons nesting on the ledge of a skyscraper; all have found their own city roost.

Many thanks to Alva Williams of Revere for donating the word game below. Try your luck.

Mary Mitchell



Dr. Ghoul struck —again and again!

GHOULS OF BELLE ISLE

Halloween came to Belle Isle again on October 26th. Halloween Committee Chairperson Ellen Koretz and her committee organized a wonderfully spooky event. Over 200 youngsters mingled with ghosts and ghouls at Belle Isle Park.

Halloween Committee members: Barbara Bishop, Esther Fich, Conal Foley, Barbara Gard, John Kilmartin, Gail Miller, Mary Mitchell, Betty Peabody, John Ribeiro, Suzanne Ryan, Robin Snyder, and, of course, Ranger Karl Pastore.

Fortune tellers: Sally Mummy, Elaine Oliver

Ghoul under the bridge: Tom Grase

Dr. Ghoul's patient: Jay Hopkins

Parade musicians: Len Goulis, Bob Eshback

Pumpkin decorator: John Falco

Refreshments: Roberta Delao, Yvonne Westcott

Storyteller: Michael Oliver

Assistant story teller and general helper: Stephanie Lombardi

Tower spook: Albi Solsgiver

Witch: Nancy Kilmartin

Winner of Belle Isle Oscar for most outrageous character: John Ribeira, alias Dr. Ghoul

And a very special thank you to Len Goulis for the sound effects in the tower and for being all around gofer.

Munchkins donated by *Dunkin Donuts* of Squires Road, Revere, and *Dunkin Donuts* of Bennington Street, East Boston.

FUNDS FOR NATURE TRAIL

FBIM proudly announces the receipt of two grants to underwrite a self-guiding interpretive nature trail at Belle Isle Reservation: Massport and the Massachusetts Bays Programs each donated \$500 toward the production of a brochure and signage.

The dedication of the trail is planned for next spring.

B	E	L	L	E	I	S	L	E	M	A	R	S	H
E	L	B	E	L	R	E	P	I	P	D	N	A	S
L	I	A	S	P	L	O	V	E	R	L	E	M	R
L	S	R	C	M	A	E	S	H	B	E	L	R	A
E	G	L	E	K	I	S	R	L	E	M	A	E	M
I	E	N	R	I	B	S	H	B	B	E	L	H	E
S	L	O	L	N	E	I	I	S	M	L	E	C	L
L	W	R	M	G	A	R	R	H	B	I	E	T	S
E	O	E	L	B	K	C	U	D	L	L	H	I	I
M	L	H	E	I	I	S	L	E	T	M	A	W	E
A	L	R	S	R	H	B	E	L	E	L	E	O	L
R	E	I	S	D	L	E	M	A	R	S	H	D	L
S	Y	B	E	L	L	E	I	S	G	L	E	M	E
H	S	R	A	M	E	L	S	I	E	L	L	E	B

FIND THESE BIRDS:													
WHIMBREL							DOWITCHER						
PLOVER							DUCK						
YELLOWLEGS							EGRET						
BLACKBIRD							HERON						
SANDPIPER							KINGBIRD						



Trash to art —and he drove it!



Intrepid explorers of wild places

FBIM HONORS LOCAL YOUTH

The Friends presented their first Youth Environmental Achievement Award during the Arts-in-the-Park Festival. There to receive his \$100 cash award was 20-year-old Jose Gonzalez from East Boston. President Robin Snyder presented the award and congratulated Jose.

This award reflects the decision of the FBIM Board of Directors to recognize local youth who have taken an active interest in both their community and the environment. Jose has been volunteering at the East Boston Social Center since high school. Laurel Lamont, Coordinator of Teen Programs, has stated that Jose has become a positive role model for many children there. Recently, Jose worked with Ranger Karl Pastore as a summer youth worker at Belle Isle. He found he liked the work and the park so much that when his job ended he volunteered to assist Karl with programs and management activities throughout the fall. His canoeing skills were vital to the success of our fall canoeing programs. But most important, many new faces accompanied Jose to the park during the last six months.

We appreciate his dedication and hard work. Thank you, Jose.

This award will be given yearly. FBIM members and local residents can submit a letter of recommendation for a local youth (from 7 to 23 years old) anytime before August. The winner will be announced in early September; The award will be presented at our annual festival in late September.

If anyone wants to make a special donation toward the award, please indicate this in a letter accompanying your check.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Wood carvings:

Leo Rogers, Winthrop
miniature birds

Metal sculpture:

Herb Guttel, Winthrop

Paintings:

Audra Gerson
Dorothy James
Beverly O'Brien
Barry Ridlon

All members of GLASS (Greater Lynn Arts and Crafts Society)

ARTS AT BELLE ISLE

The Arts-in-the-Park Festival on September 22, 1991, was a great success, as usual. The volunteers, the visitors and the exhibitors all had fun. (It was my second experience with the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, and I enjoyed giving my services again.)

The children were kept busy using their imagination in the trash-to-art contest. This consisted of turning previously collected pieces of trash into modern art sculptures. The pony rides were a delightful experience, especially for children who had never ridden before. The rides were supervised by very capable personnel, and the ponies were well-mannered. The pumpkin painting went well. Everyone had a chance to put a face on their little pumpkin: an early sign of Halloween. The art contest was a great way to encourage young artists to use their talents. They were rewarded with nice prizes.

Everyone enjoyed the fine entertainment, thanks to the Boogaloo Swamis. Their Louisiana style music was just fabulous.

The raffle was a lucky draw and great fun for all. The donated prizes were great to win, and the money will help with projects at Belle Isle.

Last but not least were the nature walks. The experienced guides showed off the park in such detail that participants came away with more understanding and compassion for the creatures that make the marsh their home.

Thanks to all for such a special day!

Alva Williams, Revere

Alva was in charge of the art contest.

UMBRELLA SEDGE

(*Cyperus odoratus*)

While wandering through Belle Isle Marsh recently, on a Saturday nature walk, in search of muskrat dens, we happened into a brackish area where salt marsh plants (*Distichlis spicata* and *Salicornia* spp.) and *Phragmites* were comfortably sharing the same space.

As we were wading through the foot-deep standing water, I looked down to see where we were stepping, and noticed a few Umbrella Sedge stems with drying inflorescences.

Despite the numerous times we have thrashed and slogged our way through every part of the marsh in the past, none of us had ever noticed this sedge here before.

Cyperus odoratus (Umbrella Sedge, Flat Sedge or Straw-colored Sedge) is a low to medium height herbaceous grasslike plant with triangular stems. ("Sedges have edges.") Leaf-like bracts are arranged at the top of thick stems, just below the multi-branched terminal inflorescence. This umbrella shape gives the sedge one of its common names. Numerous spikelets cover the branches of the inflorescence.

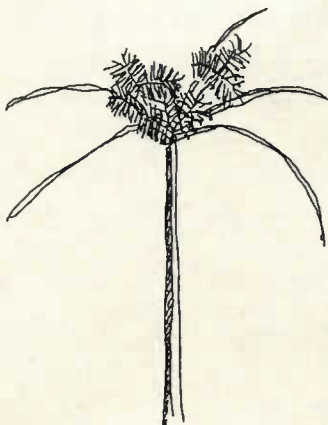
This very abundant species is highly variable and therefore difficult to identify. The size of the spikelets is one way of differentiating the species.

Source books on this sedge are confusing. One source states that the plant is perennial, reproducing from seed; another says the plant is annual; yet another says it has a bulbous rhizome. The confusion might come from there being a number of similar species: *C. strigosus*, *C. esculentus*.

These sedges do well in tidal marshes, tidal fresh marshes, moist fields, swales, freshwater marshes, and sometimes in upland situations, where they are considered pesty. Ditchbanks and areas susceptible to water fluctuation provide excellent habitat for Flat (or Umbrella) Sedge.

The wildlife value of Umbrella Sedge is high. The seeds are consumed by birds and rodents, while the leaves are used for nesting material. The flooded foliage and seeds are used by waterfowl.

Barbara Gard



Umbrella Sedge

WINTER EVENTS

The following field trips will start at 10 AM from the main parking lot at Belle Isle Park. Be sure to dress warmly and bring waterproof foot wear. For more information or to pre-register call 727-5350.

Saturday, December 21: Solstice walk. Leader: Karl Pastore.

Saturday, January 11: Border hike. Leader: Karl Pastore.

Saturday, February 15: Tracking. Leader: Barbara Gard.

Please pre-register.

Sunday Walks. Conal Foley will continue to lead bird walks in the Park every week.

Annual Meeting: March 8, 1992. Keep the date open!

Homecooked Spaghetti

Benefit Fest

Date: January 24, 1992; 7 PM.

Place: Mattola VFW Post, Revere.

Cost: \$10/person.

Sold out early last year! Reserve now!

For reservations call: 846-0786 or 567-5072.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Send us your best pictures taken at Belle Isle Marsh. The Belle Isle Photo Contest is open to all. The winner will be announced at our Annual Meeting in March.

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).

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

This issue of *Belle Isle News* has been produced by Esther Fich and Soheil Zende. Photos by John Kilmartin, Harold Reinstein and Soheil Zende.

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

P.O. Box 575

East Boston, MA 02128

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, Mass.
Permit No. 3225

