

Arts in the Park

Sunday, September 18

**Flyers to outlying zip codes were mailed separately earlier.*

*Flyer
Inside**



Belle Isle News

FALL EVENTS

Belle Isle canoe tour: Sunday, October 16, 10 AM. Pre-register.

Rumney Marsh walk: Sunday, October 16, 2 PM. Leader: Karl Pastore. We will explore the old Saugus Racetrack and Seaplane Basin. Meeting place: End of Park Avenue, Saugus.

Explore Belle Isle's perimeter: Saturday, November 19, 10 AM. Join Jim Falck, Belle Isle's landscape architect, in looking over the edges of the marsh and trying out ideas for connecting walking paths. Pre-register.

To pre-register or for more information on the above three events please call (617) 727-5350.

Sunday morning walks: 10 AM (11 AM when Daylight Savings ends): Leader: Conal Foley. Please call (617) 846-0786 if you're coming.

Belle Isle hawkwatch: Saturdays & Sundays, September 17, 24, 25, October 1, 2, 8, 9, 15. Leader: Soheil Zende.

TASL (Take A Second Look) events:



Shorebird censuses: Sundays, September 18, October 16.

Water bird census: Sunday, November 20.

Winter water birds: Lecture, slide show, and field trip: Sunday, December 11, 2PM at Eliot House, Eliot Circle, Revere. Lecturer: Soheil Zende.

For more information on the hawkwatch or TASL call (617) 863-2392 (6-9 PM).



RANGER'S NOTES

[Our former Park Ranger, Karl Pastore, is the newly appointed North Region Supervisor for MDC Reservations. These are his final notes as Ranger.]

Zoppo Walk

The walk at this newly acquired parcel was attended by 20 people, many of whom were interested in offering their ideas on the future of this area. The discussion covered a variety of issues including: how to clean the upland and marsh sections, building a pedestrian bridge over the creek, and renaming this section of the Reservation to something more appropriate than the "Zoppo property". Discussion also covered the use of the upland area as a possible de-watering site for soil from the proposed dredging of Belle Isle Inlet. In return, DEM would clean, cap, and landscape a 7-acre area.

Jim Falck, the landscape architect of Belle Isle Park, has offered to draw up some preliminary plans and conceptual drawings for this area.

Capital Project Requests

I have put in a capital project request to pave the stone dust part of the walking path at Belle Isle Park. This would greatly reduce maintenance, improve the appearance of the walkway and provide a stable surface for park visitors.

(Continued on page 4)



Networking

On my first walk through Belle Isle Marsh on a Sunday morning last spring, I took possession of it. The killdeer making patterns in the sky and ibises picking their gawky way through the shallows, the golden marsh hay, the neatly squared channels dug years ago for mosquito control, the shrubs and grasses, the ribbons of the incoming tide reaching out from the channel to cover the mudflats are all mine. After years of paying dues to an organization called Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, I finally made the connection between the marsh and me.

The marsh is just one urban wilderness of many, I found out. Connecting to one connects me to a widening network that touches local friends groups, town and city agencies, statewide organizations, and the federal government.

In our region, loosely defined as "north of Boston," there are more than a dozen neighborhood organizations. Last fall, representatives of the groups that watch over greenspaces and wilderness areas in line with the Saugus River met for the first time. The meeting was announced in local newspapers by Joe James, then a member of the *Saugus River Water Commission (SRWC)* and now on its board, as well as current president of both the *Friends of Rumney Marsh* and *Point of Pines Beach Association*, and active in other ecologically oriented groups. "I thought it was a good idea for us to know who we are," said Joe. Organizations represented included *Bike to the Sea* (Steve Winslow); *Concerned Coastal Sportsmen* (Frank Anderson); *Friends of Belle Isle Marsh* (President Eleanor Casey, Vice President Joe Wilson); *Friends of Breakheart Reservation* (Judy Clark); *Friends of Flax Pond* (Linda Williams, also a member of SRWC); *Friends of Lake Quannapowitt* (Bob Moores); *Friends of Lynn Woods* (President Steve Babbitt); *Friends of Pillings Pond* (Nancy Milburn); *Friends of Sluice Pond* (Fran Page); *Point of Pines Beach Association* (Joe James, Sheldon Kovitz); *Revere Beach Association* (Michael Kelleher); *Saugus River Watershed Commission* (Mary Kinsell, Cindy delPapa).

Most of the friends groups were started during the past fifteen years, when greenspaces in their neighborhoods were defined and put under the management of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, organized in 1982, is, we believe, the oldest and the only one

that predates MDC acquisition and management.

The primary responsibility of each friends group is to guard its area. "Keep your eyes on your own backyard," says Soheil Zende, one of the founders of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh. "People caring about their immediate neighborhood is absolute insurance that the area will be preserved." Some groups also have their own special concerns. For example, SRWC periodically tests the waters from Wakefield to the Point of Pines; Friends of Rumney Marsh concentrates on preventing the marsh from being filled in by builders; Friends of Belle Isle Marsh actively works to protect the marsh from infringement along its zigzag borders in three communities: East Boston, Revere, and Winthrop.

Local friends groups generally conduct their own annual clean-ups; clean-ups on MDC reservations are supervised by the MDC. Last April, my husband and I joined the volunteers from our group to clean up the new "Zoppo" section of Belle Isle Reservation. Trudging and slipping across the wet grass, trash bag in one hand and pointed stick in the other, constantly bending and reaching to pick up the trash dumped over the winter, I was achieving more than clearing a relatively small tract of land: I was keeping the local network vital. During clean-up week, all the friends of the marshes, ponds, and woods north of us were pulling out bottles and cans, plastic and paper litter, tires, burnt-out automobiles, and rugs. Together, we maintain a wilderness area that extends far beyond local boundaries.

My network extends to connect me with the larger metropolitan area, which includes the Boston-based *GreenSpace Alliance*, founded in 1986 to build and unite constituencies for urban open space. I share the philosophy of the Alliance as expressed by its executive director, Richard Heath: "Urban greenspace is a quality of life issue." Yes. Enhancing the quality of life of the living things in my urban greenspace enhances the quality of my life as a living thing, too. I am excited by the possibilities of the work of a new agency, the statewide Green Ribbon Commission, sworn in by Governor William Weld in November, 1993. The commission works out of the MDC and is mandated to determine "the best means

High Drama at Low Tide

An incoming tide
winding its way up
one of Belle Isle's many creeks

The tell-tale foam
lapping at the rising shoreline
giving the water depth
for the minnows and crabs
to find their way
another day.

But wait,
hard on their fins-for-heels and
shells-for-backs
come the stalking crew,
Snowy Egrets prancing along

the shore's shallow edge
keeping one-two-three steps ahead
of the ominous cormorant
just able to submerge to swim
and thrust its deadly beak
in the deeper vee of the creek,
lifting its head frequently
to swallow its quarry
while the dancing egrets
spear the unlucky smaller game
which had escaped, not quite,
to safer waters.

Their upstream sweep
abruptly reverses itself
as the waters become too shallow.

The high-stepping, low-flying egrets—
wings and legs all over the place—
quickly move downstream to get
ahead of
that deadly efficient
feathered crocodile
scaring the wits out of
those who thought they'd made it.

Conal Foley



Illustration by Denise Braunhardt Cabral

Networking (Continued)

of preserving the system's natural resources for the citizenry of the Commonwealth."

And I continue to make new connections. Because the channels in my marsh are filled and emptied by the ocean tides, my network touches all the coastal states in the country and reaches to agencies in the federal government, where the annual Coastal Clean-Up Week originated almost fifteen years ago. The Friends of Belle Isle Marsh sponsors participation in the Atlantic Coast Clean-up. For this project, the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Association (NOAA) provides data sheets to volunteers who pick up and log the various types of litter deposited on our beaches. Data are correlated by NOAA to show the significance of changes in amounts and types of litter in different areas, and the information is made available to concerned organizations, such as, among others, manufacturers of fishing equipment and the National Fish and Wildlife Association.

The network is growing and strengthening as new groups are formed at every management level and as more and more people appreciate their need for open urban space.

When I walk through my marsh, I can ignore the iron birds on their way to and from Logan Airport and the subway trains and the traffic on Route 1A that are, by definition, part of urban greenspace. I can see instead the network that links the ecosystems and the people that protect them and me.

Miriam F. d'Amato



Members of local organizations that watch over greenspaces and wilderness areas in line with the Saugus River gathered at the Unitarian Church in Saugus to participate in environmental networking and to discuss the protection of the river areas. Attendees included Friends of Belle Isle Marsh President Eleanor Casey, third from the left; and Vice President Joe Wilson, third from the right, as well as others mentioned above. (Photo by Jim Pittman)

Ranger's Notes *(Continued from page 3)*

In addition, I have requested the installation of a water line into the park with a water source for maintenance and a drinking fountain.

BIFCO Property

There is finally some movement again on this property. You might remember that it was due to be cleaned up as part of the Central Artery and Tunnel Project Mitigation. The City of Boston and the Massachusetts Highway Department have been doing some preliminary soil testing to determine the levels of cleanup needed here. Once this is complete, the work should begin. After that, the City will transfer the property to the MDC to become part of Belle Isle Marsh Reservation.

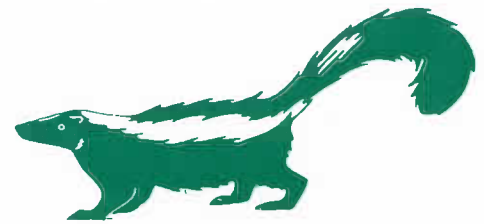
Swallow Boxes

Well, all is not lost. After five of the seven tree-swallow boxes put up by James Aliberti and myself were destroyed by vandals, we feared the worst. But, thanks to James's relentless monitoring of the two remaining boxes near Rosie's Pond, he determined that these two boxes fledged a total of 10 young.

James would like to organize next year's placement of nesting structures, including the placement of a kestrel box on the open MassPort field on Saratoga street. If you're interested in helping, give me a call.

Illegals

There have been several incidents of people transporting and releasing trapped wild animals, such as racoons and skunks, in the Reservation. One recent incident was intercepted by an alert Friend who reported it to the proper authorities. This practice is illegal anywhere in the Commonwealth unless it is sanctioned and regulated by the state's wildlife authorities. It is also dangerous to the marsh and its inhabitants.



Finally, there still isn't a site supervisor at Belle Isle Marsh and Rumney Marsh Reservations. As Regional Supervisor, I'm trying to send staff to mow grass, pick up litter, patrol, etc.. Still it's important to get a full-time supervisor on site. It is my hope that the Friends can make this a priority issue over the next few months.

Please give me a call if you have any questions at (617) 727-5380.

Karl Pastore

Belle Isle News is published quarterly by Friends of Belle Isle Marsh (FBIM), a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of this marsh. We believe that protection ultimately depends on public awareness of the value and beauty of this natural resource. Our focus, therefore, is mainly educational.

To join: Send dues to our address: \$8 (Family), \$5 (Individual), and \$1 (Seniors/Under 16). FBIM is a registered non-profit corporation. All your contributions are very important to us. Thank you for your continued support.

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