



Belle Isle News

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PROGRAMS

These programs are offered by Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN). All programs are free and open to the public.



Belle Isle Marsh canoe trip for beginners: Saturday, October 4, 9 AM. Meet at observation tower in Belle Isle Park. (Call to preregister.)



Bike trip from Piers Park, East Boston, to Belle Isle Marsh: Saturday, October 25, 10 AM. Meet at Piers Park, East Boston (walking distance from Maverick Square **T** Station). We will follow the East Boston Greenway.

For more information about these trips, call BNAN at 617-542-7696.

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Music in the Marsh at Belle Isle Park

Entrance on Bennington Street, East Boston, between Suffolk Downs and Beachmont **T** stations

Sunday, September 28, 1:30 - 4:00 PM

Roots, Rhythm and Rapture: A Celebration of Music and Dance from the Caribbean

(Enchanted Circle Theater)

Enchanted Circle Theater is a group based in Holyoke. Artists include:

- Nestor Cintron, third-generation musician from Yauco, Puerto Rico
- Tracy Vernon, Alvin Ailey-trained dancer and choreographer.



Enchanted Circle Theater has entertained both school and family audiences. Their presentation of *Roots, Rhythm and Rapture* brings to life traditional and contemporary song and dance from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Haiti, with drummers and dancers in traditional costumes.

Bring a lawn chair and enjoy the show!

Following the performance, you're invited to stay and enjoy the marsh. Kites and bubble soap will be provided! And, as always, there will be refreshments.

Note—

In case of rain, the performance will be held at the Beachmont School Auditorium, on Bennington Street next door to Belle Isle Park.



Sponsored by: FBIM, DCR, MCC

RANGER'S NOTES

Osprey from Iasgair, Gaelic for "the fisherman..."

Oak Island, Rumney Marsh, Revere

On March 29, 2003, Ospreys returned to the Oak Island artificial nesting structure at Rumney Marsh, and within days constructed a large stick nest. In midsummer, one large chick was visible. The nest location is inaccessible to those preferring to stay cleanly attired—it is surrounded by deep mud and a salt marsh creek. A second nest pole placed by General Electric is located on dry land and has not been used to date. A third pole, similarly located but in Belle Isle Marsh, is also as yet unused.

Typically, male Ospreys provide food and protection to the sitting female. Any predators entering the nest territory are quickly repelled, but Ospreys are easily disturbed by human traffic. There are only about 30,000 Ospreys in the world, with almost 1,000 of them breeding in the area from New York to Boston. To appreciate our generous share of the world's Ospreys, consider that this large population crashed in the 1950s due to pesticide poisoning, falling to about 100 birds.

Since then, artificial nesting structures, mostly platforms on poles in salt marshes, have allowed Ospreys to bounce back. They have now recovered their pre-19th century population.

Ninety-six percent of New England Ospreys nest on artificial structures. In Scotland, a different situation exists. Only 50 nests were present in Scotland in 1850. Persecution caused these to dwindle to nothing by 1900. Better protection from predators was instigated, but Ospreys did not return to breed until 1956. The first nest was built at Loch Garten in Ruthiemurchus Forest. The nest was guarded from egg thieves and eventually three chicks hatched in 1958.

An industry developed around the Loch Garten Ospreys. Tourists could visit a well-appointed blind and observe the nesting Ospreys through powerful telescopes. One million tourists had visited by 1980. Elsewhere in Scotland, Ospreys had nested in secret and by 1980 their population was back up, above 50 pairs, happily feasting on trout and salmon, no doubt.

Here at Rumney Marsh, our Ospreys can be viewed from Oak Island, Revere or, more distantly, from Route 107 at Pines River. In addition, many migrant Ospreys fly



Osprey with young

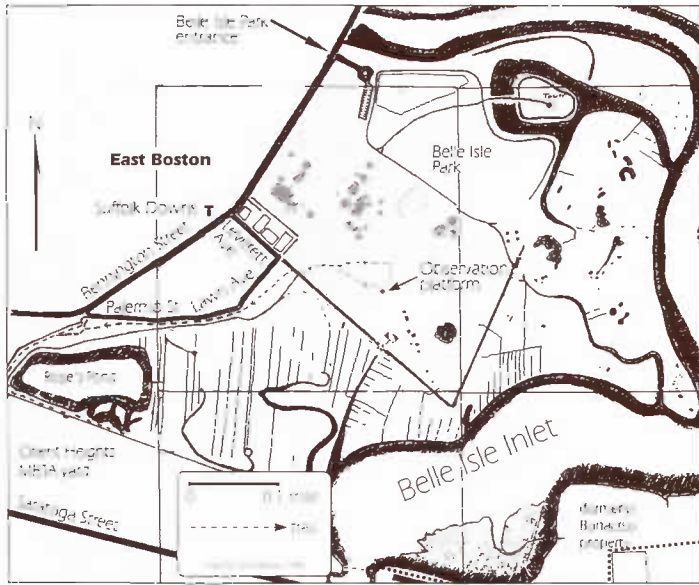
over Belle Isle Marsh during fall migration.

Belle Isle Marsh Reservation, East Boston

A marsh fire at Belle Isle Park entrance and parking lot on July 13, 2003 did great damage. Large numbers of trees were killed and over one acre burned to charcoal. The fire had been set in two places, to maximize damage.

Fortunately, the fire was put out, but not before setting alight many discarded tires and some toxic waste. The entire entrance drive and parking lot area is now marred by dead trees and burnt vegetation. The marsh will grow back, but it will probably take a couple of decades of tree growth before we can expect such fine views and healthy trees.

We are presently digging out tires, metal and concrete from the marsh and hope to be able to remove all toxic material including batteries, asbestos, and other materials.



Belle Isle Park, East Boston. Lawn Avenue observation platform is near center of map.

There were a large number of tractor and truck tires buried in the marsh. These were removed the week of July 21. We hope that the depressions that remain will be the first areas of the marsh to restore to health.

This year's crop of American Black Ducks and Mallards can presently be seen from the new observation platform off Lawn Avenue. Follow the trail from the Lawn Avenue field through woodland to the salt pond overlook in the bermed area of Belle Isle. This high viewpoint also gives excellent views over nearby woodland.

[Note: This trail is the terminus of the East Boston Bicycle Path, which starts at Piers Park on Boston Harbor.]

If you have any concerns about Belle Isle or Rumney Marsh, or just want to help us complete a small area of habitat restoration, call Geoffrey Wood, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, 617-727-5350.

Geoff Wood,
Site Supervisor

Our membership dues (listed on the back page) have not changed in over a decade.

Our newsletter goes out to over 700 households, but many of you haven't sent in your membership dues... Please help us continue our work on behalf of Belle Isle Marsh!

Driving by Belle Isle today, I caught a quick glimpse of blue water, blue sky, and a ribbon of green in between. I promised myself a walk around Belle Isle Park after work, something I don't do often enough.

This brief vision made me think of the transitory nature of beauty—a highfalutin' thought for a Monday morning. I felt its truth even more keenly, as news came of Duke Power/Algonquin's withdrawal of its proposal for the Everett Pipeline extension.

Duke's initial proposal called for a direct connection from the Salem-to-Weymouth line, currently under construction, to the MWRA plant at Deer Island, running the pipeline from Deer Island under Logan Airport, through East Boston and Chelsea, to connect to the Distrigas plant in Everett. It is this plan which Duke Power presented at the FBIM's forum at Winthrop Community Access Television (WCAT) in April.

Now, however, faced with mounting opposition from MassPort to the prospect of high-pressure gas lines three feet beneath Logan's runways and also lack of demand from its supposed customers, the MWRA and Distrigas, Duke Power has announced that it is withdrawing the proposal for the Everett Extension.

Cause for celebration, at least for East Boston, Winthrop and Chelsea neighborhoods, and for those who love Belle Isle Marsh. But we shouldn't get too excited by the reprieve. An uptick in the economy, a change of ownership at the newly-built Excelon facility in Everett or any number of other factors could bring this same plan right back to our neighborhoods and to Belle Isle Marsh in the not-too-distant future.

Kudos to Tink Martin for her vigilance on this issue. Her column "Around The Waterfront" in the *Winthrop Transcript*, continues to raise important questions about the natural gas industry, its safety, its technology and the future of the Sable Island gas fields in Nova Scotia.



With the new state budget signed, and the Legislature in recess, it is still not clear how the reorganization of the MDC is going to play out. On paper, there is a new Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), which includes the Division of Urban

Continued on page

President's corner (continued from previous page)

Parks. The old MDC system—parks, parkways, and recreational facilities, but not the management structure—will be included in the Division of Urban Parks. The MDC management structure as we knew it does not exist any more; there will be a new Commissioner in September, replacing Acting Commissioner Bill McKinney, but the rest of the MDC management will be streamlined. Of greatest interest to us, of course, is how Belle Isle Marsh will be staffed. Geoff Wood continues as Site Supervisor; there is no indication that Belle Isle will lose the Site Supervisor's position, at least in the short term.

However, with so little money available in the 2003-2004 budget, the question of staffing is a major concern, one that we will be raising with our elected representatives. It takes a huge amount of work to keep Belle Isle Park clean and well-maintained, and to keep watch over the condition of the Marsh, the trails, and Rosie's Pond. Geoff Wood has done it this summer with very little help. He is currently unable to present a fall schedule of guided tours, as he has in past years, because lack of summer help has meant he is playing catch-up on much-needed maintenance. So this means fewer opportunities for people, especially schoolchildren, to learn about the Marsh.

The first item on our fall agenda is finding more support for Geoff's great work and ongoing programs in the Marsh. Geoff will be scheduling a few birding tours with small groups at a date to be arranged in the Fall; he urges anyone interested in joining a small group tour to call him at Eliot House, Revere (617-727-5350).



Anyone interested in helping Geoff Wood out for a day, or with a specific project, whether it be in trail maintenance, installing bird boxes, or just helping with cleanup, can reach Geoff at the Eliot House office (see above). Geoff has ongoing projects that are particularly suited to groups, like Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, and school groups. Please pass this on to anyone you think might be interested!



We thank Beachmont resident Jack Markley for his help as untiring guardian of the Marsh: Taking his boat out on an almost daily basis, looking for

and removing boat loads of trash, old tires, and other debris.

In March, Jack assisted Geoff Wood in repairing and rebuilding the swallow boxes in Belle Isle. He is also a great tour guide, as several of us can attest—Jack gives boat tours of the creeks and quiet backwaters of the Marsh, as well as Belle Isle inlet, up to the Belle Isle bridge, enlivened by his great knowledge of the Marsh and its inhabitants.

Thanks again to a true Friend of the Marsh.



A number of the Friends had the chance to get our boots good and wet at the annual Marsh cleanup on May 23, held this year at the Morton Street section of the Winthrop Greenway. This area is much degraded and abused, both by residents (some, not all) and by Viking Oil.

It was an unusually dry, sunny day, and a hard-working crowd of about 25 volunteers labored under Geoff Wood's supervision to fill a dumpster-and-a-half with trash pulled from the marsh. The prize for the biggest catch went to stalwart Scott McGovern, who hauled out a huge old lawn mower from deep in the marsh.

Prizes for the hardest workers went both to the two little boys in the accompanying picture, and the young man and woman from Revere High School (photo below, second and third from left.) All four came early and stayed late. We don't have their names on the signup sheet - if anyone recognizes them, drop us a line: FBIM, P.O. Box 575, East Boston, 02128.

Elizabeth Regan, President, FBIM



Clean-up crew, May 23

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER

My older son, Christopher, is on his way to begin his college career in San Diego as I write this. Anyone who has sent one of their own off knows well that this experience is intertwined with many emotions. For us, there are many wonderful memories and hopes for him to create many more with and without us.

One such memory popped into mind when I began thinking of books for this issue's review. When I first joined the Board of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, Craig Jackson invited me to go for a stroll through the Marsh. Barbara Bishop promised to video the excursion, so of course I dressed then 16 month old Christopher up into his snappy red striped OshKosh overalls, his new white sneakers and away we went. What was I thinking... white sneakers in the Marsh?! That was the beginning of many trips together—through the marsh and around the world.

Book reviews

The Trip, by Ezra Jack Keats, Greenwillow Books, 1978.

Louie, one of Ezra Jack Keats' beloved characters from his series of many stories that take place on a simple city block, has moved to a new neighborhood where he doesn't know anybody—not a person, cat or dog. As the story unfolds, Louie creates a city scene within a shoe box and imagines a flight back to friends and a fanciful Halloween ride. The book is beautifully illustrated with Keats traditional paint and collage pictures that are colorful yet dreamlike, to catch a young child's imagination. My own children were both introduced to this book by their kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Ella Wessling. I also read this book each year to my class, and like Chris and Matt, each year a few of the children in my class are inspired to create their own flight into imagination using a box, paper and glue. Read this book and enjoy the trip!

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything, by Linda Williams, Harper Collins Publishers, 1986.

Have you been looking for a Halloween story that won't create nightmares for months after the Big Day? This story is just the one! The little old lady walks through the woods as a pair of shoes follows her...*clomp, clomp*. The shoes are joined by a pair of pants...*wiggle, wiggle*. The

story continues with your audience acting out the movements, and fun is had by all. When the creature says, "Boo!" at the end the wise little old lady isn't scared, but she does come up with a great idea to solve an age old problem!

Mary Mitchell

Things by the sea puzzle

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

Find and circle things by the sea: Up, down, backward, forward, diagonal: cod, coral, crab, dogfish, dolphin, fin, flipper, kelp, krill, lobster, oysters, red snapper, sea lions, seal, shark, turtle, whale.

Heather McClure

Rumney Marsh Citizens Advisory Board

On the last day that Jane Swift was Governor of Massachusetts, one of the many pieces of legislation she signed was a bill to form a Rumney Marsh Citizens Advisory Board. It had taken Joe James, local environmental activist and the President of the Friends of Rumney Marsh, eight to ten years to bring this to fruition; but with help from both Senator Robert Travaglini and Representative Bob DeLeo, the Rumney Marsh Citizens Advisory Board finally became a reality.

The Advisory Board will allow ordinary citizens to have a voice for Rumney Marsh (which includes Belle Isle Marsh) and to be directly involved in advising the state agency which oversees these parks.

The first meeting of the Advisory Board took place at Eliot House in Revere on April 23, 2003. No matter what state agency takes over the park, at least according to Joe James, this Board "will give us a voice" on matters concerning Rumney and Belle Isle Marsh. The Board intends to meet in September.

Eleanor Casey



Photo: Barbara Bishop

Clean-up crew working at Chelsea Creek oil spill

Chelsea Creek oil spill

September 1. WBZ Radio news at 6 PM reported that the early morning Chelsea Creek spill, which occurred close to the culvert connecting to Belle Isle Creek, was considered minor. The Coast Guard will determine the source of the leak. Clean Harbors and another environmental cleanup company had been called in. There were no reports of shore line damage.

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh (FBIM) membership dues:

- Family \$8
- Individual \$5
- Seniors \$1
- Under 16 \$1

FBIM is a registered nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your continued support.

FBIM is 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.

For extra newsletters to share or leave on magazine tables at your hairdresser, lodge, or boat club, *etc.*, please call 617- 846-3294 or email us: friendsofbelleislemarsh@comcast.net.

www.friendsofbelleislemarsh.org

This issue was produced by Elizabeth Regan and Soheil Zende, with help from Barbara Bishop, Diane Sweet, Gail Miller and Christine Zende.

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