

PROGRAMS

All programs are free and open to the public. Contact information below.



Dawn heron censuses. See page 8 for details.



Canoe Belle Isle:

Saturday, June 14, 9 AM
 Saturday, August 2, 10:30 AM
 Saturday, August 16, 10:30 AM
 Meet at Bennington Street, East Boston, entrance to Belle Isle Park.



Canoe Winthrop Harbor:

Saturday, July 5, 10:30 AM
 Meet at Winthrop Harbor Town Landing, Shirley Street, Winthrop.

Call 617-727-1199 extension 212 to pre-register. Participants must be 14 years of age or older and with a chaperone if they are under 18 years of age. Participants must have prior canoeing experience and the ability to swim. These trips are weather-dependent, and participation is at the discretion of the ranger in charge. For information about other DCR programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr.

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Belle Isle News

Published by Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

Number 74



June 2008



Board of Directors, Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, September 1982:

Clockwise from left front: Rose Corrado, Conal Foley, Ellen Koretz, Kermit Norris, Esther Fich, Soheil Zende, David Desmond, John Kilmartin, Barbara Gard, Craig Jackson, Gail Miller, Anne Lindsey

Passion, Pasta and Pizzelles: Memories of Rose Corrado

In 1977, Soheil Zende and I started visiting Belle Isle Marsh regularly. Primarily, we went to Palermo Street and either 'scoped Rosie's Pond (at that time it had not been named) from the edge or more often hiked into the marsh, jumping across the ditches to better see what was in the pool. We began to visit the marsh throughout the year, trading shorts and sneakers for down parkas and waterproof boots, as

Continued next page

Cleanup 2008

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped at our annual Earth Day Cleanup on May 4. This year we cleaned Saratoga Street and the marsh next to Rite Aid and Excel Academy as part of "Boston Shines." We removed more

Winthrop High School students found and moved tons of trash.

than a dumpster full of debris, tires, bottles, styrofoam and all kinds of paper trash. Thanks to Paul Leavey of Woodside Hardware for the generous donation of reusable bags for our volunteers. This year we were awarded a grant from the East Boston-Chelsea Environmental Fund to help defray the cost of the cleanup. Thanks to Mayor Menino and John Forbes for

Continued next page

Rose Corrado *(continued)*

winter set in. The two of us became as regular a presence at Belle Isle as the shorebirds and herons that frequented its shallows in search of rest and food.

I do not remember when we first met Rosie (or better said, when Rosie first approached us to ask what we were doing) and we began sharing our mutual passion for Belle Isle. Whether it was during the summer when we were beset by mosquitoes and greenheads or during the winter when we were freezing and wet, it does not really matter. Over the years visiting with Rosie became, for me at least, as much a part of going to Belle Isle as ‘scoping the birds, counting them, and looking for unusual species.

After the founding meeting of Friends of Belle Isle (FBIM) in 1982 some of us talked with Rosie to ask her to spread the word about the Friends and its goals with her neighbors and other East Boston residents. Rosie subsequently invited members of the community to come to her house and listen to our presentation. At that meeting, a dozen neighbors, including

State Rep. Gus Serra, showed up, some of whom became the nucleus of our East Boston supporters. Following up on that meeting we organized the first of many clean-ups in the marsh—this one concentrating on cleaning the area in and around Rosie’s Pond. Afterward, Rosie hosted a picnic for the hard-working volunteers who, if memory serves me right, gathered in her backyard.

Almost from the inception of FBIM, Rosie was a member of our Steering Committee and served as Secretary and then Membership Secretary, a position that she held for many years. In fact, for the first two years of our existence, the FBIM mailing address was her home. For even more years, Rosie was always the point person who assured that adequate refreshments and baked goods were present at our Annual Meetings and other special events, either making them herself or organizing her friends to provide them. That was the public face of Rosie that everyone saw.

When I interviewed Rosie in 2001, I asked her to reminisce about first coming to Palermo Street and what it was like to live next to Belle Isle Marsh

for so many years. She told me that she first saw Belle Isle looking down from Orient Heights when driving with her mother. It was then and there that she decided that was where she wanted to live. She and her husband bought land on Palermo Street and had their house constructed according to their specifications. The house constructed, they moved in, most probably in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

Rosie told me that over the years she loved to watch the tides go in and out and observe the white “swans” (egrets?) that would periodically come and feed in the pool. As she did this, her love for the marsh grew and she realized what a privilege it was to live next to it. That love for the natural world at her doorstep led to her passion to protect it. I am not sure if Rosie ever walked out onto the marsh itself. However, she was always interested to hear what we had seen. Soheil and I were often invited into her kitchen to eat pizzelles and talk about the marsh. This was the more private side of Rose Corrado, a side I was privileged to share.

No matter how much mud I had on
Continued next page



Winthrop High School students: Chris Firicano, Renee Rich, Samantha Gillis, Lizzie Goddard, Rachel DeFronzo, Justin Rowe, Patrick Feeley. Supervised by: Mr. Chris Farnsworth, Middle School teacher

Cleanup 2008 *(continued)*

their help. We appreciate all the hard work of Mr. Farnsworth and Ms. Foley and their students from Winthrop. We are happy to report that five past Presidents and the current President of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh participated in the cleanup this year, as they have for the past twenty years. Barbara Bishop, Liz Regan, Gail Miller, John Kilmartin, Conal Foley and Soheil Zende all showed up and worked hard! Obviously, being a member of this Friends group is a commitment that never ends.

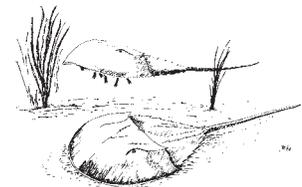


Illustration by Denise Braunhardt Cabral

Rose Corrado *(continued)*

my clothes from marsh mucking, no matter how freezing or drenched I was from falling in the snow or the marsh, Rosie always invited me in to dry off, warm up, and have something to eat and drink. Many times we started by talking about the marsh, but soon got on to other topics. She often discussed caring for her son and I told her about what I was doing, shared problems I was having, and talked about my family. We also shared travel experiences: where we had gone and what we had done. Often, these conversations were interspersed by Rosie cooking some home-made pasta and inviting me to sit down and eat with her. Almost always, whether eating a full meal or just having refreshments, there were pizzelles—for which Rosie knew I had a sweet tooth.

During our interview Rosie shared with me a story she had probably never told, for reasons that will soon become evident. When her nephew, Anthony, was a young boy, he came to her and said “Auntie, there’s a pheasant in the marsh. If I shoot it will you cook it for me?” Although Rosie did not want her

nephew to use a gun nor knew where he could get one, she said she would. [When telling me the story, she joked that not only was he a bit mischievous, but she was also!] Well, her nephew did shoot a pheasant and brought it to her, which she cooked as promised, stuffing it with raisins and dates. However, afterward he felt bad about it and couldn’t eat it. Rosie wound up eating it herself, but also regretted having in any way encouraged him to shoot it. She also kept the tail feathers, framed them, and hung the picture frame on her wall, which she showed me that day.

For many years I was a frequent visitor to both Rosie’s Pond and Rosie’s house. Those visits to the marsh have become much more infrequent for me in the last several years. In part it was because other things and birding projects occupied more of my time. However, if I am honest with myself, I think it’s also because the other part of those visits (seeing Rosie) was no longer possible, since she was too infirm.

When I interviewed her, Rosie was surprised we had named the salt pan in front of her house “Rosie’s Pond.” Those of you who have been to the



Rose Corrado:
1 April 1919 - 28 March 2008

marsh lately know that the water in the pool has drained out. In a way, perhaps it is fitting since Rosie can no longer look out her window on her beloved pond and watch the egrets come and go.

Craig Jackson

The author based this article partly on a 2001 interview with Rosie and partly on his own memory of events.

Wind Power in Chelsea

The former site of the Forbes Lithograph plant in Chelsea (along Chelsea Creek) is now being converted into lofts using the newest ideas in green design. The introduction of a wind turbine on the property made a strong impression in neighboring communities, guiding many to think about greater use of wind power.

Recently, residents of Chelsea, East Boston and Winthrop helped to defeat the Cape Wind developer’s proposal of a peaking power plant fueled by diesel in close proximity to the Forbes development. Opponents invited Cape Wind to bring wind turbines instead to Chelsea Creek for a greener solution to energy needs.

What is needed now more than ever is an open mind and willingness to

pursue alternative energy sources, and Forbes developers deserve praise for

embracing designs that challenge the status quo in new construction.

Gail Miller



The Nature of Belle Isle



Wings of Summer

Weeds, flowers, seeds and insects on the meadow mean that a lot of butterflies, bumblebees and swallows cruise and hunt in the air. It is rare that this close to the ocean the air doesn't move, but even if it is still, there is buzz in the air—the hum of thousands of wings of summer. Most of the butterflies are Cabbage Whites, but if you look well, you'll turn up a Sulphur or a Monarch.

Barn Swallows are suddenly abundant. Look for nests under the bridge to the observation tower island.

Sharp-tailed sparrows are also abundant. They have their own peculiar song, but you have to be close to or in the marsh to hear it, usually very early in the morning. When we gather on the Boardwalk, if we can quiet our human chatter, we may hear their buzz. As of last summer, I still didn't have the smoking gun: No adults feeding young, no nest found.

Shorebirds started their southward migration already. Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher and Least Sandpiper are the usual early fall migrants; "early fall," in shorebird language, can mean the fourth week of June! These birds have nested in the arctic or near-arctic and are headed far across the ocean, perhaps to South America. These adults need to get a head-start, fatten up and leave so that more of their kin and their babies can arrive on their heels.

There is probably a Willet nesting in the marsh, one of our handful of nesting shorebird species. Though incredibly noisy during courting and nest selection, they're not easy to pin down once they

begin actual nesting. I'm still looking for the nest in Belle Isle.

But the Ospreys are the crown jewels of the Marsh! They are in their third season at their nest. We all like to think that it is the same pair coming back here year after year and maybe it is. But each year, in the early season, we usually have seen 3 birds together. Park Supervisor Geoff Wood thought 2 were males and one female. He saw two taking turns copulating with one. He also said he thought one of the birds was hit by an airplane in June or July. That was in 2006. But shortly thereafter, I saw 3 birds around the nest anyway. And again, 3 last year. And yet again, 3 this year. We really don't know who's who!

But we do know that last year, two chicks hatched and at least one fledged. And this year the adults have been here since early April, courtship and nest-expansion was in full swing by late April, and one bird has been sitting down, probably on eggs, since early May. Stay tuned!

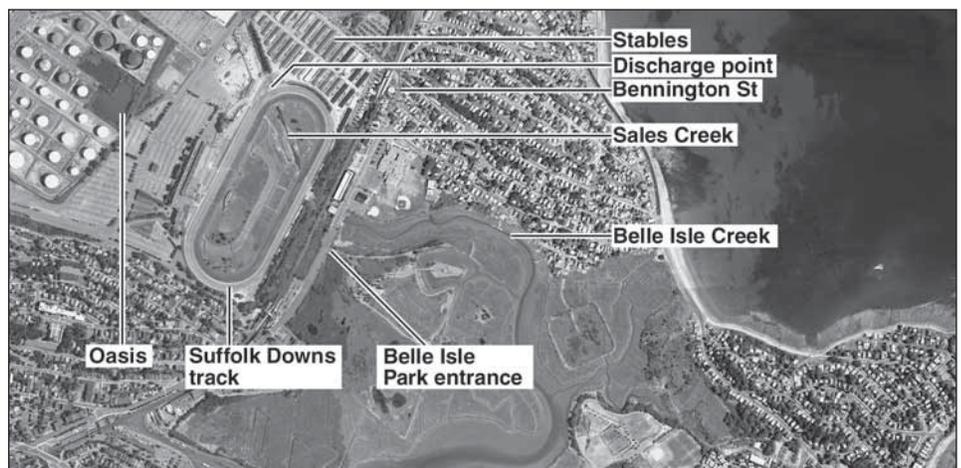
Soheil Zende

Suffolk Downs Ordered to Reduce Bacterial Waste Discharge

On May 15, EPA ordered Suffolk Downs race track to immediately reduce pollutants being discharged to Sales and Belle Isle Creeks. Suffolk Downs violates the federal Clean Water Act when horse manure, urine, bedding material, and stable wash water enter waterways through storm water runoff.

Said Robert Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England Office, "EPA and our partners have invested a lot of time and effort in improving water quality in ...Boston Harbor... This action reflects our commitment to a clean and healthy environment."

EPA determined that more than 500 horses were stabled at the facility for more than 45 days per year, and that



Aerial view of Suffolk Down and Belle Isle Park. The stables are adjacent to Sales Creek, which is tidally connected to Belle Isle Creek. The Bennington Street tide gate shuts off incoming tidal surges, but allows runoff to flow into Belle Isle Creek unimpeded.

the facility discharges to Sales Creek and an adjacent wetland through several outfalls and two drainage swales. EPA inspectors observed storm water contaminated with manure wastes and highly turbid, brown runoff being discharged from the facility to Sales

Creek. Sampling conducted at various outfalls discharging from Suffolk Downs indicates elevated ammonia, surfactant, suspended solids, biological oxygen demand, and bacterial concentrations being discharged to Sales Creek in both dry and wet weather.



Coyote Pups on Mother's Day

Occasionally things happen in clusters. Today I watched a litter of five coyote pups playing beneath a tree not two hundred yards away from Bennington Street. I had been looking for warblers in a place I seldom go and found the pups instead. Later I got a phone call from Dave Eatough who teaches science at Revere High School. He and his students run the Urban Coyote Project. He was baiting a trap at Belle Isle and I wanted to talk with him about my find.

Dave is doing something different. He teaches science by "doing" science and that is something that didn't happen when I was in high school. The Urban Coyote Project has several humane traps in the area. If a coyote is caught, the animal is examined by a veterinarian and tagged. The information goes to a coyote database that provides an overview of coyotes and their movements.

More exciting is to see the antenna in Dave's car. His team fits a coyote with a transmitter so that it can be tracked. Currently Dave follows Hood (named for the Mt Hood Park where he was trapped) around Melrose, Saugus and Revere three or four times a week from his Subaru Forester. That's so much better than any science project I ever had anything to do with.

I found the coyote trap at Belle Isle



completely by accident a few years ago. That was how I learned about the project and Dave. I have seen coyotes twice at the marsh myself and have since read more about them.

Today was a big surprise for us all. Dave had always suspected a breeding pair in or near Belle Isle but thought that they probably denned somewhere on the Winthrop side. These pups were definitely on the East Boston side and in a very unexpected location. Cobie and Febie, their parents, were not visible but the pups seemed healthy and full of energy. (COBIE = COyote Belle Isle. FEBIE = FEmale Belle Isle.)

Another birder that I ran into out in the marsh was so familiar with coyotes in Jamaica Plain that he was surprised that I was surprised. It seems like everyone knows about urban coyotes but few have actually seen them. The relationship between people and coyotes has changed enormously in just a few years. They are accepted as just another part of the urban wild like pigeons and wild turkeys (not yet at Belle Isle). I still find them fascinating and apparently so do Dave's students.

So next time, at dawn or dusk, if you see a pair of dogs running across the marsh, remember their names are Cobie and Febie and they are not dogs.

George Cumming



The author provided the photos of coyote cubs and of Dave Eatough at the Belle Isle coyote trap.

The blog OrientSee is at <http://www.georgemacumming.com/>.



It's a great honor to serve as President of the Friends. About 25 years ago, a small group of people had set up a photo display outside a Winthrop Town Meeting, and there was a beautiful photo of about fifteen egrets at Belle Isle Marsh's Rosie's Pond, with the MBTA yard in the background. Seeing that photo by Soheil Zendehe was one of those defining moments in life when I knew I wanted to become involved with this small group of people who were forming the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh. At one time there had been a plan to construct a deep-water oil tanker off-loading facility at the site. Thanks to the hard work of many, many people, that plan was defeated and the rest is history! We now have a park that is a rare urban jewel in our neighborhood. For many of us who live in the densely populated neighborhoods of East Boston, Winthrop and Revere, a visit to Belle Isle Reservation is like taking a vacation. Thanks again to everyone who "saved" Belle Isle Marsh.

I remember that beautiful summer day in 1986 when Governor Dukakis, MDC Commissioner Bill Geary and others cut the ribbon at the Belle Isle Park dedication ceremony. Many of the people who were there that day are still here, still advocating for the park. And we are still friends, after all these years. Go to Belle Isle Reservation more often this year. Enjoy bird watching, listen to the sounds of nature, and find peace and tranquility here in the park. Belle Isle is such a uniquely beautiful place. Some of the shorebirds seen here can not be seen anywhere else in our urban area.

Annual meeting

I would like to thank Pat Ewanchuk, the guest speaker at our Annual Meeting in March for the presentation on his current research on the rocky intertidal zone along the New England Coast. We hope to see Pat again soon.

Environmental bond bill

After many years of neglect, our state's parks may finally be getting the attention—equipment and other resources—that they so desperately deserve. Governor Deval Patrick has filed legislation, known as the Environmental Bond Bill, which calls for the preservation and improvement of land, parks, and clean energy in the Commonwealth. It would fund a five-year plan for the Commonwealth's energy and environmental capital needs. The \$1.4 billion includes provisions for the enhancement of the state's park system and coastal resources.

The bill addresses a broad range of critical environmental issues for the present and future needs of the Commonwealth. From endangered species habitats, land acquisition, renewable energy, upgrading of piers, to the construction of parks in urban neighborhoods, the bill begins the process of "catching up" if Massachusetts is to have a world-class parks system.

The Friends of Belle Isle Marsh advocate for completing the new park along Revere Street in Winthrop, landscaping the DCR parcel on Morton Street in Winthrop, addressing our degraded marsh areas, studying and possibly upgrading the pumping station on Bennington Street, and completing the East Boston-Winthrop Greenway project. We hope that the DCR will include these projects in their plans. We look forward to working together with DCR and other non-profit organizations to finish these projects at Belle Isle Reservation.

Barbara Bishop
President

2008 Board of Directors Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

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Plovers on Beaches

This summer, if you're walking on a local beach and see a fluff-ball running about, take a second look: It could be a Piping Plover chick. Piping Plovers, on the Federal list of endangered species, only have a *world* population of perhaps 1500 breeding pairs, most of them on the east coast of the United States. Nearly one-third that population nests on Massachusetts beaches.

Last summer you may have heard that Piping Plovers attempted to nest at the north end of Revere Beach. Though they hatched 2 chicks, and one chick survived almost a month, ultimately it is not clear that any chicks fledged from that nesting.

This spring there have already been multiple sightings of Piping Plovers on local beaches with several pairs attempting to hatch eggs and raise young. Those little puff-balls need lots of luck to survive the rigors of growing up on an urban beach.



My Marsh

Many animals live at the marsh,
Help save their homes and don't be so
harsh.

Pick up some trash and throw it away,
Then we can enjoy it on a beautiful day.

Mackenzie Chiudina

Helpful Marsh

A sponge is what the marsh is like.
There it's fun to take a hike.
It's very helpful to this day,
But there it's not so fun to play.
The marsh catches the pollution,
That is part of the solution!

Lauren Paolini

The Marsh

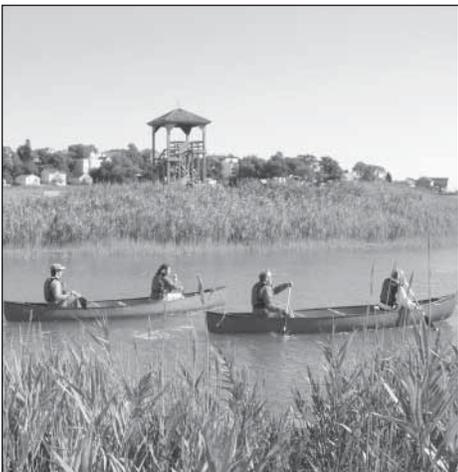
Many marshes big and small
Have one special thing in all
They remind us we should never litter
Or grassy landscapes will get bitter.

The one I know is Belle Isle Marsh
And all the litter is just too harsh.
If you see it, you could say
This is beautiful in a way,
But sorrow, sorrow, truth be told.
The marsh's pollution is too much to
hold.

Something else I have to say,
Is Belle Isle Marsh should be here to stay.

Meg Dolan

Earth Day poems by Mr. MacPhail's 4th
graders, Arthur T. Cummings School,
Winthrop.



An Ode to Dead Rivers

Captains of industry your shameless powers
Laid bare at Indian powwows—
“Greed is the bottom of civilized peoples—the engine.”
Expose your low commercial ambition
As we scrutinize a patients' condition.

The once beautiful Merrimac tumbling down off northern reaches
Meandering down to Atlantic beaches.

Your far inland watersheds
Wondrous, spotless nuptial beds
Beckoned ocean salmon from afar.

Stubborn, streamlined, muscled—a dynamic trio
Give salmon that lusty brio
To conquer relentless rapids at
Spring's spawning habitats.

But, lo, the dams of industry
Choked nature's teeming fisheries
“Great public resources”, “..even to our doores denied.”
Both native and colonist cried.
Stewardship insulted—swept aside—
Investors tripping on their high.

And, if that is not enough,
The love affair with the bottom line
Wears thin with factions over time
Opportunism demands release,
Bickering will never cease,
To find less contentious lands
In others' unwitting, grasping hands.

So, the industries pulled up stakes
But not the dams, they did not take
Fishless rivers lost of soul,
Lifeless sewers, soiled and sold
Down the river, so to speak.

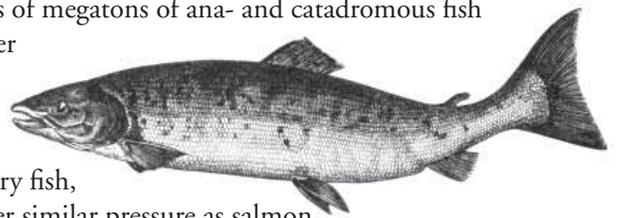
Nameless USA you need identity
In your usurious war against the wealth of waters.
A brand to mark this recidivist commercial insanity!
Usurica! Beware “The Land of Dead Rivers”
A perfect acronymic fit—an epithet.

Conal Foley

Poet's note: Prolific preindustrial wild salmon runs occurred from the Connecticut River north in rivers of the New England states and Canada. Today they are on the edge of extinction, barely surviving only in a handful of rivers in northeasternmost Maine and Canada. The loss of megatons of ana- and catadromous fish available as food and fertilizer

nationwide with minimal,
or no, fuel transportation
costs should give us pause.

All of these types of migratory fish,
and also ocean fish, are under similar pressure as salmon.



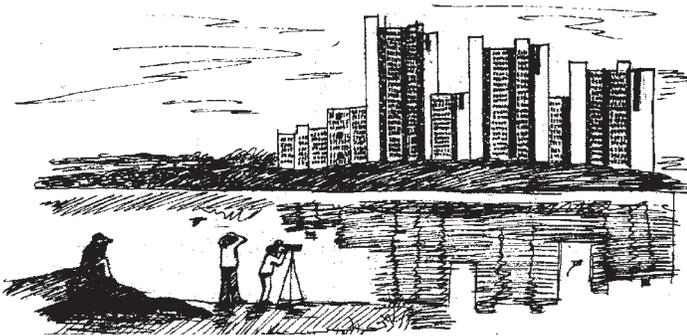


Illustration by Denise Braunhardt Cabral

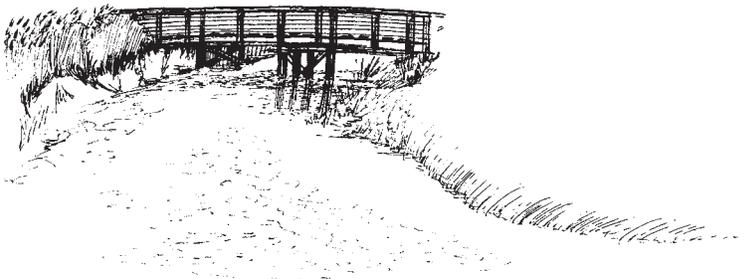
2008 Dawn Heron Censuses

Meeting time is one-half hour before sunrise. Meet at Sireen Reinstein Memorial Boardwalk at the southeast corner of Belle Isle Park. Parking on Bennington Street across from Suffolk Downs (T) station, near Belle Isle Park entrance.

	Sundays	Sunrise	High Tide
	July 13	5:19	8:35
	August 24	6:01	5:29
	September 7	6:15	5:21
	September 21	6:30	4:15
	October 12	6:53	9:55

Help count the Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Glossy Ibises. In addition to herons, you'll see other shore and water birds. Bring binoculars, waterproof footwear and mosquito protection. The census lasts anywhere from one to four hours.

For more information, please call Soheil Zende, 781-863-2392.



BIMBOS vs PLUMS

On May 8, 2008, the PLUMS (Plum Island birders) and BIMBOS (birders in Metropolitan Boston only) declared the war of bird-lists. Said Tom Wettemore, Chief of the PLUMS tribe: "BIMBOS have officially challenged PI Birders to a duel, to see which birding group can put together the better year list for 2008."

Chief Andrew Birch of the BIMBOS and Chief Wettemore keep daily tabs on the bird species being reported in their domains and file reports on BostonBirds and MassBird (both local birding listserves).

As of the middle of May, the lists stood at approximately 230 species of birds seen in each Chieftom, with about 200 species common to both realms and the rest unique to each.

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh (FBIM) membership dues:

- Family \$15
- Individual \$10
- Seniors and Youth (under 16) \$5

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 coffee shop, lodge, or boat club, etc., please call 617-567-5072 or email us: friendsofbelleislemarsh@comcast.net

Our web address:
<http://www.friendsofbelleislemarsh.org>

This issue was produced by Soheil Zende, with help from Barbara Bishop, Daniela Foley, Gail Miller and Christine Zende.

SZ08

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

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