

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Fall 2013

Truly a Fun and Work Day of Teamwork in Spy Pond Park and Beyond!

By Lally Stowell



PHOTO BY BEN KAHAN

Novice Boys from the Arlington Belmont Crew Team regroup after giving back to the Spy Pond/Park community with Coach, Ariadne Zamelis (l) and Coxswain, Kaavya Senthil (r)

On Saturday, September 7, thirty-seven energetic, spirited volunteers from the Novice Arlington/Belmont Crew Team tackled the daunting task of trimming the thick layer of rose bushes from Linwood Circle.

In true team spirit, many of them paired up to find creative ways to trim branches too far to reach from either the water's edge or the bordering fence. Park visitors will now enjoy an unobstructed view of the pond, Elizabeth Island and boating life on the water. Between the cobblestones, others dug up clumps of grass that detract from the beauty of these stones that border the path, the benches and the picnic tables.

In the midst of lively Family Fun Day activities, other volunteers also dug up unwanted grass from the cobblestones, trimmed tall grasses from the fences bordering the planting beds, and cut back or uprooted invasive plants.

We extend a heartfelt thanks to the Arlington/Belmont Novice Crew Team and their organizers/facilitators Joan Amon, Ari Azamelis and Greer Dent—and to all volunteers—for the great job done by everyone. We look forward to an enthusiastic turnout at our last Work Day of the season on Saturday, Oct. 5.

Nature's Wonders at Spy Pond Fun Day

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

My favorite kid at Fun Day in September was the boy who had won an insect guidebook last year and so had begged his parents to bring him back to Fun Day again this year so he could win a bird guidebook. He did all three scavenger hunts and took home multiple books on nature, all donated by the Book Rack.

While other festivals may have bouncy houses and cotton candy, bringing out the frivolous kid in all of us, FSPP's annual low-tech Fun Day draws out a different side of children and adults, the side that prefers to create than consume. Fun Day activities slow people down to appreciate the tiny details of the natural environment around Spy Pond, and inspires them to care for that environment.

The bug booth run for the third year by Ann Wynne was the best example of slowing people down to look at the details of nature. Ann reported fewer kids, but they stayed for longer times at her table. The most patient and nature-loving kids swept the bushes with nets, put bugs in clear containers, looked at them through magnifying glass and drew them. My 7-year-old neighbor Aadya, a keen insect enthusiast, seemed glued to Ann's side.

I noticed many kids, after constructing and floating their elaborate bark boats, continuing to hug them to their chests as they walked around the festival. Rafe Ezekiel and Puneet Syal patiently helped more than 100 kids turn rectangles of bark into something decorated and seaworthy.

(Continued on page 2)



PHOTO BY PUNEET SYAL

Children and parents making bark boats with Rafe Ezekiel

Spy Pond Fun Day

(Continued from page 1)

At the Toddler Table, Donia Goss and Gail McCormick helped preschoolers draw the animals who live in and around Spy Pond and hunt for leaves of different sizes, capturing their interest in the fauna and flora at a young age.

To make a leaf print card at the booth of artist Pinal Maniar required that kids first collect a leaf, then carefully roll ink over it and press it onto folded card stock. I saw many children show off their lacy prints to their parents, to me or other booth-tending adults.

At my scavenger hunt and puzzle booth, one change I noticed from past years was how many more adults took part in the Spy Pond History Mysteries, hunting for clues hidden around the park to reveal highlights of the area's past. At least six childless parties took part, as well as over 100 children. While some kids seemed motivated to do multiple puzzles to win more toys, in fact the most popular prizes were the working binoculars and the nature books donated by the Book Rack.

Elizabeth Island is just a distant horizon for most park visitors, but dozens of adults and children got to walk around and see its beauties up close, thanks to the Arlington/Belmont Crew Team's boats along with Ann Royer and Peter Belknap, board members of the Arlington Land Trust, the new owner and caretaker of the island with the Audubon Society.

The face painting was especially elaborate and artistic this year. In the absence of our two usual volunteers, a professional face-painter, Columbine Phoenix, graciously donated her services. And all this fun and education took place with the glorious, energizing horns of the Lokensgard Blechbläser Ensemble playing in the background.

Every booth, as well as the simultaneous Work Day, benefited from the volunteers from the Arlington-Belmont Crew Team.

FSPP is grateful to everyone who made Fun Day such a success, this year and every year.



Bark boats on the banks of Spy Pond

Take a Kid Carpin' 2013 Makes the News!

By Jerome Moisand



PHOTO BY MIKE O'CONNELL

Jerome Moisand shows off Sam's 18 lb. catch, the biggest of the day

Once again, we had two days of excellent instruction and learning about carp fishing in Spy Pond at the end of June from the walk down steps in Spy Pond Park. A couple of days before the event, we had to get a major log out of the water that was stuck in front of one of the openings obstructing fishing opportunities. We had to cut it in pieces from a canoe, and drag it to the shore.

Saturday a.m./p.m. (beginners' class) was AMAZING. 20 kids involved, each and every one of them caught at least one carp (out of a total of 25 fish landed). Tali broke our event record with a huge 17-8 lb., only to be outdone a little while later by Sam with an 18 lb. monster! Sunday a.m. (advanced class) was a bit of an anti-climax, only 5 fish landed for 9 kids; oh well, this made for more instruction time. We selected various pictures and assembled them in a semi-chronological photo album that you can check online: <http://tinyurl.com/nosv8fn>.

Also, some of the best pictures from the event made it in the main US carp fishing magazine, North American Carp Angler pages 84-91, and we even got the cover! You can check out the entire magazine online, where you'll find other stories of kids fishing (as we're trying to foster similar events across North America in addition to our local thing), and some big carp stories, including an incredible 48 lb. beast recently caught in New England. Check it out: <http://carpanglersgroup.com/naca/2013Q2NACA>

In addition, we made the local TV news! Anne-Marie Seltzer, who works with ACMi.tv, showed up during our event to record a few video segments. Afterwards, Anne-Marie interviewed me (luckily, she had access to a property on the border of the pond, near the island). This was video-recorded, edited, and incorporated into a local TV newscast. You can find it on the ACMi TV site under Arlington Public News: <http://tinyurl.com/o2doa69>.

Many thanks to mentors and picture takers, ACMi TV, FSPP, the Arlington Recreation Department, and most importantly the main actors, namely all those youngsters who participated with such enthusiasm, and were so successful this year. And... we'll do it again next year, which will be the 5th edition of the event.

Editor's note: This event teaches catch and release techniques. Carp and other fish from Spy Pond are not safe for consumption due to hazardous materials in sediment at the bottom of the pond.

“The Tempest” at Spy Pond Field

By Karen L. Grossman

On Sunday, July 21 at 3:45 p.m. the Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) began to erect our canopy and tables. We set out a wonderful variety of “goodies” to sell to the audience as our members delivered their donations. Visitors admired our new display board, signed up to get our online newsletter, and purchased some treats.

“The Tempest” began at 5:15 p.m. under blue skies with expressive teen participants exuberantly portraying the Shakespearean characters. However, the real tempest arrived when black clouds swept over Spy Pond Field obscuring the sun. The rains began to fall, gradually at first, then more steadily poured down. Umbrellas went up and although many of the audience members began to disperse, the play continued until Pam Shanley, Arlington Center of the Arts (ACA) staffer, stepped up to the microphone. She suspended the performance temporarily and we waited for the showers to abate.

Much to our pleasure, all turned out fine. Soon, a double rainbow painted the nearby sky above and the play continued to the relief and delight of those who had stayed. The FSPP once again enjoyed sponsoring the Arlington Children's Theater (ACT) at Spy Pond Field. FSPP members will be happy to know that due to their generosity, we raised \$160 from the sale of the snacks to support Shakespeare in the Park endeavors. FSPP helpers even solicited the crowd sitting in the stands at the adjacent baseball game selling sweets and getting more contributions towards the final total! We all look forward to another ACT production in a couple of years and thank the ACA for bringing culture to East Arlington.

The Vine that Ate Massachusetts

By Elizabeth Karpati

That's what Peter Alden, a naturalist with Mass Audubon, called oriental bittersweet. You have probably admired its beautiful scarlet berries, framed by three round petal-like yellow pieces of husk, climbing a fence or made into a wreath. But that beautiful appearance hides a vicious disposition. Oriental bittersweet climbs all over and smothers everything it can reach.

Bittersweet has slightly pointed, alternate leaves, and small five-petaled, creamy yellow flowers in spring. Young vines are flexible; older ones grow woody, and really old ones can get as thick as an arm. They may wind around a tree and try to strangle it as they climb to the top. In Spy Pond Park there is a birch tree in the planting bed opposite the playground with its trunk forked like Neptune's trident. The middle fork looks like a corkscrew – evidence of a bittersweet vine that squeezed it before being removed years ago, probably before the park renovation. Luckily, there is no infestation of bittersweet in the park now, though plants pop up occasionally. It does grow on the bike path, and heavily on the opposite side of the pond, next to Rt. 2.



Oriental bittersweet

In botanical language bittersweet is dioecious, which means that, like people, each plant is either male or female. Obviously only the females have berries. They are the more dangerous ones, as birds like to eat the berries and can drop them wherever they fly, thus spreading the menace far and wide. Males spread only locally, sending up new vines from their roots.

The war against bittersweet begins with getting rid of the berries. In early September the closed berries look like clusters of small yellow grapes, many clusters growing along a vine. Later, the husks split, displaying the scarlet centers. Cut the fruiting vines and keep them from the birds by bagging them and putting them in the trash to be burned. If you like a bittersweet wreath, cut some vines when the husks are just starting to split, make a wreath and enjoy it for a while (indoors only, to foil the birds), then bag and trash it. The Arlington DPW is now starting to dispose of all invasive plants as trash rather than yard waste to keep them from spreading.

Bittersweet roots send up new vines every year, but the orange roots are widespread and hard to get rid of completely. Trying to dig them up exposes the soil to erosion, so if you dig or pull up any roots, be sure to firm up any loose soil afterwards. Where bittersweet is entrenched, persistent cutting may be the only practical way to fight it. On public property, licensed personnel only may apply herbicides. It's best to learn to identify the plant and destroy any young vine before it gets firmly established.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

A lot has been happening in Spy Pond Park (SPP) and beyond all summer. All the workers' enthusiasm has been inspiring! When Spy Pond Park re-opened, during my first year as FSPP President, we set park maintenance as our priority. So, I am particularly proud of what we've been able to do towards keeping up this beautiful part of East Arlington. Thanks to the Beautification Committee: Betty Athanasoulas, Gail McCormick, Richard Norcross, Lally Stowell, and Beverly Williams for guiding all the volunteers who have worked in Spy Pond Park. In conjunction with the Conservation Commission we are continuing to explore additional measures we can take to improve the condition of the SPP planting beds along the shoreline of Spy Pond. We hope to have a plan in place for next year.

Thanks to Jackie Katzman for being a super Publicity Chair over the years, spreading the word about our events. With regret I accepted her resignation recently since she has moved out of state; we wish Jackie well in her pursuits in NH. So, to fill in, thankfully, Gerda Brown has consented to help us with publicity. However, presently we are looking for someone to assist her making announcements via social media: Facebook, Twitter, etc.... Hopefully, someone will notify me soon that they can fill this role for us. Due to Sally Hempstead's outreach efforts, our database has grown with increased numbers of people drawn to support our beautiful site every day and on Fun and Work Days, too.

Betsy Leondar-Wright organized a great Fun Day and the Arlington Land Trust organized tours of Elizabeth Island in conjunction with our activities. It was truly a fantastic day teaming with people from all over Town enjoying the park, traveling on the Pond and setting foot on the island. We are fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers in our community!

Our fundraising has expanded into October via our involvement with Arlington Whole Foods. Look for Sally Hempstead or me giving out literature in the store occasionally during the month, too. This is an opportunity for which we are so grateful: shoppers can give to our organization all month at the cash register. Please do so, if even in several small quantities, each time you venture into the new store. May I remind you, also, if you have not sent us your 2013 FSPP membership dues, please do so at your earliest convenience. You can get information about how to do this on our website: www.friendsofspypondpark.org. Although we are on strong ground financially, we want to start 2014 with a good reserve.

I am looking forward to our Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner on Sunday, December 8; at deadline for this newsletter the speaker is TBD. However, if we have your name in our database, we will be sending you a reminder in November with the details. Please save the date. I hope to see you in the park or at a meeting soon!

Sincerely,



Karen L. Grossman, President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

A Wonderful Community of Active Workers and Members

By Lally Stowell

A huge 'Thank you' to all who volunteered this spring, summer and fall to keep Spy Pond Park looking beautiful and welcoming for the many visitors who enjoy it all year 'round. Spy Pond Park would not be the unique place it is without all your many hours of work and dedication. Some of you came to our monthly Work Days on your own, some with friends and family,

and some with your volunteer community, school or work group. You collected trash and recyclables, cut back or pulled out invasive plants, pruned or thinned the overgrown planting beds, raked the playground, removed tall grasses from the fences, and dug up clumps of grass from between the cobblestones. There sure was a lot to do!

Every active member of the FSPP contributes in this/her own way. Many of you offered valuable advice and suggestions. Some of you collected trash and debris on other days as you walked through the park. There were a number who became new members or renewed old memberships, making it possible for us to purchase new tools and supplies. You might not have been able to come to our Work Days, but contributed in the form of membership dues or individual contributions. We offer a hearty 'thank you' to you all!

We have special gratitude that we want to express to the groups and their leaders who participated, some for several years in a row: BU students and alumnae participating through the BU Global Day of Service; Lori Tsuruda and People Making a Difference; Mali Ouzts and employees of HDR Architecture; Joan Amon, Ari Azamelis, Greer Dent and members of the novice Arlington/Belmont Crew Team; and Jasmine Leal with members of the Key Club at Matignon High School in Cambridge. Thanks, also, to Volunteer Match for connecting us with great volunteers and groups who participated during the season.

We hope you continue to visit Spy Pond Park with friends and family over the winter months and return to help us welcome and nurture spring plants and flowers during our Work Days beginning next April. The Beautification Committee—Gail McCormick, Beverly Williams, Betty Athanasoulas, Dick Norcross and I—send out our appreciation for all your efforts.

Town Day 2013

By Sally Hempstead, VP for Communication & Outreach

One of the most enjoyable experiences associated with Town Day are the hours between set-up and opening. You meet new friends in adjacent booths who are not only ready and willing to put together your tent, but to also show you new ways to better display your information. We share coffee, discuss the opportunities that our parks offer and try to solve the ongoing challenges. Arlington's park groups don't compete, they support each other and that is what makes this town unique.

Saturday, September 21, was a rousing success for the Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP). At our booth on the early shift Bev and Wally Williams greeted people with irresistible congeniality. Marshall McCloskey joined us soon after to spread joy around by wandering through the crowd handing out flyers from the Whole Foods on Mass Ave. in Arlington explaining how to benefit our organization during October by adding a donation to your cash register receipt.

Lally Stowell joined us at noon and her cheerful welcome helped sign-up many new e-mail friends. Every year I am amazed at the number of people she knows in Arlington. Our games and puzzle section for children of all ages received a boost when Betsy Leondar-Wright shared her knowledge of the flowers and fauna living and growing in our park. Everyone, including me, gleaned new facts and information about Spy Pond Park. Betty Athanasoulas replaced Betsy and having learned from the master, proceeded to encourage the younger population to solve our puzzles and discover the mysteries at Spy Pond Park, if only vicariously. Our President, Karen Grossman, helped us close the day by distributing more FSPP Newsletters to the townspeople than all of the other volunteers combined.

From new household memberships, donations, SPY Stickers, and T-shirt sales, the FSPP collected \$137.00. We could not have done it without the dedicated assistance of our members and the generous support of the citizens of Arlington.

Spy Pond Park Fun Day / Spy Pond / Elizabeth Island

By Ann LeRoyer

The Arlington Land Trust again coordinated boat trips and guided tours of Elizabeth Island during the Friends of Spy Pond Park's Fun Day on Saturday, September 7. Members of the Arlington-Belmont Crew Team ferried visitors back and forth from the boat ramp. Nearly 70 people were able to walk around the island, most of them for the first time. About half of the delighted explorers were adults and half children.

ALT board member Ted Siegan and volunteer Susan Stamps greeted the visitors and guided them around the island, while other board members manned the boat ramp and coordinated launches and landings with the Crew. Unfortunately, active wasp nests in leaf litter near the trail forced the cancellation of tours after about 2 1/2 hours.

ALT expects to offer more tours next spring and summer so that all who are interested in the island can experience it up-close, and will be working on trail maintenance to ensure safe use of the island.

The island is open to the public and can be visited at any time by private boat or by walking or skating on the iced-over pond, if we have a cold enough winter to allow safe passage. The Town also offers boat rentals at Spy Pond Park during the summer months. Consult the Arlington Recreation Department for more information: <https://www.arlingtonrec.com/info/>. You can find out more about the Arlington Land Trust at www.arlingtonlandtrust.org.



PHOTO BY ANN LEROYER

Arlington Land Trust and Arlington-Belmont Crew members helped ferry nearly 70 visitors to Elizabeth Island on Fun Day

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings

**at Karen Grossman's
Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013, 7:00pm
32 Hamilton Road #402**

Park on Linwood Street off Mass. Ave. or on
Lakehill off Lake St. at the far end of the complex.

**& Annual Meeting
at the Jefferson Cutter House
Sunday, Dec. 8, 2013
5 pm potluck dinner, 6 pm meeting**

with speaker TBD; details to be emailed and announced
on the FSPP website.

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990
email fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...

Send your annual dues (\$15 individual, \$25 household, \$5 low-income) to:
FSPP, P.O. Box 1051
Arlington, MA 02474-0021
For more information, call a Friends officer.

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For newsletter contributions, contact berkshire2@juno.com
General comments can be sent to fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Friends of Spy Pond Park • <http://www.friendsofspypondpark.org> • P.O. Box 1051 • Arlington, MA 02474-0021

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



Spiderman at Fun Day

Final 2013 FSPP Work Day

Saturday, Oct. 5: 1-4 p.m. (rain date October 6 1-4 p.m.)

For questions:

Work Days-Lally Stowell, Beautification Committee,
781-777-2759 lallystow@yahoo.com



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Laura Tracey of the Lokensgard Blechbläser Ensemble