

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2025

What could be better than Fun Day?

By Betsy Leondar-Wright, Fun Day Coordinator for 21 of the last 24 years

At the end of the Fun Day festival, a first-time volunteer said to me, "This is the kind of event that gives me hope for the human race!" I was touched, and told him I felt the same way: a community coming together to show kids a good time, in a well-cared-for natural environment, with live musicians and with scads of volunteers and parents helping children connect with nature and crafts... What could be better?

Once again, we had a great turnout (probably over 500 people). But there was no problem accommodating them all, because we had so many volunteers, who worked so hard, on so many activities.



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

The children let their creativity shine as they crafted enchanting fairy houses with vibrant materials and imaginative designs as Leah Cirker-Stark, the Fairy Lady, offered encouraging guidance

artistic level of the painted faces was amazing this year. Thanks to Alexandria, Byron, Alana, Annie, Ricki and Ana (I think) for so much lovely painting!

The creative activities were popular, as usual. I saw lots of kids carrying around a leaf-print card and a fairy house and a bark boat that they had made! Lally and Diana once again ran the leaf-print table like an efficient assembly line, accommodating an awful lot of kids without generating any paint mess. Leah the Fairy Queen was assisted by their mother, Rachel, and stepfather, David. Because they and I collected boxes and decorative materials

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PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Children lined up at the face-painting station where FSPP volunteers painted colorful rainbows, butterflies, and creative designs on happy faces like (l-r) Adeline's and Aileen's

Several strong first-time volunteers loaded up vehicles the night before, came early, stayed late, and did most of the heavy lifting and in-between staffed activities: there was Byron who painted faces for 3 hours straight; Michael whose truck saved the day (and whom I quoted above); and Bruce, who discovered FSPP on [VolunteerMatch.com](https://www.volunteermatch.com) and who gave Fun Day an exceptional amount of energy. They were coordinated by Lynn Horgan, whom I proclaim the Vice-Coordinator of Fun Day 2025 for her many, many roles.

The face painters kept painting faces until 45 minutes after the festival was over, since so many kids were still in line. The



PHOTO BY FRED MOSIS

Colorful toy representatives of nature entertained toddlers and adults sprawled out on the tarp

Fun Day in Spy Pond Park

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all year, they didn't run out, but helped over 100 kids create glittery fairy houses. Sharon, Lynn, Bruce, and Cairn plowed through three cartons of birch bark, a big tub of biodegradable clay, and piles of berries, leaves and feathers, helping kids turn them into creative little boats, some still floating on the pond the next day.

PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA



Alan and Caleb Yang worked together building a bark boat, turning nature into a hands-on craft activity

Environmental education is always part of Fun Day. Brad Barber, a Co-chair of the Spy Pond Committee, taught a lot of people how to measure water quality using a Secchi disk. The more sophisticated scavenger hunts crafted by the clever designer,

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



People gathered around Brad Barber launching bark boats at North Beach and learning how to use a Secchi Disc to assess water quality



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Maggie Carey guided the children as they solved the puzzles

Jan, convey a lot of information about threats to the natural environment. The paper puzzles result in simple messages about caring for Spy Pond, such as "don't feed the geese"; and the leaf hunt introduces kids to the tree species in the park.

As always, Jan and Sarah were strong anchors for the complex activity station of puzzles, hunts and prizes – especially since I wasn't assisting them this year. Why not? Well, Gail Leondar-Wright, who always plays a million roles as the coordinator's "spousal auxiliary", went overboard this year in collecting prizes. It was the abundance of stuffed bunnies she found that led me to create a new activity (the bunny scavenger hunt) involving learning facts about the rabbits in the park. It was such a huge hit that all 60 paper sheets and all 60 bunny prizes were gone in less than two hours. The other puzzles, scavenger hunts and prizes got a bit less traffic while so many kids were bunny-clue hunting! Clearly, we need to solicit more bunny donations for next year.



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Betsy Leondar-Wright, Park Activities Chair, Jan Ionzaric, and Sarah Hager kept children engaged with scavenger hunts, puzzles, and fun prizes—bringing curiosity and smiles to participants

Preschoolers had a really, really good time this year, as toddler table coordinators, Jenny and Maggie, cleverly spread out toys on a tarp. Also, the 'color an animal and you can take it home' activity was a big hit with the crayon set; at least 50 stuffed animals, all species that live around Spy Pond, found their new humans.

The architectural disks reappeared after some years of absence, thanks to first-time volunteer Nora, resulting in some impressive tall sculptures.

Once again, the music was fabulous. The LBE Brass Band played rousing old-time favorites, and Cousin Louis drew listeners over to the meadow with their crisply played and soulfully sung jazz, pop and blues. Since these two bands have entertained us for so many years, I anoint them both the title of "Soundtrack to Fun Day"!

Our skilled photographers, Mithelesh Sharma and Fred Moses, were assisted by Arlington High student Ana. It was wonderful to have two high school students come back again after volunteering in 2024, both Ana and the face painter Alana, as well as newcomers Maya, Cairn and Aiman. Where would we be without the community service workers? We also got spontaneous clean-up help from a stranger walking through the park, Reggie.

PHOTO BY MITHELESH SHARMA



The Lokensgard Blechbläser brass band tooted their horns, filling the park with music, adding energy and joy to everyone's delight

As always, FSPP's long-time President, Karen Grossman, staffed the organizational table, selling t-shirts and giving out information about the park, the pond, and the Friends of Spy Pond Park. She had assistance from Laura Kiesel and Eric Hoyt who discussed rodenticide harms, and fishing and fishing line dos and don'ts.

Thanks to all who loaned us pieces of infrastructure: Judy Weinman for the canopy; and Kelly, John and Lynn for chairs; and Michael and Bruce for trucks.

A hard-working volunteer said to me as he departed, "I plan events myself, and I don't envy you all this work you do." I said, "What are you talking about? You don't envy me? Everyone could envy me! It's one of the most joyful parts of my year, preparing for Fun Day, working with the volunteers, and then watching hundreds of kids have fun! What could be better than that?"

Final note: We all are greatly indebted to Betsy Leonard-Wright. Once again, her creative ideas brought artists, scientists and families together to experience joy in Spy Pond Park while learning the wonders of nature around us.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Summer has sped by and oh, what a nice one we had! September is always such a busy month, filled with volunteers' time and efforts on Fun Day, Town Day, and a Work Day. We welcome Arnav Gupta, who will be serving our organization as General Vice President. He will be assuming some of my responsibilities, and some of those of other officers and committee chairs. I express sincere gratitude on behalf of FSPP to all our dedicated volunteers!

Natasha Waden, Parks and Recreation Director, now knows about the broken playground equipment. She has been working with the DPW to order the parts and do the repairs. In addition, we are pleased that the DPW has cleared away most of the refuse and natural debris at the Linwood Beach shoreline. We continue to ask the DPW to remedy the eroded step at North Beach and for them to prune the forsythias at the Linwood Street end of SPP.

David Morgan, Town Planner and Conservation Agent, has facilitated new discussions between FSPP and Essex Horticulture regarding their taking over what was previously set forth with Parterre, and more. Caitlin Rodriguez, an Essex Horticulture representative with whom Adrienne Landry and I met, commented that the FSPP Stewardship Team has done a great job curbing invasive growth in the planting beds. Things look more promising than they did, that we will be able to supplement Town funding next year. This will further foster cooperation to further FSPP's mission and the goals of the Conservation Commission to curb erosion at the shoreline and filter stormwater runoff via the rain gardens in the park.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter, filled with some of the beautiful photos taken throughout the summer. Thanks to those of you who stepped up to contribute your thoughts and images of all the activities FSPP offers in service to the Town of Arlington. Perhaps you can join us on our final October 18th Work Day. And please watch for our end-of-year solicitation, which will come your way in November; we always appreciate your support!

Warm regards,

Karen L. Grossman

Karen L. Grossman, President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Great Summer for Herons!

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

Spy Pond is always home to a couple great blue herons, but the summer of 2025 stood out for having more and varied herons.

- The so-called green heron is beautifully many-colored, like the chestnut breast on the one in the photo.
- Mature night herons have the lovely ribbon from their crown down their black and white backs, but juveniles like the one in this photo are just brown with red eyes.
- We were lucky to have great blue herons come closer to the park than usual this summer. One often sat on the snag near Linwood Circle in the early mornings. The sitting one with the unusually folded wings (first photo) was on the shore just below the ballfield, halfway between the condos and the park. When it flew away (second photo), it headed into the condo cove.

There were also osprey, eagles and red-tail hawks that I saw soaring over the pond. Isn't it amazing to have such great bird-watching right in our own park?



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Great blue heron flying across Spy Pond

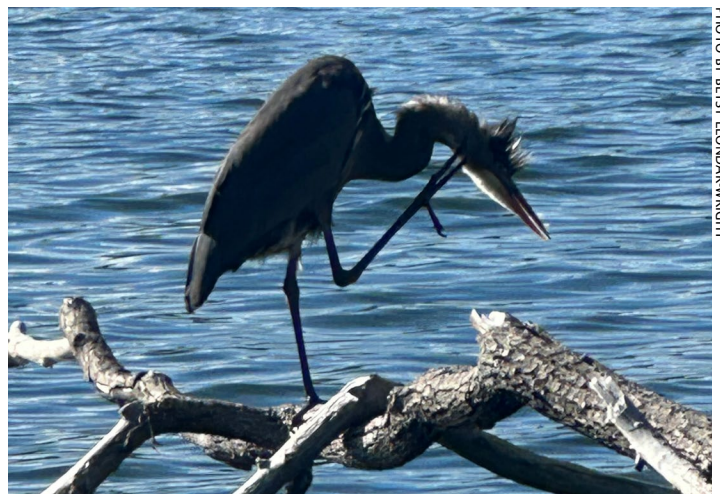


PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Heron grooming itself on a snag



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Green Heron on Spy Pond



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Juvenile Night Heron

Stewardship Team Report end of year 2025

By Lally Stowell, Sharon Green, Diana Maggini and Adrienne Landry



(l-r) Work Day volunteers Susan and Linda removed invasives among the goldenrod and trimmed the shrubs with guidance from Adrienne Landry of the Stewardship Team

The Stewardship Team has been working steadily at ridding the planting beds in Spy Pond Park of invasive plants and replacing them with native plants since 2020.

Since 2020, we have planted 43 shrubs and several flowering plants. This year, we planted two fragrant sumac in Bed 8, behind the stone wall and two Christmas Ferns in Bed 2. The shrubs have a better survival rate because we believe their woody stems hold up better through the winter. We normally plant anywhere from 5 - 7 shrubs per year only using volunteers.

This year is different in that \$3,500 - \$4,500 was allotted to Spy Pond Park from a larger grant from Water Bodies Working Group fund. The working group is part of the Conservation Commission. With this added money, and after a walk-through in April with our former landscaper, we decided we could have the landscaper plant 14 or more shrubs. In September, we had a walk through with a new landscaper, Essex Horticulture (also to be involved in phragmites treatment in Spy Pond) and we are awaiting their cost estimate. We are hoping they will plant 14-18 shrubs in the spring and maintain the rain gardens in SPP (as well as others throughout the town).

With regard to the trees in the park, Tim Lecuivre, Arlington's Tree Warden, has been alerted to some dead trees and large dead branches that need removal and one Quaking Aspen to be transplanted.

The Stewardship Team includes Lally Stowell, Sharon Green, Diana Maggini and Adrienne Landry.



Tree of heaven, an invasive and damaging plant species that is toxic to dogs

FSPP 2025 Remaining Work Day

Oct. 18, 9-11 a.m. (rain date Oct. 19, 1-3 p.m.)

Liability waivers are required for all participants in Work and Fun Day activities. If you are working, please download the form <https://friendsofspypondpark.org/pdf/liability-waiver.pdf> from the FSPP website, fill it out and bring it with you. Children below 18 years of age must have parental signature to participate in Spy Pond Park Work & Fun Days.



People Making a Difference® always brings specific tools for trimming the bushes off Linwood Circle and in SPP



Representing FSPP at Arlington's Town Day on September 20 were (r-l) Diana Maggini, Jenny Babon, and high school volunteer Maya Chakrabarty (not pictured: Arnav Gupta, Lally Stowell, Sharon Green and Karen L. Grossman)

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

Please Note Time Change

**Sunday, November 5, 2025
5:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,
&
A Sunday in January, 2026
5:00 p.m. Potluck dinner,
6:00 p.m. Speaker & Annual Meeting
Exact date and details TBA**

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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Photographer's Assistant: Open	

Newsletter contributions and general comments can be sent to
fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Friends of Spy Pond Park

• <https://www.friendsofspypondpark.org>

• P.O. Box 1051

• Arlington, MA 02474-0021

The Heron

By John Shahabeddin

Look! On the bank! On the shore of the stream,
away from rushing roads;
She comes down to the water, the bane of fish and toads.
Loping, tall, but graceful, she bobs along the shore;
Seeking those who hide themselves upon the river floor.
With silent grace her yellow eyes scan every hole and nook;
Her lightning spear is poised to strike at those within the brook.
Her speckled breast and grey topcoat disguise both low and high;
So those below, when looking up, will only see the sky.
Her long grey legs do bend and bow just like the water reeds;
As she skulks along the river bank, amidst the scraggly weeds.
And then she stops, all frozen-still, a pale but deadly spike;
She coils her neck just like a snake and readies for the strike.
The eel she's spied is unaware, he swims without alarm;
In a flash of white, of yellow bright, a splash disturbs the calm!
And with quarry caught within her maw, all grace is cast aside;
She guzzles down her breakfast, and down her throat it slides!
You've heard about the Fisher King who flits in royal blue,
Now meet the regal Fisher Queen, upon her spindly pew.
Who catches fish and toads and frogs with elegance and grace,
With yellow eyes and tufted crown above her noble face.

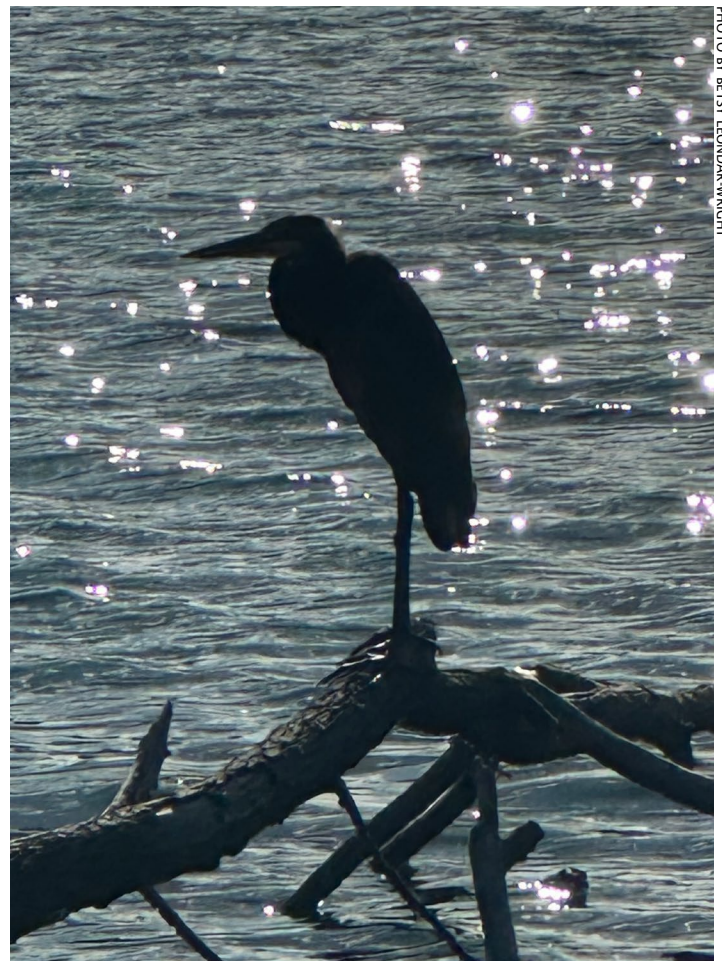


PHOTO BY BETSY LEONAR-WRIGHT