

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Spring 2013

EcoFest 2013

By Marshall McCloskey

The Friends of Spy Pond Park's display at **EcoFest 2013** held at Arlington's Town Hall on Saturday, March 23 was well received by many who attended. One of the themes of the event this year was to celebrate Arlington's open spaces, and we, in all modesty of course, might claim to be among the premier ones in that regard. We distributed a number of Friends of Spy Pond Park brochures and flyers with a list of the 2013 Work Days, from which we hope to get more volunteers and also some new members. Our goose, as shown in the accompanying picture of our display, attracted much attention, especially from the younger attendees, who, hopefully, took away the message that the geese shouldn't be fed! This was a great opportunity for the FSPP to outreach to the community.

Our display was adjacent to the display of the Spy Pond Committee, an official committee of the Arlington Vision 2020 task group, which focuses their maintenance efforts more on the southern side of the pond near route 2, but, like us, is concerned and involved with the general well-being of the pond for the enjoyment of all.

This was the 25th anniversary of **EcoFest**. Launched as an environmental event where people would get information, get involved, find products, learn about services and be entertained by people who care about the environment, **EcoFest** started as a visionary effort for a better world. Through dynamic exhibits, stimulating entertainment, celebrity performers and speakers, **EcoFest** fosters public awareness about opportunities for environmental change.

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PHOTO BY MARSHALL MCCLOSKEY



The FSPP exhibit at EcoFest 2013.

More Rain Gardens in Arlington

By Karen Grossman



PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE MILAN

The Rain Garden Committee views the Spy Pond Park rain garden. Two new rain gardens are planned for locations in Arlington: one by the Hardy School, and one at Hurd Field.

If you enjoy the rain garden in Spy Pond Park and want to assist in the installation of two others in Arlington sponsored by the Town of Arlington and the Mystic River Watershed Association, please mark your calendars for the following events, and RSVP here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dGxubkJpYkI4eW01R3Vfd1JHVENhRmc6MQ>

- Hardy School Rain Garden

Planting date: Sat. May 4th, 10am–1pm (or until it's complete!)

- Hurd Field Rain Garden

Planting date: Sat. May 11th, 10am–1pm (or until it's complete!)

These rain gardens will collect, absorb and clean storm water runoff. For more information go to: <http://mysticriver.org/rain-gardens/>.

EcoFest 2013

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This was the fourth time the town has hosted an **EcoFest** event. At 10:00 a.m. Grammy nominee Judy Pancoast gave a concert with fun and lively family music, and at 11:00 a.m. Lexington resident Meg Muckenhoupt, author of "Boston's Gardens and Green Spaces" From Glaciers to the Great Meadows: 15,000 years in Arlington's Open Space, gave a talk related to some of the topics covered in her book.

There were 29 exhibitors at this year's **Arlington EcoFest**. Other "Friends" organizations represented were: the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows, Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, and Friends of Robbins Farm, as well as the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA). It's comforting to know that there are other people and organizations engaged in maintaining and improving Arlington's local resources.

A number of tables had displays where a lot could be learned about local environmental issues and concerns. Gail McCormick staffed The Vision 2020 Sustainable Arlington and the Shrink It (environmental footprint) display. Next to us was a table: HomeHarvest Custom Edible Gardens, which designs attractive gardens that provide many types of flowers and edible plants. The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC) provided tips for safe bicycling, and information on riding group activities around town and surrounding communities. Among others represented were the Arlington Center for the Arts, Arlington Community Education, the Arlington Garden Club, the Arlington Land Trust and the Arlington Historical Society, all with very informative and interesting displays. The FSPP looks forward to opportunities for participation in Arlington's **EcoFest** again in the future.

Editor's note: The display that Marshall used at EcoFest was also at the Robbins Library most of the month of March. We hope you saw it there. Many people took the handouts, learned more about FSPP and our 2013 Work Days. So, we hope to see some new volunteers in the park this year!

Minuteman Trail Cleanup

By Stephan Miller

Spring is upon us, the snow has melted and exposed a years' accumulation of trash along our Bikeway. I've noticed that there are particularly bad concentrations of rubbish in Arlington Heights from the Park Ave. Bridge to Trader Joe's, Arlington Center from Mystic St. to the High School and in East Arlington at Thorndike Field.

Please join the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee in a spring cleanup of the Minuteman Trail in Arlington. The cleanup will take place on Saturday April 27 from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm. The rain date is Sunday April 28. We hope to see you there.



Volunteer Peter Howard joins others installing curbstone.

9th Annual Spy Pond Trails Day

Saturday, May 11, 9 AM–1 PM
(rain date May 12)

Meet your neighbors and learn valuable tips for maintaining your own property. Please join us at Spy Pond, Arlington, for our ninth year of trail maintenance, controlling invasive plants, pruning vistas, bagging litter, and generally improving this scenic slice of public land so enjoyed by all. Equipment and snacks will be provided, but please pack your own lunch for after. This event is hosted by the Spy Pond Environment Task Group, a committee of volunteers working in partnership with the town and a variety of civic, sports, youth, and social organizations. C'mon down and join the party, rain or shine! Participants should bring sturdy footwear, work clothes, water, hat and sunscreen, rain gear. Liability waivers will be available and must be signed by all participants (under 18 need approval from—and are preferably accompanied by—a parent or guardian). Location is along the path that parallels Route 2, between Lake St. and Pleasant St. Recommended parking: exit 60 off Rt. 2, head towards Mass. Ave. (N) on Lake St., first left onto Colonial Drive, left onto Roanoke, left and park along Spy Pond Parkway. For further details, call (781) 641-2506, or visit our website: www.arlingtonma.gov/spypond/.

Spy Pond Plant Life

By Bill Eykamp

I made my first boat ride on March 19th this year. The ice had been out less than a week, and the day was cold and blustery. I wanted to get the first Secchi disk reading for 2013, but the day wasn't particularly pleasant.

In Spy Pond, the Secchi disk measures (indirectly) the level of microscopic plant life, algae, in the pond water column. The disk disappeared at a disappointingly shallow level, not unusual for March. There are a lot of algae there. They are cold tolerant, and they will be gone when the water warms.

Algae and macrophytes (rooted plants) are the major plant communities living in the water. Algae derive their nutrients from the water column; rooted plants rely on nutrients in the sediment.

Algae, then, are more sensitive to nutrient levels in the water, and those levels change much faster than those in the sediment. Phosphate, the limiting nutrient, when washed in from fertilizer affects the water column immediately. When the organic matter in the column dies, it settles and adds to the sediment taking some nutrients with it. There are warm weather processes that bring some of those nutrients back into the water column to feed algae, but much of the nutrient load feeds the roots of macrophytes.

We get concerned about algae primarily in warm weather, when a few of the many species in our pond "bloom." Three of the algae, *Microcystis*, *Anabaena* and *Aphanizomenon* are watched carefully, as they can produce toxins. These toxins, while rarely fatal, cause legitimate public health concern, and the Board of Health posts warnings when the levels rise above 70,000 cells/ml. Unfortunately, these algae have developed the ability to float, so the local concentration is highly dependent on wind. Fortunately, when they are at dangerous levels, it looks as if green paint has spread on the surface.

Rooted plants cause major impairments in Spy Pond. Historic anthropogenic practice has dramatically accelerated the aging of many lakes, and ours is a classic example. Excessive nutrients and exotic rooted plants make for a vibrant lake flora, leading to dramatic impairment.

Our leading problem weed is Eurasian watermilfoil. It is exotic. A second exotic, spiny naiad, made an appearance last year. So far, it is under control. Exotics come to us without their natural controlling organisms. Milfoil may be the #1 aquatic plant pest in northern North America. Huge efforts are invested in finding a biological control. Occasionally, there is a hopeful report, usually about a native organism taking a liking to the plant. These findings have proven impossible to replicate reliably. We are therefore reliant on herbicides, several of which have been applied in Spy Pond every few years.

Other plants of concern are natives, but with our rich nutrient sediment, they can easily get out of control. About a decade ago, coontail made simple rowing impossible. Sago pondweed was prominent in 2012. Snail-seed pondweed, clasping-leaf pondweed and stonewort were also abundant. A complicating factor with emergent rooted plants is filamentous algae, a single cell organism that organizes itself like very long strands of hair. It binds the rooted plants together at the surface, and the mat it forms can become virtually impenetrable.

My early boat ride did not reveal any emergent rooted plants, but given the bad conditions for observation, they might be there already. It often happens very early. The ice and snow cover did not block light well enough to inhibit plants over the winter, and I am not optimistic. We'll soon know what is in store for 2013.

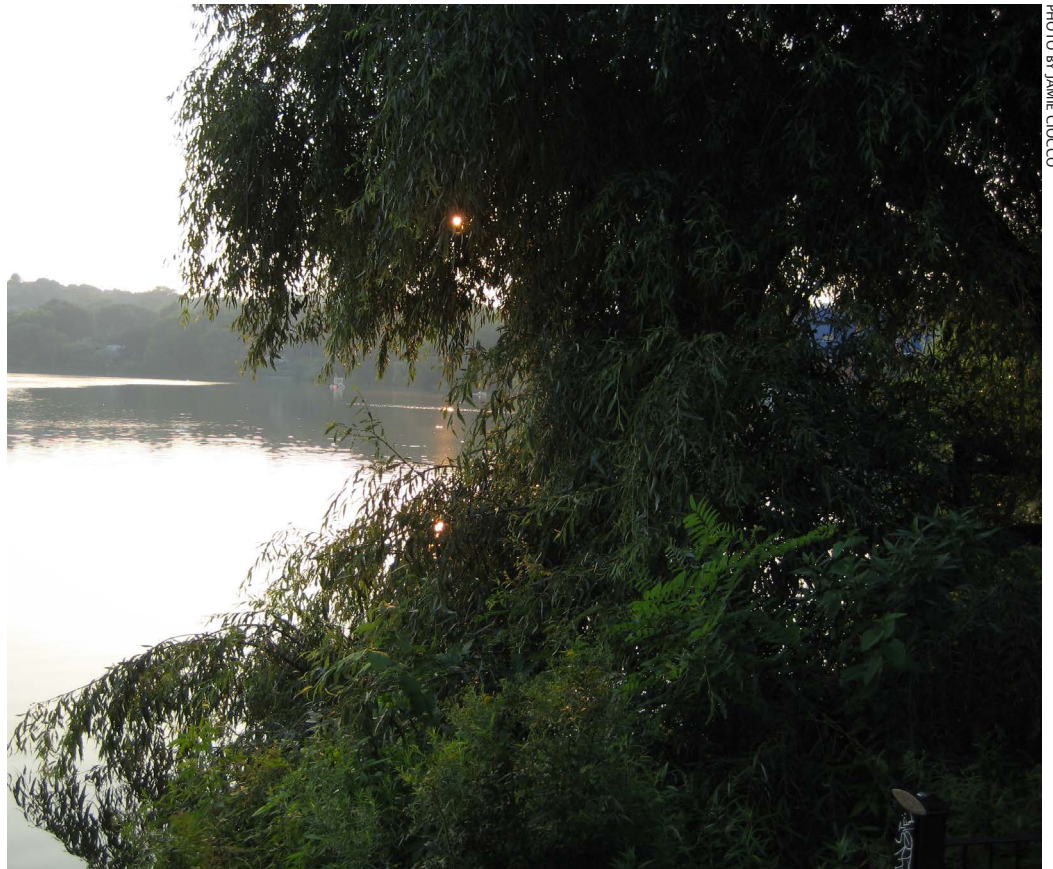


PHOTO BY JAMIE CIOCCO

Area Events

“Three Towns, One Forest”

April 25 at 7 p.m.

**Lesley University Hall's Amphitheater
1815 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge**

A six-member group of scientists will be part of this regional environmental forum See more at:

http://www.boston.com/yourtown/news/arlington/2013/03/environmental_forum_at_lesley.html#sthash.t98S2E9u.dpuf

Mystic River Watershed Association's 17th Annual Herring Run and Paddle Sunday, May 19, 2013

Participate in this fun event as a runner, paddler or biker.

Pre-registration encouraged.

<http://mysticriver.org/herring-run-paddle/>

Citizen Scientist Training Workshop June 11, 6 p.m. Cambridge Health Alliance conference room A/B 195 Canal St., Malden, MA

Registration required:

<http://mysticriver.org/citizen-science-training-works/>

This workshop provides interested volunteers with training on water quality monitoring methods and concepts. By completing this workshop, you'll be prepared to join the Mystic River Watershed Association's Baseline Monitoring Program. This program includes regular training courses, monitoring events at least once a month between 6:00a.m.-8:00a.m., picking up and caring for water quality monitoring equipment, utilizing data sheets, and remaining in contact with the Water Quality Monitoring Director. Please note that their water quality monitoring efforts are active year-round and in inclement weather.



PHOTO BY JAMIE CIOCCO

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Although I was away during the March snowstorms, it still does not feel like spring, yet. However, the forsythias and crocuses are peeking out and I know we'll soon be enjoying their blooms! This also means that our job of cleaning up Spy Pond Park is just around the corner, too.

April 20 is our first Work Day and we celebrate Earth Day and Boston University's Global Days of Service that are being held worldwide throughout the month of April. We welcome BU alumni to our park and encourage as many of our volunteers to participate in the extensive job of cleaning up after the long winter. Please mark your calendars to remind you of all our Work Days in 2013 and plan on helping us keep Spy Pond Park beautiful. It is important that Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) members are involved in the park, a factor that is essential to its long-term welfare.

This year the FSPP will be funding a portable toilet on Pond Lane's gravel parking lot and will monitor maintenance by the service provider. Since we are making this financial commitment for your convenience, please take care of our investment. If you notice that either unit is not cleaned adequately, contact the number listed on the units. The company should be accountable for regular upkeep of their property.

Enjoy Spy Pond Park and I hope to see you there and/or at our May 5th meeting!

Sincerely,

Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

FSPP Saturday Work Days

By Lally Stowell

The FSPP monthly Saturday Work Days begin soon. We encourage all who enjoy the beauty of Spy Pond Park to come and join our efforts to preserve this unique spot for present and future generations. We need your help pulling weeds and invasive plants, removing fallen branches, clearing the beaches and playground, and picking up trash. Our Work Days are scheduled for three hours, but any amount of time is greatly appreciated. A lot can be accomplished in even a short amount of time. This is an opportunity to meet and work side by side with others who love the park and enjoy helping to keep it looking beautiful. It is also an opportunity to learn more about native and invasive plants.

For each monthly Work Day, we plan to provide photographs and mounted samples of plants and flowers we hope to preserve and invasive plants we want to prune or remove. These samples will be available at the main table and will be hanging on the fence in front of each bed where volunteers will be working. Also in each bed, there will be photos mounted on stakes to mark the location of plants to be removed. Members of the Beautification Committee will be available to assign tasks, answer questions and welcome comments and suggestions.

PHOTO BY JENNY BROWN



Lally Stowell gives advice on cleanup of the pond shoreline.



PHOTO BY JENNY BROWN

Stuffing brown bags with natural debris.

Below is a list of all the 2013 Work Days. We encourage you to come as often as possible and to invite your friends, family, members of your community groups and colleagues at work to participate. High school students can earn community service credits. We look forward to a record number of eager volunteers this year!

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| April 20 1-4 p.m., | rain date April 21, 1-4 p.m. |
| May 11 1-4 p.m., | rain date May 12, 1-4 p.m. |
| June 8 1-4 p.m., | rain date June 9 1-4 p.m. |
| July 13 10 a.m.-1 p.m., | rain date July 14 1-4 p.m. |
| August 17 10 a.m.-1 p.m., | rain date August 18 1-4 p.m. |
| September 7 1-4 p.m., | rain date September 8 1-4 p.m. |
| Work and Fun Day (children's activities in the park) | |
| October 5 1-4 p.m., | rain date October 6 1-4 p.m. |

For questions: Lally Stowell, Beautification Committee Member, 781-777-2759

**Friends of Spy Pond Park
next meeting
at
Karen Grossman's
Sunday, May 5, 2013
at 7:00 p.m.
32 Hamilton Road #402**

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

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

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.

President: Karen L. Grossman (781) 646-5990

General Vice-President: open

Treasurer: Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877

Recording Secretary: Beverly Williams (781) 316-1917

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Fundraising Chair: Jason Fligg (781) 724-7638

Newsletter contributions and 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

Professor Hans Von Puppet Presents: Three Ways You Can Help the FSPP

Love Spy Pond and want to help out? Our funny and furry "Professor Hans Von Puppet" offers 3 easy ways you can help out "the jewel of Arlington". Check out this 60-second PSA and share on Facebook to help even more!

See him at: <http://vimeo.com/54224714>

