

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Spring 2014

2014 FSPP Work & Fun Days

By Lally Stowell



PHOTO BY SHERIDAN KAHMANN PHOTOGRAPHY

The FSPP monthly Saturday Work Days begin on April 19th this year. We encourage all who enjoy Spy Pond Park to come and join our efforts to maintain and preserve this unique spot for the many families and visitors who come from all over throughout the year. 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, even in 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 will provide photographs and mounted samples of plants and flowers we work to preserve and invasive plants that we need to prune or remove. These samples will be available to inform and guide volunteers. Members of the Beautification Committee will be available to assign tasks, work together with volunteers, answer questions and welcome suggestions.

Below is a list of 2014's Work Days. We encourage you to come as often as possible and to encourage 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!

Saturday, April 19, 1-4 p.m.; rain date April 20, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, May 17, 1-4 p.m.; rain date May 18, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, June 14, 1-4 p.m.; rain date June 15, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, July 12, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; rain date July 13, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 2, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; rain date Aug. 3, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 6, 1-4 p.m.; rain date Sept. 7, 1-4 p.m.

Work & Fun Day*

Saturday, Oct. 18, 1-4 p.m.; rain date Oct. 19, 1-4 p.m.

***Fun Day includes Children's activities in Spy Pond Park and Arlington Land Trust boat trips and tours of Elizabeth Island for visitors**

For questions contact Lally Stowell, member of the Beautification Committee, 781-777-2759.

Liability waivers are required for all participants in the above Work and Fun Day activities. If you are working, please download the form 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 activities sponsored by the Friends of Spy Pond Park.

Swan Sculpture for the Park

The swan created by sculptor Kevin Duffy slowly emerges as we prepare for its home at Linwood Beach in Spy Pond Park. Watch for the announcement of its onsite dedication.



The original granite stone with the swan model



PHOTOS BY KEVIN DUFFY



The progress of the granite swan sculpture



Upcoming Activities

Spring Walks

There are many spring walks sponsored by the Friends of Alewife Reservation for the purpose of bringing awareness to the area of the valuable natural resources there. Check the Google Calendar at www.friendsofalewifereservation.org for details.

EcoFest: March 29

Come visit the FSPP booth at **EcoFest: Rethink, Recycle, Reduce, Reuse, and Repurpose** on Saturday, March 29, 2014 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Arlington's Town Hall. Guest Speaker is Richard Duffy: "Antique Beauty with Energy Efficiency."

MyRWA Committee meeting: April 1

You can participate in **MyRWA Committee meetings** the first Tuesday of every month. April 1st's guest will be a speaker from Tufts discussing the WSSS project on the Malden River. Go to www.mysticriver.org to find out more information on MyRWA events.

Mystic Community Earth Day: April 26

Save the date for the **5th annual Mystic Community Earth Day** on Saturday, April 26th. Events are happening throughout the watershed to celebrate Earth Day. Volunteers are needed to complete this work! Join MyRWA at the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse, 32 Shore Drive in Somerville on 4/26 at 10AM for a river cleanup - sponsored by KEEN Footwear!

Minuteman Bikeway Cleanup: April 26

The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee will be sponsoring a cleanup of the Minuteman Bikeway in Arlington this year on Saturday, April 26 from 9:30am to 12:30pm. There are areas where the trash is piling up. We are hoping that, with sufficient response, we can expand our mission this year to removing dead vegetation and invasive weeds. Please mark your calendars so that you can participate in this essential yearly event. Visit minutemanbikeway.org for updates.

10th Annual Trails Day: May 17

10th annual Trails Day at the southern end of Spy Pond adjacent to Route 2: Saturday, May 17, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. rain or shine. Pick up litter, control invasive plants, prune vistas, or use broken curbstone pieces to build some steps to the water under supervision of expert members of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

18th Annual Mystic River Herring Run and Paddle

Sunday, May 18, 2014:

Run, Walk, or Paddle for the Fish!



The annual Herring Run and Paddle includes a 5K run/walk race, three paddling races (3, 9, and 12 miles), educational booths, children's activities, and more. All events are held at the DCR Blessing of the Bay Boathouse in Somerville. The 5K course continues along the Mystic

River bike path and through DCR Torbert MacDonald Park. Register online at: <https://www.racemenu.com/events/34401-Mystic-River-Herring-Run-and-Paddle>

Spy Pond Fun Day 2014

By Erin and Jason Fliggburger

The 10th Annual Friends of Spy Pond Park Fun Day is happening on September 6th this year and is sure to be a blast for kids and adults alike! Save the date now!

Featuring:

- Nature Crafts
- Bug Hunting
- Scavenger Hunts
- Boat Rides to Elizabeth Island
- Face-painting
- Live Music
- Prizes and more!

Volunteers are needed! We are seeking teenagers and adults to help with publicity, lead activities, solicit prizes, play music, and help with setup/take down. If you would like to be a part of the fun, contact Jason Fligg at mrfligg@yahoo.com as soon as possible. With your help, this will be the best Fun Day yet!

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Although Spy Pond has been frozen over for weeks and someone was ice fishing as recently as Saturday, March 15, spring is just around the corner. The weather was sunny, but cold and windy earlier this month when I walked through the park once again with Cathy Garnett, Conservation Commission and Carol R. Johnson, landscape architect. Carol has kindly offered to design an overlay to the renovation design done by CRJA in 2004 that would serve to update the planting beds and curb erosion. We are hoping to have a proposal soon for securing the soil at the water's edge so we can present it to the Conservation Commission and the Park Commissioners in early April. Both Cathy and Carol are researching possible solutions that must be installed before we begin the second stage involving a planting design to inhibit erosion and keep people from walking in the planting beds.

PHOTO BY KEVIN DUFFY



Swan sculpture being created by sculptor Kevin Duffy

The Friends of Spy Pond Park volunteers and other workers need to have access to the planting beds once monthly on our Work Days, but we do not want others creating paths from the walk down stone steps into the beds to fish, get close to the water or go from one planted area to another. We hoped the black fencing would enable plant stabilization, but it did not deter people's movement into the plantings. Plants in those beds are there to secure the soil and prevent erosion as well as offer additional beauty in the park. So, please, *do not* walk in the planting beds except when volunteering on a Work Day. Some of the trees are in fragile condition, so climbing the trees can be dangerous, too. In general, please stay out of the planting beds and enjoy the view from the designed paths.

I am very excited about Kevin Duffy's progress on the beautiful swan that he is crafting from a large granite stone in Acton. Soon, he'll be bringing it to his studio in Arlington to complete his work. I can't wait to announce when it will be placed in Spy Pond Park! We'll have a dedication of this first permanent artistic endeavor in our park and will be in touch to let you know when that will occur so you can join in the festivities and welcome the bird to its new home.

I am very happy to announce that people have stepped into Open positions on the FSPP Board! Elaine Crowder has assumed the role of Publicity Chair with Jacki Katzman's assistance during a brief transition period. And, Erin and Jason Fligburger have taken on the roles of Co-Chairs for Outreach/Park Events to plan Fun Day this year. We are so grateful to all three for assuming these important responsibilities for our organization!

We'll be engaging in our annual dues solicitation in May. Please join us in supporting our endeavors by becoming a member. Additional funds for upgrading the park may be in DPW's 2015 budget, but we'll need money for planting this year, too. Thanks for your interest in Spy Pond Park. We hope to see you there volunteering on our Work Days, picking up litter on your own while walking through, or just enjoying the view or the playground equipment with your children.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Grossman

President

Friends of Spy Pond Park

Memories of Spring on Spy Pond Years Ago

By Eva Balasz

Sally Hempstead asked me to tell you about spring on Spy Pond in the olden days. Well, I surely do remember that an armful of Weeping Willow twigs brought in on Valentine's Day would be in full bloom in about two weeks and on the first of March we had a gorgeous, golden, yellow bouquet by the window. Spring was just around the corner...not really, not quite.

Spy Pond would still be frozen in March. In fact, it was considered the worst month for winter accidents. I myself almost drowned on a March day. Thom, our beloved family dog, fell through the ice in the middle of the pond where the water is at least 10 feet deep. He couldn't get out... just couldn't make it. However, I got to him at the last moment, grabbed his collar, and pulled him full force! Then the ice collapsed under my feet... and I found myself vehemently treading water, bouncing among chunks of floating ice, too! But, we saved ourselves and neither of us even got the sniffles! That sure was a close call.

Then, we would have a couple of snowstorms, of course; it was still March, after all. But, only once did we have it on Easter Sunday! It was the memorable blizzard of 1962.

When it was getting lighter with each week and spring was ready to take off, our early-rising son, André, would burst into the bedroom shouting, "HERE THEY COME; HERE THEY ARE AGAIN!" And sure enough, way up, high in the sky, you could make out the V formation of a large flock of Canadian Geese. The muted call of karong-karong sounded melodious and lovely. They were the earliest arrivals of the migrating birds and they were welcome in the olden days. We had pheasants, too, would you believe it? Late afternoon and early morning the double squawks of tonk-tonk were the only clue. We never saw them, except I did, once catching a glimpse of a magnificent male bird. He was kind of showing off his sparkling, spectacular plumage, parading slowly along the shore. Now, how foolish can you get, really!!

There were other signs of the upcoming spring. Along the old Route 2 grew a long row of Weeping Willow trees, gray in the winter. But by the end of April, the entire shore of Spy Pond was a sparkling stretch of golden yellow! People would stop on the highway to admire and photograph the view. This original shore doesn't exist anymore. Alas, some 10 acres were filled in throughout the years to accommodate the ever-widening Route 2.

There was a marsh where Kelvin Manor is today. We had fewer houses and more open land. At places, it was quite wooded and wild. In other words, it was an ideal background for little boys to chase Indians and spy for pirate ships lurking on the horizon. And, we had sea monsters, too! Just ask Jamie Powell or David Hibbet; they grew up here and could tell you a story or two about sunken boats... huge sealed barrels full of treasure...

upside-down automobiles, all resting on the seafloor!!! There certainly was mystery here, that's for sure.

During the 1970s several Swedish families lived nearby, most of them connected with Boston academia. They all loved Spy Pond. 208 Pleasant Street was a large, beautiful property of Dr. Bob Freeberg and his wife, Elsa, both of Swedish-American background. They had two children. Everybody had children, many children, it seemed. But, let me just say it right here: our Swedes knew how to celebrate, and we locals took it all in. Come June 21st, that was it! The most joyful, spring date on the Scandinavian calendar was "Midsommer Fest"...Hey, it sounded good!

The Dohlmans, another Swedish family, rented the old carriage house on the Freeberg estate. Carin Dohlmán became the designated organizer of the festival. She hired two musicians, a fiddler, and an accordion player, who came dressed in their traditional Swedish costumes and looked like new arrivals from the Old Country. Now, the mood was set.

Following the old custom, a group of young men carried in the beautifully decorated, huge May Pole. Then all of us, young and old, boys and girls, joined hands and formed a large circle around the raised pole. There was magic in the air; dancing and singing began: fast waltzes, polkas, and children's well-known sing-alongs, one following the other. And we, 70-80 of us, danced them all. The gestures conveyed what the songs were about and we mouthed the Swedish words. Nothing to it! We just kept dancing and laughing.

Then, we played games. I was usually in charge of that part of the day. We had "3 leg races," "pillow-case runs," "sweet bun-eating" contests and many more. I made sure we had plenty of ribbons, both for the winners and the losers.

Finally, we were ready to eat. You should have seen that table! Festively decorated, laden with luscious homemade goodies: Scandinavian specialties, as well as our New England standbys.

We celebrated several such splendid events... and we were ready for the upcoming summer. The weather was always perfect, come to think of it, never a cloud in the sky!

Yes, I have fond memories. So, I send you warm regards as spring arrives once again.



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONARD WRIGHT

Ice sailing and hockey on frozen Spy Pond

More Invasive Plants

By Elizabeth Karpati

Japanese beetles, knotweed, honeysuckle...

No slur intended against the Japanese—one of the favorites in my garden is a well-behaved *Nipponanthemum nipponicum* or Montauk daisy (“Nippon” means Japan), but some imports are apparently so exotic that local critters cannot recognize them as potential food, so by not being eaten they have a leg up on native flora and fauna and can crowd them out.

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is established in the western planting beds of Spy Pond Park. It snakes through the bush willow next to the boat ramp and spirals up the fences. Where it finds nothing to climb on, it runs along the ground and roots repeatedly. If you yank at a piece, you may end up with a few yards of vine in your hand. It has opposite leaves, broadly oval like a racetrack, about an inch long. Sometimes it tries to fool you by growing a few leaves with rounded lobes like some oak leaves.



Japanese honeysuckle

Japanese honeysuckle ingratiated itself with gardeners by having sweetly fragrant spring blossoms that start out white, and turn yellowish before they fade. My neighbor had it but got rid of it years ago, but I am still pulling some of his escapees out of my raspberry patch. There are many honeysuckles, some of which are native and no problem, but beware of non-native ones.

Japanese knotweed is an oversized relative of the small herbaceous knotweeds with tiny pink flowers. It is so big (it can grow over your head) that it has two scientific names: *Polygonum cuspidatum* and *Fallopia japonica*. The common name comes from the fact that the stem has knots in it like bamboo – indeed it is sometimes called Japanese bamboo. It blooms in late summer with drooping clusters of tiny, dingy-white flowers. Until then, you can recognize it by its large leaves, which look as if they had been cut straight across at the stem end and are pointed at the other end. Russ Cohen, the edible wild plants guru, says the new shoots in the spring can be eaten steamed like asparagus, but I have never tried it.



Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed is rampant in some places along the bike path. It has not yet seriously invaded Spy Pond Park, but it keeps trying. A rootstock under the stairs near the playground sends up a stalk every year. Baby plants keep popping up among the roses in the small bed to the right of the boat ramp from roots that are apparently already too deep and tangled with the rose roots to be yanked out. In theory, persistent cutting to minimize top growth that can photosynthesize and feed the roots should eventually starve the plant to death, but in practice this seems to require an awfully long time. At least getting rid of all invaders as soon as they are spotted should keep them at bay. Long live the weed pullers!



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONARD WRIGHT

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings at Karen Grossman's Sunday, April 6, 2014 & Sunday, June 8, 2014 both 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

VPs for Communication & Outreach:

Sally Hempstead (860) 944-1370

Jamie Ciocco jamcio@gmail.com

Chair for Publicity: Elaine Crowder (781) 648-1927

Beautification Committee:

Betty Athanasoulas (781) 646-1343

Gail McCormick (781) 646-0614

Richard Norcross (781) 641-2404

Lally Stowell (781) 777-2759

Beverly Williams (781) 316-1917

Elizabeth Karpati (781) 643-4172

Webmaster: Fred Moses fred@fmoses.com

Co-Chairs for Outreach/Park Events:

Erin and Jason Fliggburger (781) 724-7638

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

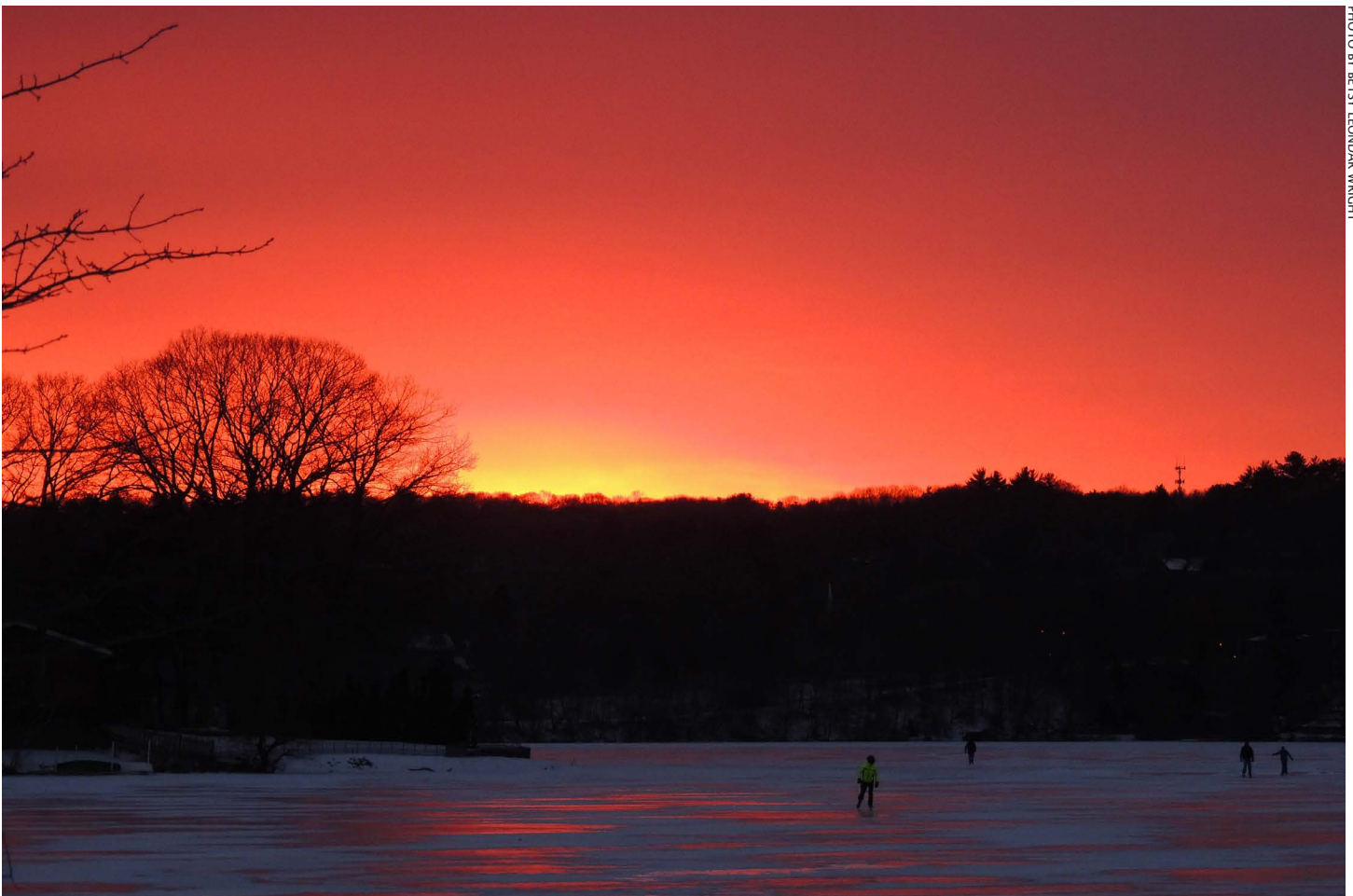


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