

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2023

Awesome Fun Day!

By Betsy Leondar-Wright, FSPP Park Activities Chair

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES



There was spirited dancing, swinging to the musical rhythms rising above Spy Pond!

Wowie-kazowie, did we ever show a lot of kids an awfully fun time! I estimate there were more than 400 participants.

And look at the number of people I'm sending this thank-you message to: there were more than 45 of us who made Fun Day happen!

Armloads of gratitude are due...

Especially to all the high school students who pitched in on set-up, clean-up and assisting with every activity - in particular Emma and Janae who stayed until the bitter end. We needed your strength and your energy!

The music was terrific - many thanks to Cousin Louie for the bluesy sound, and to the LBE Brass Band for the oompa sound!

I want to give a special shout-out to my neighbors Kelly and John, Deb and Peter, Begabati, and Anne and Christopher who kindly lent their cars and/or their loading/unloading efforts to get all the tables, chairs and boxes from and to my house - on short notice after we realized that other transport options had fallen through. My spouse Gail coordinated all that loading and unloading and brought water and snacks to all the volunteers.

Leah the Faery Queen and Lauren, both resplendent in their costumes, ran out of boxes to be decorated as fairy houses, and so improvised with folded paper.

The bark boats were such a huge hit that it's hard to believe it was Lynn's first time in charge of that activity, with Nick and Noelle assisting. A whole flotilla filled the pond's edge.

The face-painters always had a line of kids waiting; thank you to painters Anne, Annie and the intrepid high school volunteers Cecilia, Carolyn and Mea who kept painting for the entire 3 hours despite the heat.

There was more for preschool toddlers to do than in any past year, thanks to Jenny and Danielle at the coloring table, and to Lauren and Becca from Tinkergarten / Mystic Valley Nature Play, and also thanks to an extra abundance of donated toddler toys.

Sarah and Jan hid their creative bird-clues around the park, and they and I puzzled the minds of dozens of kids about how to care for the pond; we gave out prizes that included more than 30 pairs of binoculars.

There was always a crowd at the leaf-print table, which was so well-organized by Lally and Nancy.

Cecily brought the cardboard disks that were built into fanciful towers and walls.

We had two info tables, with Ann and Peter staffing the Arlington Land Trust one and Karen Grossman staffing the FSPP one - and the Mystic River Watershed Association was well represented with a fish photo-cutout board.

Fred Moses took photographs that appear in this FSPP newsletter and on the website; Danielle collected the names of the people in the photos.

How do we get such a big turn-out year after year? Several officers of the Friends of Spy Pond Park pitch in on publicity:

Lally Stowell walked posters to dozens of locations up and down Mass Ave; FSPP President Karen Grossman and Newsletter Editor Jamie Ciocco got the announcement out to the FSPP list; and Publicity Chair Jenny Babon made the poster and plugged the event on social media. We're a great team.

And the weather cooperated with us! Until the day before, it looked like Fun Day might get shortened by rain, but it held off until the festival was over. Thanks, Mother Nature!

I enjoyed working with all of you and seeing all the happiness you created. Let's do it again next year!



PHOTO BY BIANVA SHRESTHA

Opal Shrestha created a beautiful leaf print on Fun Day

PHOTOS BY FRED MOSES



Winnie Burke was happy with the little monkey face painted on her forehead



Susan Chapnick, Arlington's Conservation Commission Chair, Nick and Matthew topped off their Fun Day pleasure via the Mystic River Watershed Association's peek-through board



Miyabi Saito and her father were eager to begin making a bark boat together



Sam reached into the tube to pull the mast stick through the bark to make his boat



There were lots of natural materials available for constructing bark boats



PHOTOS BY FRED MOSES

Betsy Leondar-Wright, FSPP Park Activities Chair, was very grateful to all the volunteers who made Fun Day a wonderful experience again this September. Kudos to Betsy for all she's done over the years to make youngsters and their families appreciate nature in Spy Pond Park!

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Fall is ramping up here with bright, varied tree color as I write this letter to you. Meanwhile, many wonderful activities have been continuing in Spy Pond Park. Fun Day was a complete success in September. Thanks, especially, to Betsy Leondar-Wright for planning the wonderful combination of activities! I know she put in hard work and time to plan, supervise and participate in this year's event. We were all happy to have so many dedicated volunteers conduct and guide participants through the activities. Everyone enjoyed the park and what it has to offer, including the renovated playground.

Our Work Day season drew to a close on October 14 with much progress by the FSPP Stewardship Team (previously called the Beautification Committee). Thanks to Adrienne Landry, Lally Stowell, and Sharon Green, along with the teams of volunteers who made this year so successful. On our website, Julie McBride has posted photos from 2022. Check them out; it's fun to review last year's endeavors – and there you may even see yourself or people you know! Thanks, Julie.

New signage in two of the planting beds draws visitors' attention to our Revegetation Project. The QR code links people to the FSPP website for an explanation of this endeavor. The signage is the result of the effort of: Adrienne Landry, Stewardship Team member; David Morgan, Environmental Planner and Conservation Agent; Julie McBride, FSPP Website Designer; Jenny Babon, Publicity Chair; and the Parks and Recreation Commissioners who approved the signage. Our gratitude to all for their efforts over several months refining the signage wording and design, and enabling installation of the signs.

We thank Anna Doctor, a new FSPP volunteer, and Fred Moses, who have graciously volunteered to learn the bulk-mailing process from our long-term Coordinator, Marshall McCloskey. Please watch your street mail or email for our November end-of-year solicitation. We appreciate all that you can give in terms of financial and/or physical support by volunteering in the park. Thanks so much for your interest in our organization; we hope to see you at our Annual Meeting on January 21, location TBD.

Sincerely,



Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

The Dying Cygnet

By Rachael Stark, a friend of Spy Pond and a friend of Spy Pond swans

She flapped her downy wings, struggled to stand, then laid down her beautiful long neck and died. Yesterday morning, by Spy Pond, a light grey cygnet died. She was perhaps two or three months old.

Silent, elegant, and gleaming white, her parents watched from across the pond. The cygnet lay injured and bleeding all night, flies buzzing around her. The parents must have understood there was nothing they could do but keep watch as she weakened through the night. After she died, the adult swans came out of the water. They walked by her still warm body, with their three remaining babies, out of a clutch of eight. They protected the little ones, keeping them between the large adults. But they were not able to protect this baby.



The cygnet, showing its injury

How was she injured? Was she hit by a bike? Bitten by a snapping turtle or dog? We do not know. We do know we tried to get help for her and found none. Dozens of people saw her and did what they could, calling one number after another seeking emergency medical care, but no one was available after hours. By the next morning when offices opened, the little grey cygnet was dead.

Town Animal Control policy does not seem to allow medical help for injured wild animals. State wildlife offices are understaffed and hard to reach. Private rescue centers are full and far away. What help can we offer an injured swan? Or any wild mammal, reptile, fish or bird of Arlington if they get sick or injured? Several winters ago, we let an adult swan starve to death, tangled in fishing line. This week we let a baby swan bleed to death while her parents and siblings watched.

Somehow the Town of Arlington can find money to mow baseball fields and soccer fields, plow snow off the streets, and buy ever larger vehicles for the Police. But, we cannot find money to hire Town staff to help an injured baby swan? Shame on us. Maybe we should spend a little less on cars and sports, and a little more on care.

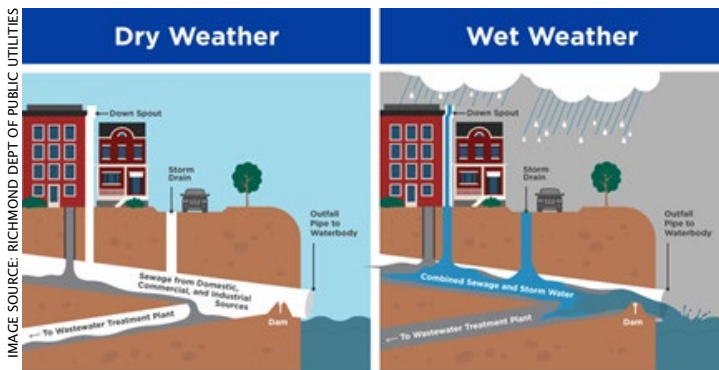
Are swans a recent invasive species in this area? Perhaps. But, so are humans, especially humans, whose ancestors fled poverty and persecution in Europe. If policies and budgets are harsh and do not allow us to help creatures in need, perhaps we need to change them to be kinder. What will you do to make this the last time we have to stand by and watch such a sad, but preventable, death?

Alewife Brook Report

By Dave Rogers, State Representative, dave@repdaverogers.com

This past month, I had the pleasure of meeting with a group of students from Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge who are participating in a summer program run by [Biodiversity Builders](#), a local organization run by Jean Devine and Skye Schirmer. This great program is innovative in a number of ways, and I greatly enjoyed my visit. Part of its mission is the restoration of native plant habitats and landscapes in the Alewife Reservation, in turn increasing biodiversity and climate resilience in the process.

Improving and maintaining the Alewife Reservation has long been a priority of mine. As many of you know, Alewife Brook has several [Combined Sewer Overflows](#) (CSOs). This is a type of sewer system where rainwater runoff and sewage run through one pipe, as opposed to separated systems. During normal weather, this approach is adequate and everything in the pipe goes to a treatment plant. During heavy storms, however, the amount of stormwater runoff can overload the system, and the CSOs provide an outlet to relieve the stress and prevent sewers from backing up into homes, businesses, and storm drains. The result is that untreated sewage flows into our waterways, most notably for our communities, the Alewife Brook.



During heavy storms, sewers can be overwhelmed with excess rainwater, causing sewage to run off into local waterways

Decades ago, the infamous [Boston Harbor cleanup court case](#) mandated that CSOs in the Charles and Mystic River watersheds be removed to stop polluting the region's waterways. The vast majority of them have been removed, but sewer separation is an expensive and difficult undertaking and some CSOs along the Alewife Brook remain in operation.

Compounding the problem of the CSOs is the fact that the Alewife Brook regularly floods its banks, which can send the sewage-contaminated water into the backyards and even at times the homes along the Brook. As climate change continues, heavy storm events that cause flooding and CSO activation will only worsen, making action on this issue all the more important.

In the last legislative session, a bill I co-sponsored was [signed into law](#) requiring the operators of CSOs to notify the public whenever the CSOs activate, thereby giving people

advance notice of potential contamination. This effort was led by the [Massachusetts Rivers Alliance](#), headed by Belmont's own Julia Blatt.

While this law made important strides, there is clearly more to be done to alert people to the danger of CSOs—look no further than the [recent flooding](#), where people were seen jogging, biking, and pushing strollers through contaminated water. Moreover, action is needed to address the root cause of the problem: the CSOs themselves. That's why I have filed, H.886, [An Act relative to combined sewer overflows](#). This bill requires that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority not operate any CSOs that activate in moderately heavy storms by 2030. I am pleased to be partnering with local advocacy group [Save the Alewife Brook](#) on this legislation.



Dave Rogers (back l.) with the Biodiversity Builders, students from Arlington, Belmont and Cambridge, near the Alewife Reservation

I have also worked to secure earmarks in the state budget to address the issues around the Alewife Brook. In FY23, I secured \$40,000 for clean-up efforts around the Brook. This year, working with Save the Alewife Brook, I helped secure \$100,000 which will be allocated to the [Mystic River Watershed Association](#) for a study to 1) model the effects that dredging the sediment that has accumulated in the riverbed would have on flood mitigation (an option [hinted at by the EPA](#)) and 2) evaluate specific actions needed to protect the environmental justice communities in the area. This study is an important step, and ultimately might allow our communities to take advantage of potential federal infrastructure funding. Of course, when it comes to protecting local residents from flooding and health risks, there are other measures just as important as hard infrastructure, like sewer separation. Green infrastructure—such as native gardens and habitats—can be [very effective](#) at reducing stormwater flows into sewer systems and play a crucial role in managing flooding. This only underscores the importance of what these students helped do to improve the local ecosystem. As I continue to work on policy solutions at the State House, it is heartening to see young people working on the ground to address the problem as well.

2023 FSPP Stewardship Team's* Progress

By Adrienne Landry and Lally Stowell

Last year's drought was eclipsed by this year's rainfall. On August 31, the Boston Globe reported "More than 20 inches of rain fell in Boston over the past three months, the second-highest total on record, the National Weather Service said..." The rain seems to have helped our plants and brought out much more Goldenrod and the New England Asters which had not appeared in at least four years.

We continue to work on invasive plant removal and re-vegetating with native plants. During the spring work days, we planted three *Viburnum Dentatum*, three Red-Twig Dogwood, one male Winterberry, two Bearberry and two Chokeberry. Along with the shrubs, we planted two Asters, a flowering plant. In addition to these planting projects, volunteers from People Making a Difference® trimmed the hedges at Linwood Circle.

This Fall, Parterre, a landscaper, planted seven more shrubs for us: four *Rosa Virginiana* and three Red-Twig Dogwood. With the addition of a weed wrench, we were able to take out large invasive plants with expansive roots systems. The total plantings for 2023 are 18 shrubs and two flowering plants.

Our September Work Day involved transplanting some Joe-Pye Weed from one planting bed to another. Volunteers from Silman, a TYLin Company and Ethos Cannabis dug out grasses and weeds from between the cobblestones that line the main path through the park. They enhanced the beauty of this path for over half of its length through the park. Our regular cast of volunteers joined in this task, also.

With the addition of new signage in the planting beds, we hope to inform visitors of what we are doing. Check out the QR Code on the sign. All in all, we had a very good season!

**Formerly the Beautification Committee*



PHOTOS BY PARTERRE ECOLOGICAL



Jordan O'Hare Gibson and Kayleen LaRose, Parterre Ecological employees, worked for hours on Friday, September 15 to remove invasive plants and aggressive, weedy vegetation in a couple of planting beds in Spy Pond Park. Their removal focused on species such as: false indigo, common buckthorn, honeysuckle vine, multiflora rose, various rubis species, sweet autumn clematis, mugwort, and mulberry. Phragmites by the pond bank were also mechanically removed.

Volunteer Spotlight

Linda Clark, pictured here, has helped in many ways this year. She is an avid gardener and has been willing to share her knowledge with the volunteers. Starting this spring, she demonstrated how to plant shrubs properly, planted them alongside the volunteers on that same day, and became part of the watering team to keep them alive. Not only did she tend the shrubs she helped plant, but she bought and added two more. As well as attending most Work Days this year, she can be seen removing invasive plants throughout the park - on her own time!



PHOTO BY JENNY BABON

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON



Lori Tsuruda and People Making a Difference® workers trimmed bushes and cut down invasive growth

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

**Sunday, Nov. 12, 2023
7:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,**

&

**Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024
6:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA**

&

**Sunday, March 24, 2024
7:00 p.m., Zoom link 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.

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

General Vice-President: Open

Treasurer: Susan Saw (781) 439-1490

Recording Secretary: Megan Chrisman (760) 604-8384

Membership Secretary: Daniel Jalkut (617) 276-6672

VPs for Communication & Outreach:

Lauren Bonilla

fsppvoluteer@gmail.com

Jamie Ciocco

jamcio@gmail.com

Communication, Outreach and Publicity Committee:

Anne Ellinger (781) 646-1705

Marshall McCloskey (617) 548-9877

Bulk Mailing Coordinator: Anna Doctor (615)-686-0328

Chair for Publicity: Jenny Babon (774) 253-6325

Stewardship Team:

Adrienne Landry

Lally Stowell

(781) 777-2759

Web Developer: Julie McBride

Chair for Outreach/Park Events:

Betsy Leondar-Wright (781) 648-0630

Photographers and Videographers:

Jenny Babon

Fred Moses

(774) 253-6325

fred@fmoses.com

Mithilesh Sharma

(617) 233-9218

Photographer's Assistant: Open

Post-processing: Mark Sandman

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

PHOTO BY SHARON GREEN



Lauren Bonilla, Outreach and Communications Chair, set up a great booth for Town Day and talked to passersby at Arlington's Town Day detailing projects, answering questions about the Friends of Spy Pond Park and selling t-shirts and "Ice Business" booklets all day. Even with rain as the day progressed, there was a great crowd attending this yearly event!

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON



Tessa Flanagan (r.) organized Silman, a TYLin Company, engineers to come to Spy Pond Park. Karen L. Grossman, FSPP President, (2nd from right) joined the volunteers and collected trash for the Reverse Tashlich project she launched with the [Mystic River Watershed Association](#) and [Tikkun HaYam](#)-the national organization that launched Reverse Tashlich.