

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Summer 2025

Ready For FUN on FUN DAY?

By Betsy Leondar-Wright, FSPP Park Activities Chair



FUN DAY!

At SPY POND PARK
SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 13, 2025
10AM – 1PM

Friends of Spy Pond Park

Near Pond Lane
Rain date: 9/14 1-4PM

- * Face painting and leaf prints
- * Bark Boats and fairy houses
- * Scavenger hunt and puzzles with prizes
- * Origami and toddler activity table
- * Live music and more!

Mark September 13 on your calendar for our annual festival of nature activities, music, and crafts!

We have some new activities this year, such as animal origami by Takako, and a bunny* treasure hunt.

Volunteers and in-kind donations are needed:

- As our stalwart Fun-creators age, we need more strong-back people, and more big vehicles to transport stuff.
- Prizes for the puzzles and scavenger hunts. Most popular are binoculars and nature guidebooks, and stuffed animals and plastic toys representing species that live in or near the pond. *Bunnies especially needed this year!
- Small boxes (like Kleenex-sized) and sparkly decor for fairy houses

- Face-painters are always in demand.
- Do you know a lot about fishing? We got a donation of some laminated flat fish with magnets, and a plastic fishing rod with a magnet on the end. So, it would be great to have a volunteer lead an activity in which kids learn about fishing!

But most of all we need volunteers to set up, clean up and lead activities. Can one of them be you?

Contact Betsyclassmatters@gmail.com

The Hard Problem of Fishing Line

By Christopher S. Wilson

Fishing line is designed to be stubborn. It's designed so fish can't bite through it and so it won't shear if dragged over submerged rocks and branches. Having fished my whole life, I am quite familiar with the frustration of getting line tangled in trees when casting too close. In freshwater, bass like to linger under overhanging branches to grab insects and anything else that might drop from the trees. So, when you fish, it pays to cast near the branches. I've heard other anglers say that if you're not getting tangled in the branches now and then, you're not casting close enough.

(continued on page 5)



Christopher Wilson wades in the water at the edge of Spy Pond Park to remove fishing line caught in the trees

FSPP Work Day May 17, 2025

By The Stewardship Team

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON



Volunteers worked in the planting beds

On the May 17, 2025, Work Day at Spy Pond Park, we had 12 volunteers, and 6 FSPP members in attendance. All were busy for the two hours. We filled six bags of invasive debris and eight bags of compostable debris.

We worked from excellent notes taken by Sharon Green on the pre-work-day walk through on Wednesday May 14. Here is a summary of work done and in which bed:

- **Bed 8** Four volunteers lead by Diana Maggini cleared out invasive plants from Bed 8 (behind the stone wall near the parking lot) and also cleared around the three red-twig dogwood planted in 2023.
- **Bed 6** Volunteers led by Sharon dug out clematis vines from the fence and then transplanted a red-twig dogwood that was getting ragged from some sort of interference from the right side of the bed to the left side.
- **Bed 5** With the help of volunteers, Bill Stalcup cut suckers off the cherry tree and bagged them.
- **Bed 4** A large patch of Japanese honeysuckle, as well as garlic mustard, was cleared out and four saplings pulled out by volunteers. They also cut down a large dead plant on the right side of the bed.
- **Bed 3** Volunteers cut down a large large oak sapling but kept the roots intact.

PHOTO BY JENNY BABON



Olivia, our youngest May 17th volunteer, swept errant wood chips to groom the playground

Editor's note: Thanks to the volunteers and The Stewardship Team: Adrienne Landry, Lally Stowell, Sharon Green and Diana Maggini.

We encourage you to join us on our Work Days as often as possible, for whatever length of time you can give. We also hope you will 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 having many eager volunteers work with us this year. For more information, contact Jenny Babon: fsppvolyunteer@gmail.com.

FSPP 2025 Remaining Work Day Schedule

June 21, 9-11 a.m. (rain date June 22, 1-3 p.m.)

July 19, 8-10 a.m. (rain date July 20, 1-3 p.m.)

Aug. 16, 8-10 a.m. (rain date Aug. 17, 1-3 p.m.)

Sept. 27, 9-11 a.m. (rain date Sept. 28, 1-3 p.m.)

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

Sept. 13 Fun Day 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
(rain date Sept. 14, 1-4 p.m.)

Fun Day involves children's activities in Spy Pond Park. It is not a scheduled Work Day, but we do seek volunteers.

Liability waivers are required for all participants in these 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.



PHOTO BY DIANA MAGGINI

Juvenile Bald Eagle Video

Michael McVey works as an independent film producer for ACMi on Park Street, creating various works for the community. He tells us, "My works may be of interest to the Friends of Spy Pond Park. Here is Vimeo link for one such short film, unpublished and unlisted video of a half dozen Juvenile Bald Eagles at Spy Pond from March 12, 2025:

<https://vimeo.com/1065592226/79d7210d6c> Please enjoy!"

Editor's note: Thanks, Michael, we love it!

Garlic Mustard Removal in Spy Pond Park

By Anne Ellinger

About six years ago, I started a campaign to remove all the invasive garlic mustard from Spy Pond Park, and from the bike path between Linwood and Swan Place.

In the early years, we removed



Invasive garlic mustard

bags and bags full of garlic mustard each spring. Signs and black plastic bags were left along the bike path, urging others to join. This spring, I can finally say that our efforts are paying off! Although it still required about 30 minutes of work each day for a few weeks, the volume of invasives was dramatically reduced—a clear indication that the campaign is working.

A big thank you to all of you, known and unknown, who pull out garlic mustard in April when you see it along the park and along that stretch of the bike path. It will still take annual vigilance – a single missed plant can seed hundreds more – but we are making a difference, as you can tell by the difference between this stretch and the still-infested areas nearby.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Time flies by so quickly as I undertake many tasks and enjoy a variety of experiences within the ongoing turmoil of present-day life! I hope you saw the Robbins Library display of new park photos and will enjoy summertime in Spy Pond Park. FSPP volunteers have been busy on Work Days since April and will continue through October. Thanks to our Stewardship Team: Adrienne Landry, Lally Stowell, Sharon Green, and Diana Maggini for their dedication to planning and working in Spy Pond Park once a month. There is much to be done. David Morgan, Arlington's Environmental Planning and Conservation Agent, is hoping to foster a partnership with a new consultant. David and the Conservation Commission will assist us in this endeavor, facilitating maintenance of the planting beds and rain gardens. This effort will protect the shoreline in Spy Pond Park, prevent erosion and help filtrate stormwater runoff.

Regarding another important matter, Susan Saw, FSPP Treasurer, gave notice over a year ago that she wished to step down from her position. At that time, I began my search and posted an Assistant Treasurer position on Volunteermatch.com and in our newsletters. Finally, after I interviewed many interested parties by phone, an outstanding candidate from Arlington inquired, Sandip Agarwal. I talked with him, contacted his references, and introduced him to the responsibilities of Assistant Treasurer. After a 2-hour in person session with me to get him started, Sandip carried out tasks to help Susan: picking up, depositing, and acknowledging contributions.

Two weeks later, Sandip consented to step up and assume the role of FSPP Treasurer! The board, having met him at our May meeting and aware of his credentials, happily cast a unanimous "yes" vote for him on June 11. I am pleased to announce that Sandip Agarwal will assume the Treasurer's position now and you will have the opportunity to vote for him at our Annual Meeting in January 2026. In the meantime, Susan Saw will provide support, when needed, for the tasks involved. Thank you, Susan, on behalf of FSPP. I extend our sincere gratitude for your diligence as Treasurer for 2½ years.

Those on our mailing lists should have received our Annual Solicitation letter in May. Thanks to Anna Doctor, FSPP Bulk Mailing Coordinator, for preparing the labels and setting up the mailing with USPS. Volunteers for "Helping Hands" from the Calvary Church, near SPP on the corner of Linwood St. and Mass. Ave., contributed their invaluable assistance in stuffing 475 envelopes.

FSPP is in good standing, and we appreciate your financial support of our mission. If you have not donated yet this year, we encourage you to do so to help further the goals outlined in the FSPP Winter/Spring 2025 Newsletter. I hope to see you in the park, especially on Fun Day or our Work Days. Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Losing Our Willows

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

The beautiful weeping willows in Spy Pond Park are deteriorating. Some are tilting over so far that they are almost horizontal, dragging their branches in the water. Some have big holes in their trunks. Most have already lost a significant portion of their bulk.

Why are the willows in such bad shape? Well, they're old. Weeping willows typically live only 30 years, and these trees were full-grown when I moved near the pond in 1985. Some I remember are long gone.

Also, weeping willows are sensitive to drought, and we've had some of those. Excessive wetness can also harm them, and the pond has had some floods and high-water times. The narrow branch angles of weeping willows make them susceptible to breakage during storms and high winds.

Humans can bring down branches by climbing – and in other ways. Who else remembers the accident in the 1980s, when a girl fell from the rope swing, a long-time favorite for kids leaping into the water, hit her head on a rock, and her father came with a chain saw and cut down the whole tree? Suddenly the shoreline had one less willow.

The willows won't be replaced. All new shoreline plantings are now species that contribute less green matter to our eutrophying pond.

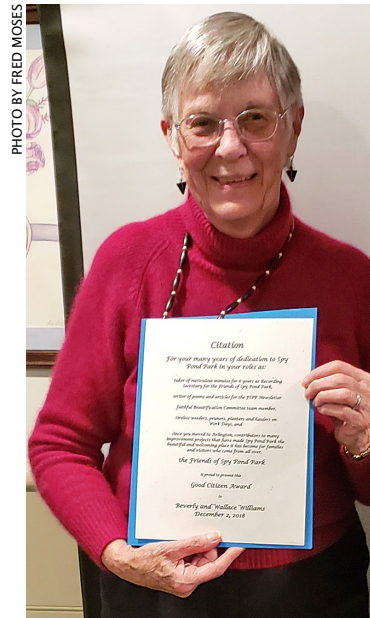
So future generations won't be able to enjoy these magnificent trees, the ducks' favorite shady hang-out, their leaves' delicate pale green in spring, or their lovely yellow in fall.



This weeping willow has a branch that is tilting so far it is dragging in the water

A Tribute to Beverly Williams

By Karen L. Grossman, FSPP President



Beverly Williams

We received notice from her daughter this past March that our longtime, dedicated FSPP member, Beverly Williams had passed away. She and her husband, Wallace, received a Good Citizens Award at the FSPP Annual Meeting in December 2018. We present this Citation once again to serve as a tribute to her and to remind us of the wonderful person Beverly was. We will be eternally grateful for her service to FSPP as Recording Secretary for 6 years and Beautification (presently Stewardship) Team member for 8 years. Beverly cherished Spy Pond Park and Spy Pond, visiting with her daughter,

enjoying the view until very recently. We offer our sincere condolences to her family on the loss of their beloved Beverly. We miss her gentle spirit, but memories of her live on in our hearts and in the beauty of Spy Pond Park.

Citation

*For your many years of dedication to
Spy Pond Park in your roles as:*

*taker of meticulous minutes for 6 years as Recording
Secretary for the Friends of Spy Pond Park,*

writer of poems and articles for the FSPP Newsletter

faithful Beautification Committee team member,

*tireless weeders, pruners, planters and haulers on
Work Days, and*

*since you moved to Arlington, contributors to many
improvement projects that have made Spy Pond Park
the beautiful and welcoming place it has become for
families and visitors who come from all over,*

the Friends of Spy Pond Park

is proud to present this

Good Citizen Award

to

*Beverly and Wallace Williams
December 2, 2018*

The Problem of Fishing Line

(continued from page 1)

Even an experienced angler gets tangled in a branch now and then, and when that happens, unless you can reach the branch, the typical way to deal with that is yank the line until it breaks, leaving your lure hooked in the tree. It's the same thing you do if you get hung up underwater. If you do it right, the line will break where it's cinched to the lure, leaving no line behind. But I get the impression many anglers in our area are not doing it right. I know this because I have been cleaning up the tangles left behind, and there are a lot of them, including along the shoreline of Spy Pond Park, with long tangles running up branches, line dangling from the trees into the water, and huge masses of line on the shore. Our anglers are not being good stewards of our shared green spaces, and birds are dying as a result.

I was walking at Sudbury Reservoir last year and saw a juvenile oriole with its leg tangled in fishing line on a tree branch. It was struggling with all it had to get away, but it was caught for good. I couldn't reach it. I called around to find someone who could help and eventually got a park ranger on the phone, but he couldn't make it out until the next day. By the time he got there, the little bird was dead.

Here in Arlington, and in the surrounding communities, there is a fishing line problem that is even worse. People are fishing both from shore and from kayaks, getting their lines tangled everywhere and leaving them behind. Even uglier are the giant masses of line left on shore, which I nearly can't find an explanation for—it's outrageously irresponsible. Any small tangle can kill a bird, like the little oriole caught in a tiny tangle at Sudbury, but the big tangles will ensnare bigger birds, too, like the great blue heron found earlier this year dying on Hill Pond.

I found a mass like that, which filled both my hands and then some, along the shore at Spy Pond Park when I first cleaned it in April. I have twice this spring now done line cleanups at Spy Pond Park (the second time as part of FSPP's Work Day) and on both outings cut down more than twenty tangles, and both times filled a grocery bag with cut line and tangled debris. Some of the line can be reached from shore with the tree pruner and twelve-foot extendable boat hook I bought last year for this purpose. I wear my water shoes since most of the work requires me to be in the water and use wire snips to cut every tangle I can find. The line is so difficult to remove that usually I must cut or break branches to get it all down.

Important to note here is that some of the anglers getting their lines caught are children. I know this both by the types of tackle I find in the trees (red and white bobbers are a dead giveaway) but also because I've talked to them. At Hill Pond in Menotomy Rocks Park many children, even under the age of ten, are fishing unsupervised, and they fully admit to me how often they get tangled in the trees. They seem to care when I point out the negative impacts of their actions, but the consequences are far off, just like any tragedy of the commons. It is a heartwarm-

ing thing, of course, to see children fishing by themselves or with their family.

I grew up fishing with my family, so I understand the sentiment. Unfortunately, the impacts of all this tangled line are mostly invisible to anglers—we certainly would see more outrage if people were going to the ponds and killing birds directly. I know regular anglers to be strong conservationists themselves, and I wonder if they would adjust their behavior if they saw the scale of the problem, and if they saw the birds being killed by their tangled lines. The few birds we have seen killed or injured are only the ones we know about. There are certainly many we never see.

Save Arlington Wildlife has been petitioning the town of Arlington for a pause on fishing at Hill Pond, but so far, no action has been taken by the town. Similar advocacy might be worthwhile to benefit Spy Pond Park. I was able to convince the town arborist to remove a couple particularly tricky branches at Hill Pond, which brought down some of the ugliest tangles of line and tackle, but that has been all the city has done officially, that I'm aware.

I'll keep doing the work of removing fishing line, but I, too, have come to wonder if there needs to be tighter regulation of fishing on our local ponds. Even just simple enforcement of Massachusetts's existing fishing license regulations might help, although children under 15 are exempt. Personally, I think protecting the health of our living, wild neighbors, and our stewardship of their habitat, is of primary importance over that of the heartwarming, bucolic scenes of children fishing where this problem exists. Adult anglers should know better than to leave fishing line behind in areas of dense tree cover and teach their children care of bobbers and the danger of losing them and their lines in the reeds and trees. There are plenty of other places to fish where fishers won't risk having hazardous tangles, and there are many other ways to enjoy our parks and wildlands than fishing.

If you are interested in learning the tools of the trade, would like a demo, or know of a site that needs line cut down, please reach out at outsideoutside@gmail.com.



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE LANDRY

Examples of dangerous, discarded fishing line found along the shoreline of Spy Pond Park

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meetings:

Please Note Time Change

**Sunday, July 13, 2025
5:00 p.m., Zoom link TBA,**

&

**Sunday, September 7, 2025
5:00 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.

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General Vice-President: Open	
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Recording Secretary: Megan Chrisman	(760) 604-8384
Membership Secretary: Daniel Jalkut	(617) 276-6672
VPs for Communication, Outreach, & Publicity:	
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Communication, Outreach and Publicity Committee:	
Anne Ellinger	(781) 646-1705
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Chair for Outreach/Park Events:	
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Fred Moses	fred@fmoses.com
Mithilesh Sharma	(617) 233-9218
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

Tai Chi in Spy Pond Park

Timothy LaVallee is starting an outside summer Tai Chi class beginning on Tuesday June 24th. The class will meet twice a week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:00-11 AM for 10 weeks. The group will meet at Spy Pond Park at the end of Linwood St next to the baseball field in Arlington, MA. Timothy will be training the Yang Family long form. For more information, contact him at 781-859-8637 or tjlwoosmartialarts@gmail.com.

Additional 2024 Donations

By Daniel Jalkut, Membership Secretary

I want to apologize for a mistake I made last year, which resulted in the following dues/donations being inaccurately reflected in our recent Winter/Spring 2025 Newsletter. We had a total of 115 individuals, households and foundations making 2024 contributions.

I have corrected the information in the database and the list below accurately reflects and acknowledges those peoples' total 2024 contributions.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Friends of Spy Pond Park.

\$400-\$499

Jan Bergstrom and Walter Fey

\$100-\$199

Lionel Fergus
& Gerda Brown
Charles De Virgilio
Carolyn Boettner
Marshall McCloskey
& Sally Hempstead
Sue Bass

\$25-\$49

Penny Mitchell
Alicia Russell & David Stipp
S. Georgine Pennington
Marlene H Alderman & Eugene Benson
Lawrence "Stroker" Rogovin
Dan Chadwick & Robin Goldstein
Tara MacKenzie and Kai Kishimoto

\$50-\$99

Doris Rucinski
Mimi & Kevin Barbera
Evelyn & Xavier Benveniste

\$15-\$24

George Laite
Marianne Balazs
Dolores Schueler