

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Summer 2016

Boston University's 2016 Global Day of Service at Spy Pond Park

By Kristen Lake

A small group of Boston University (BU) alumni joined the Friends of Spy Pond Park to take part in the first spring clean up on April 9th. Their help was part of the BU Global Days of Service program, which allows BU students and alumni to volunteer everywhere, from the Boston area to other nations around the world. As a BU CAS 2014 alum and Arlington resident who enjoys the beauty of Spy Pond, I was naturally drawn to participate in the Spy Pond clean up last year and continued this year, as well.

The group of BU alumni removed debris from the water near the shore as they shared numerous stories of their times spent in college, spanning many generations. Other volunteers raked leaves along the grassy areas, cleaned up the pathway, and trimmed trees and bushes along the water. Some people passing by thanked us for our efforts in cleaning up the park. At the end of the day, it was fulfilling to see the difference made by all of us!



Betty Athanasoulas (r), FSPP Beautification Committee member, and her hearty crew of BU alumni (l-r): Benjamin Mattox, Kristen Lake, Eduardo Gutierrez, and Kenneth Drucker, spent 3 hours clearing Linwood Beach natural debris at the water's edge

Feast of the East 2016

By Sally Hempstead



Rachel Mello's Felicia Fox and her offspring are poised for action on the Spy Pond Park fence near Linwood Circle

Rachel Mello, commissioned artist, created Felicia Fiona Fox, an activist fox, to raise awareness of all the wild animals that live in Arlington's green spaces! She and four of her offspring on the Spy Pond Park fence near Linwood Circle advertised the Feast of the East Fox festival and parade on June 18 in East Arlington. Felicia Fiona's other two offspring were hiding elsewhere and park visitors were encouraged to find them. The new wrinkle of a wonderful starting parade was added to the Feast of the East this year featuring a variety of costumed folk, young and old, with colorful paper maché animal masks and a few life-sized figures, including many foxes honoring the Fox Library. They wound their way up and down the sidewalk on both sides of Mass. Ave. led by a brass band encouraging all who heard it to tap their toes and follow along.

The Friends of Spy Pond Park booth was strategically located across from the band area, allowing us to enjoy the music of the Second Line Social Aid and Pleasure Society Brass Band, the Funkrust Brass Band and the A-Town Jazz Band while chatting with residents who all, without reservation, love Spy Pond Park. Many signed on to receive e-mails excited by the prospect of helping in the park on our monthly Work Days and looking forward to our Fun Day on September 10th. Yvonne Chase, Bev and Wally Williams, Sally Hempstead and Marshall McCloskey ably answered questions about the park and supplied information to all interested passersby. It's always fun to snack on the free popcorn and cotton candy and be a kid for the day while checking out the new businesses in the area and telling them about the beautiful park right up the street. East Arlington has a rich history and Spy Pond Park is an important part of it.

Spy Pond Park Highlights Public Art

By Sally Hempstead



Participants stand with life-sized chess figures made of recycled ductwork designed by Somerville artist John Taguiri, and learn the moves of the game from a different perspective

On a beautiful Saturday in May, Friends of Spy Pond Park and Arlington Public Art with consultant Cecily Miller hosted a public art extravaganza on the lawn abutting Linwood Circle. The event, It's Your Move!, featured an oversized chess game created by Somerville artist, John Taguiri, with child sized pieces that children could move at will to play the game. Nearby, residents were learning how to make checkerboards with stencils and spray paint as well as flags with a variety of colorful emblems and designs. Further along, interlocking discs and large building blocks allowed participants to create fun sculptures that could be taken apart and rebuilt.

The afternoon was a perfect example of how to use public spaces as venues for art and culture and make it fun. The Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC) with Co-Chairs Stephanie Marlin-Curiel and Barbara Costa is in the process of applying to the state for the purpose of setting up a cultural district in town along Massachusetts Avenue from Arlington Center to East Arlington, including Spy Pond Park. Andrea Nicolay (Open Post) states exactly what a cultural district entails. "It's a program by the Massachusetts Cultural Council that recognizes vibrant, walkable districts with a concentration of cultural places and activities, such as museums, theaters, artists, festivals, cafes and restaurants, galleries, creative shops, public art, and more." Various merchant groups and cultural organizations as well as Arlington Center for the Arts, libraries, Chamber of Commerce, The Historical Society and local museums would also have input.

It's exciting for the Friends of Spy Pond Park to be a part of this concept and to actively contribute to making a cultural district viable. Look for future events in our park that will bring art and culture to our residents and visitors.

The Flower Planter Nest at the Spy Pond Condominium

By Gerda Brown and Rochelle Wolfe

One day in mid April on my neighbor Rochelle's third floor balcony, a duck showed up on her banister, looking at her expectantly. As Rochelle had made her acquaintance the previous spring, when she had nested in her large flower planter full of pansies, Rochelle knew what she had to do. She hurried to place the planter on top of her balcony banister. Right away the duck jumped in and made her nest.

Before long the duck laid 9 eggs in her nest! Rochelle watched her every day and each week she sat longer upon her eggs. Once in a while she flew down to Spy Pond to visit and quack with her mate and to get some food. However, she didn't lack a thing, since Rochelle was feeding her grapes, seeds and dandelion. Ducky even started to eat out of her hand! One could say this lucky duck found a unique niche while incubating her eggs, practically a B & B.

One day in mid May, several of her ducklings emerged from the eggs. Soon there were 9 little ones all huddled together. The nest was starting to get a bit too small for Mama duck and all those tiny ducklings. Therefore, the time to fly the nest was quickly approaching. One stormy, grey and cold day Mama duck decided that was it and she flew down to the ground.

We had previously covered the broad bushes below with a large sheet, so that the ducklings wouldn't get stuck there. When Ducky was down on the ground she quacked and encouraged her babies to jump out of their nest and take the plunge from the third floor balcony. Three of them tumbled down and rolled off the tarp. One got behind the bushes, but Mama duck quickly picked it up. She gathered the 3 around her and waited a few minutes to see if more might follow. When that did not happen, she marched her three ducklings along the edge of the pond until she found an opening to the water, near a dock.



Momma duck sits in her third floor balcony nest

That day was so very windy and cold with big waves on the pond; it would have seemed risky to introduce those ducklings to the big world. Nevertheless she proceeded, guided them onto and over the waves and led them safely to the other side. Upstairs on the third floor in her nest were 6 abandoned ducklings. What is going to happen with them?? While we were hoping she might come back for them, we had to be careful that none of them jumped and were left on the ground where no one was waiting to take care and guide them.

Rochelle got quite nervous and called Tufts University's Birding Department who directed her to a Gloucester waterfowl rescue center. So, she and her friend transferred the ducklings into

a deep box and drove them to Gloucester where the rescue center will take care of them and feed them until it is safe to release them into a lake or pond.

Apparently, it is not a rare occasion that ducklings are abandoned by a mother duck.

The next day we had the pleasure to see Mama duck with her three ducklings again on a large branch of driftwood. It was nice to know they had survived the trip across the pond. It is quite possible that she will return next spring to establish herself once more in her favorite spot and enjoy another stay at her B & B while laying and incubating her eggs!

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

I have a lot of good news to report to you. The Community Preservation Act funding of the Conservation Commission's proposal for almost \$50,000 for a feasibility study for "Spy Pond Edge Protection and Erosion Control" was approved by Town Meeting in May. That means we will soon see surveying along the shoreline to help assess what factors, including stormwater runoff, might contribute to the erosion along the Spy Pond shoreline on plots owned by the Town of Arlington. One potential unforeseen element in studying the erosion problem is the present low water level that may reportedly be due to a broken weir (a barrier across a river designed to alter its flow characteristics) between Spy Pond and Little Pond. I hope to be able to bring you an update regarding the progress of the job contractor, Chester Engineers, and their affiliates' work in the FSPP Fall 2016 Newsletter.

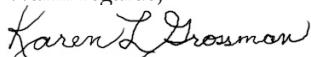
FSPP rallied behind the Friends of Magnolia Park's efforts to save the Dawn Redwood. Happily, the Park and Recreation Commissioners voted to go forward with their Magnolia Park renovation project without cutting down the beautiful tree that so many love. We park-lovers stick together; Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) sees that every Work Day in our park. Many thanks to the BU alumni assisting for BU's Global Days of Service in April and to Saint Athanasius Church's GOYA group for helping in May. Of course, we always appreciate the FSPP volunteers who graciously contribute time and energy on a regular basis. Spy Pond Park needs us all!

Our park has been bustling with enjoyable activity, too. I am happy that Arlington Public Art has embraced Spy Pond Park as part of the proposed Cultural District. We can look forward to collaboration for many more exciting events in our beautiful park if this designation passes through local and state channels successfully. Thanks to the support of many who rallied around the "Save a Penny" campaign, Kevin Duffy's beautiful swan sculpture located at Linwood Circle has gained status as Arlington's first piece of permanent contemporary public art. We hope you can extend congratulations to Kevin at our Fun Day on September 10 when we'll give "Penny" a warm welcome.

Many people have been fishing in the newly stocked waters; others have enjoyed renting canoes, kayaks and paddleboards. They are available every weekend through August at the Spy Pond Park boat ramp off Pond Lane. You can reserve in advance via the Parks and Recreation website: https://www.arlingtonrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=27952

Finally, thanks to those who have renewed or newly joined as 2016 FSPP members in response to our May solicitation. We greatly appreciate your generous donations. If you haven't mailed in your 2016 membership dues, yet, please do so at your earliest convenience. The unity of our membership is our strength.

Warm regards,



Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

It Takes a Village

By Beverly Williams

It takes a village to keep Spy Pond Park looking beautiful-

- A couple visiting from Connecticut,
- A group of hard-working, mentally challenged young adults,
- Asian families stopping their picnic to assist,
- A mom and her young daughter,
- Friends of Spy Pond Park board members who bring the tools out each month and put them away,
- Lally, our intrepid Beautification Coordinator and her team,
- Volunteers who come individually or in groups for Saturday Work Days,
- A young man riding through on his bicycle,
- Retired women and men who love the Pond, and
- Early morning walkers who look down and pick up trash,
- YOU, who all help to keep Spy Pond Park looking beautiful!



PHOTO BY MITHILESH SHARMA

Mommy's Beach Buddy enjoyed the nice weather at the water's edge during Fun Day 2014

Saturday, September 10: Fun Day Needs YOU!

What are you doing on Saturday September 10? Would you like to spend the last of the warm weather showing kids and others a good time in lovely Spy Pond Park?

Our annual Fun Day festival (1-4 pm Saturday, Sept. 10, rain date Sunday) needs volunteers to staff tables for nature activities and crafts, to paint faces, to set up and clean up, and musicians to entertain us all.

If you can help, please email coordinator Betsy Leondar-Wright at betsy@classmatters.org.

Editor's Correction: In the FSPP Spring Newsletter, attribution for the eagle photographs on page 6 should have been given to Elizabeth Ewins, not to Liz Blumenthal. Elizabeth Ewins describes her pleasurable experience taking the photograph: "This was the first time I have seen eagles outside a zoo and the first time I have seen them fly! It was a thrill to see them and photograph them!" Thank you to Elizabeth Ewins; we apologize for the error.



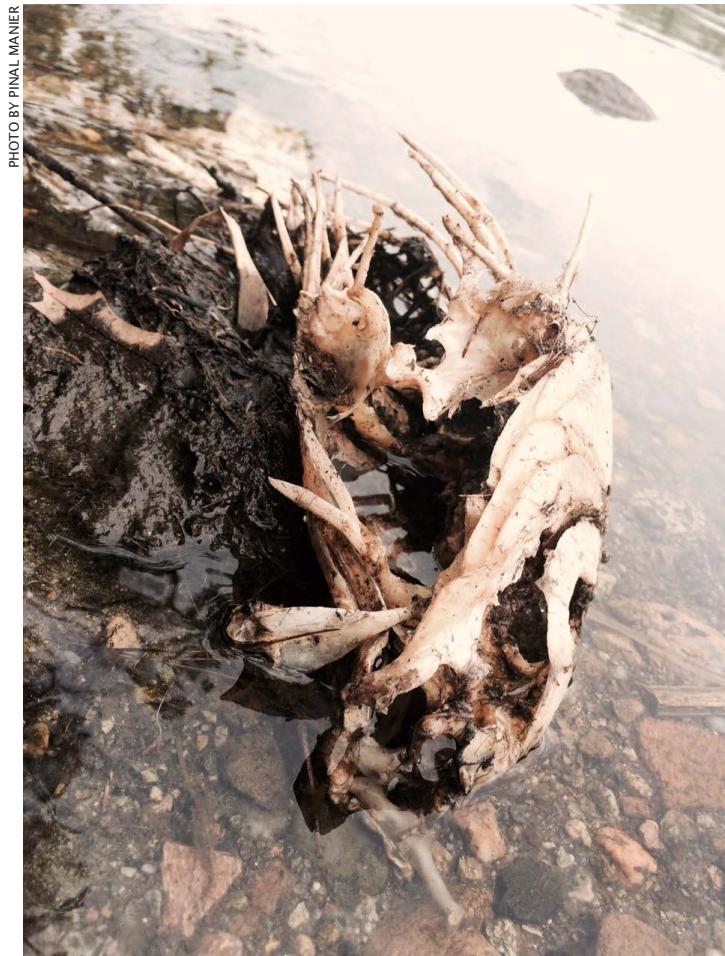
Saint Athanasious Church's GOYA group collected natural debris at the Linwood Beach shoreline that remained after the FSPP April Work Day. With Betty Athanasoulas' guidance, the water's edge is clean and more inviting

Regrowth on Elizabeth Island

By Betsy Leondar-Wright

I canoed out to Elizabeth Island in early June and noticed a few changes.

- Lots of local wetland plants are growing profusely along the shoreline, a new development thanks to the Arlington Land Trust's steady efforts to chop down and poison the phragmites (the tall reeds, a harmful alien invasive species), which had choked the shoreline in recent years. In this photo of yellow irises, notice the short stumps in the background, letting in the sunshine.
- Turtles basked on top of the phragmite stumps on the sunny northwest side of the island. I also saw a great blue heron fishing back there, and lots of red wing blackbirds.
- The big fish die-off earlier this spring was evident in several picked-clean skeletons of huge fish (like the one in this photo).



This fish skeleton is one remnant of the spring's big fish die-off



PHOTO BY PINAL MANIER

Yellow irises flourish in the sunshine as phragmites stumps bring to mind the former prolific occupants in this area

- The huge birch tree on the southeast side that had fallen over and been uprooted a couple years ago now has many new leafy branches. It looks like it's going to make it.
- I picked up a little litter around the island, but not as much as in some other springs. It appears that more island visitors are cleaning up the island - or else fewer are messing it up.
- There were several un-hatched goose eggs on the island, and no baby goslings, which shows the success of the egg-addling program.

Well-cared for, and well loved by humans and animals alike, Elizabeth Island seems to be flourishing.

Friends of Spy Pond Park 2016 Work Days

July 23 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (rain date July 24 1-4 p.m.)

Aug. 27, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (rain date August 28 1-4 p.m.)

Sept. 24 1-4 p.m. (rain date September 25 1-4 p.m.)

Oct. 22 1-4 p.m. (rain date October 23 1-4 p.m.)

Liability waivers are required for all participants in the above Work 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.

Friends of Spy Pond Park next meeting at Karen Grossman's Sunday, August 7, 2016 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.

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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



Playful Art in Spy Pond Park near Linwood Circle on May 21 included the option of stretching the imagination, creating disc sculptures

PHOTO BY FRED MOSES