



# Belle Isle News

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Photo by Soheil Zende

East Boston High Schoolers at the April 4 Belle Isle cleanup: Stephanie Oliveira, Ana Mejia, Cindy Ramos, Ana Vallejo, Fatima Pineda, Maria Mejia. (Thanks to Stacy-Michelle Reid, physics teacher and Key Club advisor, who organized the participation of the students.)

## Geoff Wood Honored

**F**BIM is proud to announce that Geoff Wood, our Belle Isle Site Supervisor, was honored with the DCR Distinguished Field Service Award at an April 1 ceremony. For those of us who are privileged to know Geoff, this award is well-deserved. Geoff can work wonders with tools and cast-off lumber and he has won the respect of everyone from the dog walkers to the neighbors. Congratulations, Geoff!


The award was accompanied by the following comment from the award committee:

“Geoff is truly a one-person wonder... DCR is privileged and better because of Geoff’s role in it.”



## EVENTS

All programs are free and open to the public.

 **Summer heron censuses.** See page 6 for details.

### Memories of Revere Beach:

Wednesdays, June 17 and July 15, 11 AM to 1 PM. Meet at The Pavilion, Revere Beach Blvd. at Oak Island Street.



**Weekly group walks on Revere Beach:**  
Every Saturday

(starting June 13th), 10:30 - 11:30 AM. Meet at clock tower across from State Police barracks, Revere Beach Blvd. (Stroller friendly.)

The children’s programs below are sponsored by DCR. For more information, contact Matthew Nash at 781-485-2804 ext. 105 or by email at [Matthew.Nash@state.ma.us](mailto:Matthew.Nash@state.ma.us).

**Residents of Red Rock Park, Lynn Beach:**  
Saturday, July 11 & July 25, 9 - 10 AM.

**Ocean creatures beach search, Revere Beach:** Saturday, August 8, 10 - 11 AM.

**Terrific trees, Constitution Beach:**  
Saturday, August 15, 10 - 11 AM.

**Protecting the plover, Winthrop Beach:**  
Saturday, August 22, 10 - 11 AM.

Pre-register for the following canoe programs. Call Justin at 781-286-2439 by July 8. Participants must be at least 10 years old and be able to swim.



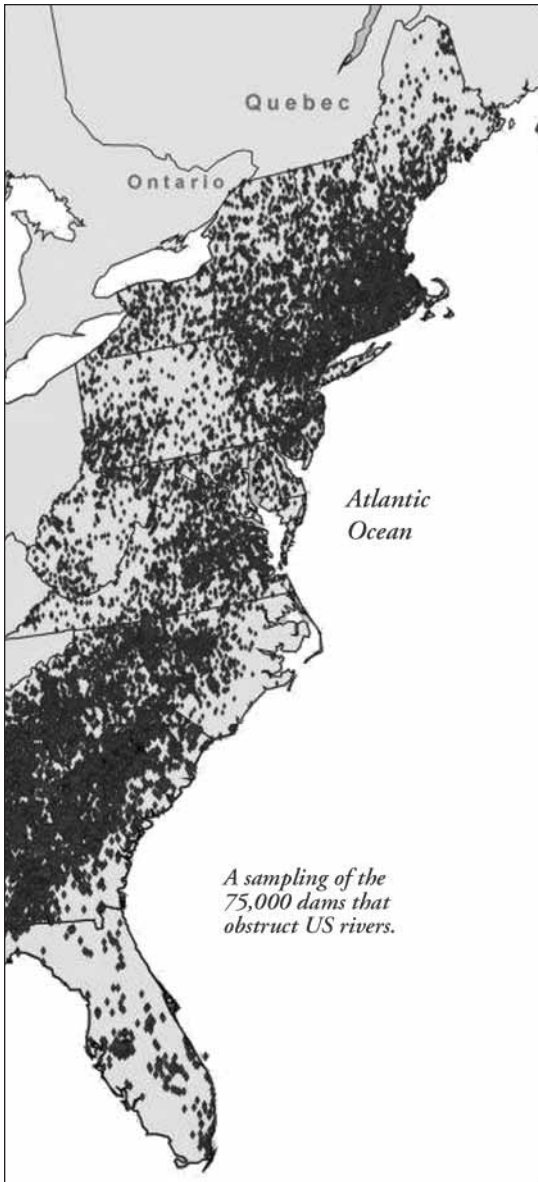
**Canoe Belle Isle Marsh:**  
Sunday, July 12, 1 - 3 PM.



**Canoe at Constitution Beach:** Sunday, July 26, 3 - 4:30 PM.

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## Rivers Be Dammed

(part 1)

The State finds itself in possession of what all admit to be a great public good, and what we have we may keep and give no reason for our will.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1908*

Two to three hundred years ago, New England's inland waterways provided two vital functions that all rivers, large and small, do naturally and efficiently. They drained hundreds and thousands of miles of upland watersheds down to the oceans while at the same time providing passage up and down stream for those fish requiring fresh and brackish river waters to spawn and ocean waters to mature.

Ocean fish which are totally dependent on salt or brackish water to spawn and mature, populate the rich marine fishing banks on the coast

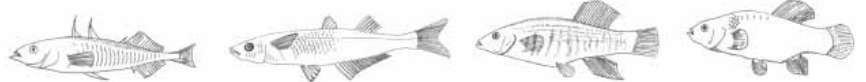
and far at sea. In the aggregate, river watersheds, large and small, are as rich and productive as ocean fishing banks. Woodland Indians, who were skilled agriculturalists and fisher-hunters, sustained themselves comfortably off various flora and fauna, including fish runs, seasonally. The early colonists, depending on the same resources as the Indians, built riverside forge, saw and grist mills without obstructing the passage of fish.

Later generations, driven by increasing numbers of colonists, a growing urban industrial / market economy and a desire to push Indians further inland, began completely obstructing rivers and their tributaries with dams. Industrial sewage waste was soon to follow.



Our nation's recurring political economic crises have often been the result of tension and conflict between those who are driven by the need for personal profit and others working for the public good.

*Continued on page 3*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We had a very busy winter and spring. FBIM sponsored two well-attended Monday night forums.

In February, Dave Eatough presented his outstanding talk and slide show on the Revere Coyote Tracking Project. Dave and his students at Revere High School have been tracking coyotes that live in Revere, East Boston, Malden and other nearby localities for several years. Coyotes are being sighted more frequently in urban areas. The Forum helped us learn about the wildlife around us and how we can peacefully coexist.

Our March Forum, The Birds on the

Beach, was presented by FBIM member Susannah Corona who has become the local champion of endangered species nesting on Winthrop and Revere Beaches. Heather Warchalowski of DCR, Becky Harris of MassAudubon and Franz Ingelfinger of the Trustees of Reservations talked about local efforts to protect Piping Plovers and Least Terns. We are hoping for another successful nesting season for these birds this summer.

FBIM was awarded a grant from Save the Harbor / Save the Bay for a Forum at the end of this summer to update us on this year's birds on the beach.

FBIM raised funds for fencing the endangered species nesting area on

Winthrop Beach this summer.



The Osprey platform at the Belle Isle Urban Wild was replaced with one in a location that is not directly under the Logan Airport flight path. The platform was built by Boston Natural Area Network volunteers and erected by Site Supervisor Geoff Wood with the able assistance of Jack Markley. We hope our new platform will be occupied by an Osprey family in the near future. Other Osprey families have found the platforms at Rumney Marsh near the Wheelabrator (Resco) Plant in Saugus and Oak Island in Revere.

*Continued on page 3*

## Rivers Be Dammed (continued)

Exclusive commercial investors—for profit corporations—with sympathetic judges and lawyers have crafted laws giving them an advantage over the broad interests of the nation's non-profit communities in which all citizens are “investors”. Both groups focus on the same wealth of natural resources—the commonwealth. The difference is that for-profit investor corporations compete among themselves and with communities to exploit the same wealth to enrich *themselves* beyond use—that is, usuriously. The nation's communities, as non-profit corporations, are burdened with protecting the same wealth for sustainable and future use only.

Our river systems are excellent examples of “commonwealth” or a “great public good”. Their abuse is a glaring example of how our laws have created what has become our adversarial and deeply troubled political economy.

*Conal Foley*

*This is the first of a multipart series on the destruction of American rivers. The author is a founder and past President of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh.*

## President's Report (continued)

This year's Good Neighbor Award goes to Susannah Corona for her work to protect the birds on our local beaches. Susannah coordinated efforts by local officials, state agencies, volunteer groups and neighbors that ultimately resulted in the successful breeding of endangered species.



FBIM lost one of our most beloved members in May with the passing of Elaine Oliver. Elaine loved everyone and brought fun and laughter to all the events and Halloween Haunts she helped organize. She will be missed.

*Barbara Bishop, FBIM President*

# THE CHILDREN'S CORNER

During our Earth Day Clean-up of the Urban Wild behind the new CVS in East Boston, I discovered many lupine plants scattered along the trail. They are among my favorites: leafy plants with tall blue or rose colored spikes. I can't wait to go back a little later in the season to see what color they will be and how they will look with the backdrop of marsh grasses and sea!



*Miss Rumphius*, story and illustrations by Barbara Cooney, The Trumpet Club, 666 Fifth Ave. NY, NY 10103, 1982.

This winner of the American Book Award is an enchanting story about a girl named Alice who grew up near the sea, listening to stories her grandfather told about faraway places and people.

“When I grow up, I too will go to faraway places and when I grow old, I too will live beside the sea.”

Her grandfather replied, “There is a third thing you must do... something to make the world more beautiful.”

After years of travel throughout the world, Alice, now known as Miss Rumphius, came home to live by the sea. She planted a small garden of lupines amongst the rocks. The following spring the garden surprised her with a showy display of blue, purple and rose colored spikes. However, the next year there was a real surprise.... Get this book and enjoy it with a young friend.



*Miss Rumphius in her lupine garden (illustration from Miss Rumphius)*



*Seeds in the wind (illustration from The Tiny Seed)*

*The Tiny Seed*, story and illustrations by Eric Carle, Scholastic, 730 Broadway, NY, NY 10003, 1989.

Eric Carle's books have been reviewed several times in this column. His beautiful tissue paper and paint collage illustrations are world renowned and appreciated by many. In *The Tiny Seed*, a seed travels through the seasons and through nature's plan for its life cycle. This book will be enjoyed by all who have had the rewarding experience of planting a small sunflower seed and marveling at the showy results.

To really appreciate Eric Carle's artwork, visit the Eric Carle Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts. It is located in a field surrounded by apple trees on the edge of the Hampshire College campus. There are two galleries, a studio space for children, a library, book store and café. It is a wonderful summer trip and

only a two hour ride away!

*Mary Mitchell*





## A Pantheist, an Oystercatcher and FOY

Use my eyes and ears when I'm walking around Belle Isle but I also use the Internet. The Web enriches my walks and has much to offer to anyone interested in learning more. I could go on and on but I'll try to keep it to just a few sites.

Email lists are a way for people to share their bird observations with others. If you subscribe, you will automatically receive emails daily as observations come in from other people. Then you can read where some one has seen a shearwater off Revere Beach or a large flock of Brant in Belle Isle Inlet or yellowlegs at the Oasis. I pay attention and plan my walks based on what I find in local birding email lists.

Today after reading a report, I realized that there was a better vantage point to see Snake Island in Winthrop harbor. From Pico St. which is off Sunnyside Ave., I was finally able to see an American Oystercatcher which is this wonderfully goofy looking shorebird with an oversize red-orange bill. It helps to know that some one else has already seen a bird from a place I hadn't known about.



There are three lists which I monitor every day. First is **BostonBirds.org** which covers exclusively the Boston area. Secondly there is **MassBird.org** which covers our entire state. There is often considerable overlap.



boston birds  
URBAN BIRDING ENTHUSIASTS

Who would have ever thought that Post Office Square in downtown Boston has so many different interesting birds? Would you have known about the semi-forgotten bit of wetland just past the Route 1 bridge in Salisbury? You also get to know people. These reports are not always dry listings and numbers. Myself, I always look forward to reading Douglas Chickering of Groveland on **MassBird**. He's got things to say that I enjoy reading.

The third list is **Bio-Mass**, a Yahoo! user group, devoted to mostly non-bird sightings. There aren't Fishers in Belle Isle but it is fascinating to read about them.

If you are really into birding stats, the ultimate website is **eBird.org** which covers all of North America. It isn't an email list. You have to go there, login, enter your data and find whatever you're interested in. It's very comprehensive but lacks the human touch.



Another kind of help are the photographic web sites. **AllAboutBirds.org** comes from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You can look up a bird and get all kinds of information including photos. It's the kind of place to go if you're curious about what kind of thrush you saw.

Another is **New England Wildlife Photography (www.pbase.com/newildlife\_photography)**. You have to join but you get to see really terrific photographs often taken locally. When the next special bird, say a Great Grey Owl or a Mississippi Kite, shows up in the area, you can be guaranteed to find pictures of it here. It helps to see what a Piping Plover really looks like before you head down to the beach.

A little web exploration will turn up lots more photos. Google **Flickr** and click on **Popular Tags**.

Most people know about Google Maps. With the street view, it's possible

to get to that corner of Rumney Marsh without getting lost. Better still is **Oliver**. MassGIS's **OnLine data ViewER** allows you to look at the best aerial mapping views of any part of Massachusetts. It comes from the state and is free.



The most enjoyable web sites for me are the personal blogs. I have a few quirky favorites.

**A Brooklyn Bachelor** comes from the sort of person who walks down a street and sees the names of old apartment buildings or birds roosting on a roof. He is talking about Brooklyn, the former home of the Dodgers. If Belle Isle is an urban wilderness, then Brooklyn is the urban Yellowstone.

**The Urban Pantheist** is a keeper in a zoo hospital and lives in Jamaica Plain. The Muddy River and the Emerald Necklace are his Belle Isle. He takes great pictures and often has much to say.

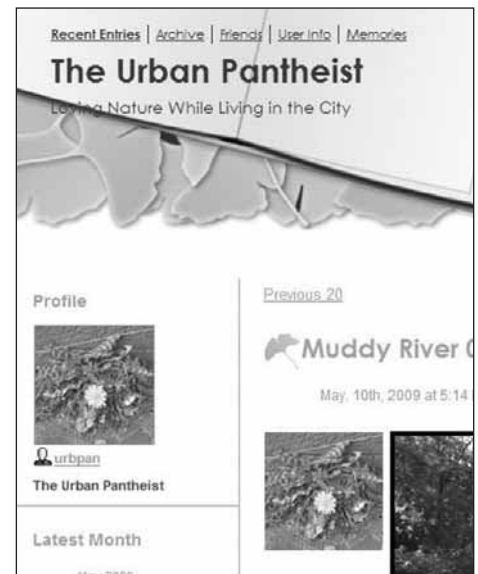
When you start looking, you'll find plenty of similar sites. Enjoy, enjoy!



**FOY**, by the way, is First of the Year which is what happens when the first egret of April lands right in front of you.

*George Cumming*

*George Cumming's blog OrientSee is at [www.georgemacumming.com/](http://www.georgemacumming.com/).*



## The Nature of Belle Isle



Twelve-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula pulchella*)



Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum* species)



Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*)



Fragile Forktail (*Ischnura posita*)

Photos by Soheil Zende.  
See <http://tinyurl.com/6cdxfw>

## The Hunters

Land of the Dragonflies (*Akitsushima*) is one of the mythological names for Japan. Dragonflies are everywhere. In Japan they symbolized courage and strength, to the Navajo, pure water. But in Europe they were sometimes called eye-snatcher or horse-biter.

Adult dragonflies are among the most distinctive as well as most beneficial of insects. They chase, catch and eat enormous quantities of smaller insects, including mosquitoes, flies, wasps, gnats, moths and sometimes butterflies. As a larva (called a *naiad*), a dragonfly lives in water and is equally voracious. The underwater prey consists of aquatic insects (including the larval stage of mosquitoes), as well as tadpoles and small fishes.

### Evolution and taxonomy

Dragonflies evolved into their current distinctive shape long before there were birds, mammals, or even flying reptiles and dinosaurs. More than 250 million years ago, there were dragonflies with wingspans of over 2 feet flying about tropical jungles (which are now coal and oil deposits).

Taxonomically, the insect order *Odonata* contains 3 suborders:

- Damselflies (*Zygoptera*) fold their wings parallel to the body over the back when perched. They are light and airy, though quite powerful as predators.
- Dragonflies (*Anisoptera*) hold their wings more or less straight out from the body when perched. The hind wings are wider than the fronts. These are the familiar large and powerful fliers one sees cruising over summer ponds, flowers and fields.
- *Anisozygoptera* is a small suborder with only 2 species known from Japan.

### Habits and sex

Dragonflies and damselflies have exceptionally good eyesight, with eyes that contain tens of thousands of lenses.

They are also strong and maneuverable flyers, with the ability to flap each of their four wings separately. Furthermore, they have strong jaws and mouthparts. All these are adaptations for an aggressive predatory lifestyle.

Odonate sexual rituals are elaborate and showy. Male and female couple themselves into a wheel, with the male grasping the upper part of the female and her sexual apparatus engaging his copulatory organs. Sometimes the mating pair travel together like this for several hours. The male may stay with the female while she lays eggs near or under water. In some species, the male defends his territory and a laying female from competing males.

### Odes at Belle Isle

I began collecting dragonfly photos at Belle Isle last summer and was hooked. What I found is that the smaller meadowhawks (genus *Sympetrum*—the species are hard to tell apart) are there in large numbers throughout the summer. Damselflies are harder to see and photograph. They tend to stay in shady areas and deeper brush. The big boys appeared late in the summer and were very showy. One day in early September there seemed to be dozens of Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*) around. Then in mid-September came Wandering Glider (*Pantala flavescens*). This golden beauty is an amazing traveler, having been seen thousands of miles out at sea.

My personal favorite remains Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*). See it in color at <http://tinyurl.com/6cdxfw>.

Soheil Zende

### References and additional reading:

A Dazzle of Dragonflies, by Mitchell and Lasswell; Texas A&M University Press.  
Dragonflies of the World, by Silsby; Smithsonian Institution Press.  
A Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Massachusetts, by Nikula, Ryan, and Burne; Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program.  
Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies, by Nikula and Sones; Little, Brown & Co.

## Annual Meeting: March 15

Attendees of the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh Annual Meeting on March 15 heard Matt Ayer, aquatic biologist for the Commonwealth, explain current efforts to restore smelt to state fisheries. Matt spoke about the migration of this fish from salt marshes to the sea and back, also explaining that smelt make very good eating.

The current Officers and members of Board of Directors were elected:

### Officers:

**Barbara Bishop**, *President* (Winthrop)  
**Gail Miller**, *Vice President* (East Boston)  
**Eleanor Casey**, *Secretary* (Winthrop)  
**Heather McClure**, *Treasurer* (Winthrop)

### Members-at-large:

**Daniela Foley** (Winthrop)  
**Erica Foley** (Winthrop)  
**Mary Mitchell** (Winthrop)  
**Suzanne Ryan** (Revere)  
**Karyl Stoia** (Lynn)




### Past President:

**Liz Regan** (Winthrop)

*FBIM is always looking for members willing to take on an active role in the organization. Call Barbara Bishop 617-864-7418.*

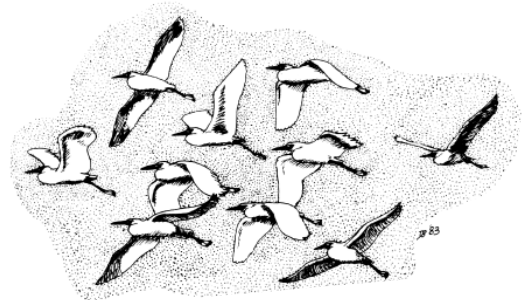
## 2009 Dawn Heron Censuses

Meeting time is one-half hour before sunrise. Meet at Sireen Reinstein Memorial Boardwalk at the southeast corner of Belle Isle Park. Parking on Bennington Street across from Suffolk Downs T station, near Belle Isle Park entrance.

	<i>Sundays</i>	<i>Sunrise</i>	<i>High Tide</i>
 July 12		5:18	3:00
 August 16		5:52	7:46
 September 13		6:21	6:27

Help count the Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Glossy Ibises. In addition to herons, you'll see other shore and water birds. Bring binoculars, waterproof footwear and mosquito protection. The census lasts anywhere from one to four hours.

For more information, call Soheil Zendehe, 781-863-2392.



Friends of Belle Isle Marsh (FBIM) membership dues:

- Family \$15
- Individual \$10
- Seniors and Youth (under 16) \$5

*FBIM is a registered nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your continued support.*

*FBIM is a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of this marsh. We believe that protection ultimately depends on public awareness of the value and beauty of this natural resource. Our focus, therefore, is mainly educational.*

*For extra newsletters to share or leave on tables at your coffee shop, public library or boat club, etc., call 617-567-5072 or email:*

**friendsofbelleislemarsh@comcast.net**

*Our web address:*

**<http://www.friendsofbelleislemarsh.org>**

*This issue was produced by Soheil Zendehe with help from Barbara Bishop, Daniela Foley, Gail Miller and Christine Zendehe.*

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