



Friends of Belle Isle Marsh

NOV. 83

Dear Friend:

We are writing to invite you to a meeting of Friends of Belle Isle Marsh (FBIM) on Wednesday, November 16, 1983 at the Orient Heights Yacht Club, 61 Bayswater Street, East Boston at 8:00 p.m. The business of this meeting is to ratify the Bylaws of FBIM. We enclose a copy of the Bylaws as drawn up by the FBIM Steering Committee. Additional copies will also be available at the meeting.

Following the business part of the meeting, slides will be shown of the East Boston and Winthrop community cleanups undertaken by FBIM this past year. Home-baked (of course) refreshments and coffee/tea to follow. Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Soheil Zende
President

WILDLIFE AT BELLE ISLE MARSH

David and Chris, two boys from Revere who often participate in our field trips, report that they have found several small snakes at Belle Isle Park. Craig Jackson also recently turned over a board at the marsh and there were five Eastern Garter Snakes and two Northern Brown Snakes under it. Snakes at Belle Isle play an important role in the food chain, and none found here are poisonous to people. This past summer, Craig and Barbara Gard, while doing a mollusk survey of the marsh, sighted a muskrat swimming in one of the salt pools. We would like to hear from anyone else who has sighted these mammals at Belle Isle.

As for birds, we have had a great year for sightings at Belle Isle. Last winter, up to three Short-eared Owls spent some months here. These owls hunt the marsh by flapping and gliding over it at a low elevation, often at daytime. They catch and eat small rodents, and on one of the field trips last winter, FBIM member, Pat Hickey, found a pellet (regurgitated inedibles) containing small bones and jaws, probably belonging to a Meadow Vole.

During spring migration, Soheil Zende was hawk-watching when a White Pelican flew over the marsh! These immense birds winter along the south-east coast and fly to the upper prairie states and Canadian provinces to breed. An occasional one is seen in New England. This one apparently kept going north and was seen a few days later in a marsh in Maine.

August and September were generally fine for heron and shorebird sightings as these birds massed for the flight south. The Dawn Heron Censuses at Belle Isle culminated in a great flight of over 200 Snowy Egrets on September 4. An Osprey was also seen for several weeks in September fishing at Belle Isle, while on September 24 three Ospreys and a Peregrine Falcon were seen migrating here. Finally, on the October 22 tour of Belle Isle, a Bald Eagle was spotted flying overhead by 10 field trippers.

Other highlights of the fall thus far have been two Forster's Terns, two Black-headed Gulls, and two Snow Geese. The latter were spotted flying over the marsh during the festivities of the Winthrop cleanup at the end of the day on October 16.

Soheil Zendei

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*   Support the ongoing work of FRIENDS OF   *
*   BELLE ISLE - Become a Member             *
*                                             *
*   Family Membership                         $ 5.00 *
*   Individuals                               3.00  *
*   Seniors (60 and Over)                    1.00  *
*   Youth (16 and Under)                      1.00  *
*                                             *
*   Please send fees: 20 Palermo Street      *
*   to: East Boston, MA 02128                *
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THE BELLE ISLE MARSH CLEANUP

ED NOTE: The many people who participated in the June and October Belle Isle Cleanups (in East Boston and Winthrop) felt a tremendous sense of community, "a real high." One such participant was inspired to write:

'Twas a day in October,
 '83 was the year,
 A day full of sunshine,
 The sky blue and clear,
 As we gathered in groups,
 The marsh for-to-clean
 Of litter left there
 By folks, far too mean
 To think, or to care
 About fouling the scene
 With rubbish in bags,
 And all kinds of rags,
 Nails sharp and quite rusty,
 Two rugs damp and musty,
 China and glass
 In pieces and bits
 Requiring some bandaids
 On hands, despite mitts.
 We stashed all in bags

At the side of the road,
 Where MDC trucks
 Took load after load,
 Using crane and a lift
 For logs, a car door,
 Half of a rowboat
 Rotting ashore,
 To which they drove down
 DPW men near--
 Some from our town
 And some from Revere.
 We struggled, we strained,
 We drank in the sun,
 Uplifted in spirit
 With each blot undone
 As plants were exposed
 And wet soil was bared.
 So life could expand
 In this habitat shared
 By lone birds and flocks,

A late butterfly,
 Creepies and crawlies
 Hidden a-sly,
 Minnows in schools,
 Egrets in season,
 Our task was a joy
 For many a reason.
 As day's changing shades
 Came into view
 On marsh-meadow greens
 Edged now in deep blue
 Of low tidal inlet
 Reflected above
 In an arc of sky over
 A high tide of love
 For our world at its best
 In nature, woman and man.
 We're here but a moment,
 We do what we can.

Esther Fich

BELLE ISLE MARSH IN WINTER

During the winter, Belle Isle Marsh becomes a harsh environment. Few creatures can stand the cold and many plants die, leaving their shriveled forms above the ground. Snow and wind further prune the marsh and tidal ice grates down anything left standing.

It is at such times that I like to visit Belle Isle. These visits are often truly unforgettable. So why don't you join me on my winter journey. Before you come, however, you have to dress properly or it will truly be an unforgettable and unpleasant experience!

You'll notice right away that there are few creatures around. Bugs no longer bother you and the large number of shore birds and herons have long since departed. If the winter has been relatively mild, a Great Blue Heron or a Killdeer may have lingered, but in general, the only creatures that one will see are ducks and sometimes owls.

The most attractive ducks are the Buffleheads and mergansers which are seen in the inlet. Buffleheads are small black and white birds which dive and then pop to the surface unexpectedly. The males are quite stunning, with large white patches on their dark heads and almost all-white bodies. Both males and females are a delight to watch, and it's also possible to watch them engaging in courtship rituals at this time.

Snow coats the marsh. Here is where your waterproof pants come in handy, for then you can relive childhood pleasures by plowing through snow drifts piled high against the reeds. Other places may be uncovered by snow blown away, while swirling snow elsewhere may etch changing patterns upon the ground.

While plowing through the snow, you may be startled by an owl rising from the ground, gliding silently out of sight. Most often it will be light brown: a Short-eared Owl; but you may be lucky and come upon a large white one: a Snowy Owl, a visitor from the far north. Snowy Owls come south in large numbers about every seven years when the lemming population crashes. Both of these owls come from the north and hunt by day. If not disturbed, they may be seen coursing above the marsh, looking for their prey. Short-eared Owls feed mainly on Meadow Voles while Snowy Owls may take prey as large as Buffleheads.

These are a few of the sights that await you. Now that you've taken this imaginary winter journey, why don't you come for real. Join us on one of our field trips this winter. Check the schedule elsewhere in this issue for exact times and dates.



Craig Jackson

Join us on any of our field trips listed below:

Saturday, November 12 Saturday, January 14
Sunday, December 4 Sunday, February 26

Meet at 2 P.M. at the entrance to Belle Isle Marsh Reservation on Bennington Street, East Boston/Revere line (adjacent to the VFW Post).

ALERT! ALERT! ALERT! ALERT! ALERT!

The shooting of firearms at Belle Isle is ILLEGAL (and dangerous)! Should you hear gunfire or see someone shooting, please call the Revere MDC Police at 284-0038 or 523-1212. Supt. Thomas Keogh has pledged a quick investigation following all such calls.

Friends of Belle Isle Marsh
20 Palermo Street
East Boston, MA 02128

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