

# ACTON ACTION

APRIL 2015

VOLUME 58 ISSUE 2



## *Spring Social and Launch Schedule:*

10:00 Harbormaster and volunteers launch boats

12:30 - Spring Social lunch in Hueston Room by park office

1:00 - Park Manager Mark Lockhart - "State of the Park"

2:00 Naturalist Sean Connor Wildflower Walk

## SAILING SEASON NEARS; SPRING SOCIAL KICKS IT OFF

One of the world's most famous migrations is about to take place. You are probably thinking wildebeests in the Serengeti or the monarch butterfly or maybe even the humpback whale.

Actually it is the annual mass migration of the *sailor midwesternatum*. Having hibernated for several months, this specie is awakening from its long winter sleep ready to shed winter burrows for its natural habitat: the water.

Unlike the wildebeest, there are no crocodile infested rivers or lions crouching in the grassy banks to weed out the unlucky.

So let's celebrate the return of Spring and the relative ease with which we can return to the ecosystem that sustains and nourishes us.

Coming up on Saturday, April 18 at 12:30 is the HSA Spring Social. Lunch is only \$4.00 (barbecue, potato salad, relish tray, brownies a la mode) followed by a talk by park manager and

well known nice guy Mark Lockhart. After Mark delivers the state of the park message, naturalist Sean Conner will lead a wildflower walk.

If you come earlier, say 10:00, you can get lunch free just by helping out with the maintenance and launching of HSA's committee boat and Rescue One. Harbormaster Don Fecher needs volunteers to assist with the prep and launch. If you new to the club or have not done this before, we encourage you to come out and learn the ropes.

### Inside this issue:

- 2 - Sail shape and controls: What they are and how to use them
- 2 - Sailing film of the issue: *All Is Lost* (2013)
- 4 - Racing in light air: a guide - by Jerry Callahan
- 5 - Former junior sailing camper goes big!



## Let's Go to the Movies!

*All Is Lost.* The title doesn't exactly promise a cheerful, fun-filled romantic comedy. In fact it sounds more like an existential crisis.

The film is a survival drama starring Robert Redford as a man lost at sea. The film is notable for its lack of dialogue. There is only one cast member, Redford, and he says maybe 15 words the entire film.

Somewhere in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the man wakes to find that his boat, a 39' cruiser not too different from the cruisers you see at Hueston Woods, has struck a wayward shipping container, ripping a hole in his hull.

The rest of the film then becomes his struggle with a boat that, first, needs to stay on one tack to keep the hole above the waterline, then a storm that eventually tears off the mast, and finally, a retreat to a lifeboat where he faces water, food, and exposure problems while trying to be rescued.

Critics generally received the film well. Rotten Tomatoes gave it a 93% positive score. And it did receive several awards despite its seemingly limited appeal to a general audience.

Some in the sailing community thought it was unrealistic and that the man made bad decisions inconsistent with his character. For my part, I too saw some of those bad decisions but that was part of my enjoyment of the film. However, the *English Yachting Monthly* called it "authentic and grippingly realistic".

The ending is somewhat ambiguous and may depend on how you view the world and our place in it.



## WHAT SHAPE IS YOUR SAIL? USING SAIL CONTROLS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Sail shape? A triangle, right! Ok, not just a triangle (usually) but an airplane wing that is curved out on one side and in on the other so that the force of the wind can provide the same lift for a sailboat that it does for an airplane. Sailboats essentially "fly" across the water.

But what about all those adjustments on a sailboat for changing that basic airfoil shape? Just what do they do and when should you do them? Well it is more art than science but we will try to give you some basic guidelines to get you started if these controls are as mysterious to you as they are to most.

There seem to be three general rules for sail controls. By "sail controls" we mean those lines and rigging on a sailboat that not only control a sail but also change its shape.

You may know them by name: outhaul, downhaul or cunningham, boom vang, mainsheet, traveler, halyards, backstay and maybe others. But let's keep it simple. Most of us have these on our boats and some have more than one function. The science is complicated so we won't go too deep. The art of sail controls approach allows us to be more

intuitive about their use, as long as we have a basic understanding of their function.

If you sail a Sunfish, the only sail controls you have are the halyard and the mainsheet. You may also use the bridle as a sail control, but that's it. Unless you have added an outhaul and downhaul and know how to rig a boom vang, which many who race Sunfish have done.

Back to the three general rules for sail controls. The first is that when it comes to sail shape and power, deeper or fuller sails have more power; flatter sails have less power. We'll talk later about when each might be better.

Second, sail controls are set looser in medium wind and tighter in very light or in very heavy wind. Now what constitutes light, medium and heavy. Generally, light is anything below 8 mph. Medium winds are in the 9-16 range, and heavy is anything over 16.

Lastly, adjustments are generally made in small increments rather than all off or all on.

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Ok, so far we understand that we want sail controls (outhaul, downhaul, boom vang) tighter in light and heavy air, and looser in medium air. But what happens to the sail when we loosen and tighten?

The first effect is to the draft of the sail. Draft is the depth and location of the curvature in a sail. You can move the deepest part of the curvature either forward or aft depending on how much you tighten or loosen the controls. Tighter moves the draft forward. Loosen, it goes aft.

The second effect is twist. It isn't my favorite sail shape term since it doesn't really seem to describe what is happening to the sail, but for now let's just call it the curvature of the leech edge of the sail (the part that goes from the top at the mast to the back or end of the sail down on the end of the boom). If you view the

leech edge from behind the boat, it will either be closed (less curve from top to bottom) or open (more curve from top to bottom and at different places along the leech)

The controls for the leech being open or closed are mostly the boom vang, the traveler, and the mainsheet. The optimal setting on most boats is when the top batten is parallel with the boom.

In truth, most Sunfish people set these controls before they start racing and never change them. Other boat crews will tighten up for sailing upwind and loosen for sailing downwind because they have a crew on board that can do this stuff for the skipper.

If you want to make adjustments either on or off the water, just what is it worth and what will happen if you do or don't? Next issue: Sail controls upwind.



## Should I Get Into Racing?

The fundamentals of racing are mostly easily learned in small boats, which are affordable and easy to transport and store. Many small boats are designed specifically for youth, and most provide a lifetime of enjoyment for adults as well. Because of their size and simplicity, many small sailboats can be sailed singlehanded or with a crew member or two. Small boat sailing can bring you relaxing days on the water, adventurous family fun, or challenging competition.

One-design is a form of racing where all boats are virtually identical. Class legal boats race each other, start at the same time, and the winner is the first to cross the finish line.

At Hueston Woods, the racing calendar begins at the end of April and goes until early October.

Want to learn how to race? The first Learn to Race Clinic comes on Saturday, May 30. In this clinic, you can learn how to rig your boat for racing, how to start, how to sail around the race course, and how to finish. No boat? No problem. If you are a member, you can use an HSA boat!



## HSA's Learn to Sail Class Full for June Date

It didn't take long to fill this summer's first LTS date on June 6-7. Twelve newcomers to sailing have registered and committed to HSA's tenth annual Learn to Sail June class. Six couples comprise this year's first group. The two day school teaches them to rig, launch, and sail a sloop rigged sailboat and introduces them to the basics of wind and water.

HSA also offers Learn to Race clinics, the first of which comes on Saturday, May 30. Solo sailing instruction in Sunfish is also available to those wanting to become certified to use HSA's fleet of Sunfish. All that is required is a desire to learn, the Sunfish Certification course, and membership in the club. How much? Family memberships are only \$95 per year. Yes, a great bargain.

## Observations from a Geezer

By Jerry Callahan

**(Editor's note: The title is Jerry's and he says there is a story behind the name. Ask him sometime. As many of you know, Jerry is a three time Y-Flyer National Champion and has a host of other titles he has won in his sailing career. At age 80, he jumped into his Sunfish for the first time in quite a while last summer and promptly stomped the field. He didn't race any more that summer but he remains active in our club. What follows is advice about sailing in light air from someone who perhaps does it better than anyone else. Still.)**

Light wind sailing is some of the worst sailing one encounters. My father used to tell me, "If you **like** sailing in light air, you're a sailor." One of our HSA sailors worked really hard to become good at light wind sailing, because over the entire season, we had more light wind than heavy wind! It made him one of the better sailors on Acton Lake.

Here are some thoughts about light wind sailing:

**Never get far from the starting line in light air.** You never know when the wind might quit altogether.

**Determine the best end of the starting line and get there early.** It takes a long time to get there in light air.

**Look up the lake to see what puffs of wind are coming.** The first one to that "new" wind often wins.

**Watch your telltales and feel the wind on your body.** In light air, it often comes from multiple directions. The feeling on your skin often foretells the new wind direction – even before the telltales.

**Sit forward on your boat.** It gets the aft portion of your hull out of the water and reduces drag.

**On beats, heal your boat to leeward.** This lets your sail take its natural shape by gravity. Too much heal can be detrimental as your sail has a smaller profile to the wind.

**On a run, heal your boat to windward.** This gets the plane of your sail up higher where the wind is not slowed down by friction over the water. You should rig a line to the tack of the sail so you can pull the sail out and hold it there.

**If the boats ahead of you sail high of the rhumb line on a run, take the low road.** There's an old saying, "What goes up, must come down". While those going high may go fast early, they really slow down when they have to head back down to the mark.

**Watch any puffs that come down the course especially on a run.** Sail high to get the puff, then run low to stay in the puff longer. The saying is, "Up in the lulls; off in the puffs".

**Sail to the closest end of the finish line.** The finish line almost always has a favored end. Just because you can probably cross the finish line on your present course, doesn't mean another boat won't beat you by sailing to the closer end.

**If you're a new sailor, glance at other boats for guidance.** Look to determine how their sails are set, what course (direction) they are sailing and where they are sitting. Don't look too long as you should be concentrating on your telltales and the luff of your sail.

## Rules Challenge!

A fisherman slowly trolls in his 16 ft. bass boat in front of you as you head for the race course. You are going faster than he is and will overtake him soon. Who has to keep clear, you or the bass boat? (answer page 5)



## Joined HSA for 2015 Yet?

The 2015 sailing season, complete with clinics, racing, and social activity is fast upon us. Have you sent in your dues yet?

Rear Commodore Laura Beebe needs your membership forms in so she can set the committee duty for the season, which begins on April 26. Inclusion in the yearbook also rests on getting your membership done soon.

If you are new to the club, we invite you to join us for committee boat launch on Saturday April 18th at 10:00. Newcomers to sailing are also assigned committee duty and receive training on the job.

Learn about sailing from the inside by volunteering and serving.

# Junior Sailor Moves On to Tall Ships with 'Sisters Under Sail' Opportunity

Junior Sailing camp alum Sierra Campbell won't be returning to the junior camp this year. She has aged out, for one thing, but she will be attending a sailing camp of another sort in July.

Sierra will be one of 16 teenage girls who will spend six days this summer aboard the *S/V Denis Sullivan*, a 137 ft. three-masted schooner and a recreation of a 19th century ship that once sailed the Great Lakes.

The ship is mostly used for educational purposes, particularly environmental issues concerning stewardship of the natural world. Sierra will be on board as part of a program called "Sisters Under Sail", a program that teaches leadership, self-discovery and personal growth to teenage girls.

While on board Sierra will be standing watch, steering the ship, setting sails, climbing rigging, navigating, and, yes, swabbing the decks too. According to the website the experience will "encourage girls to observe their

all-woman crew as they demonstrate leadership in action. The key competency ... is all about learning, through example, how to channel personal leadership styles effectively."

The experience, it also says, is all about "authentic teamwork with emphasis on communication, collaboration, and confidence."

Sierra, whose family lives in Wisconsin, has ties to the local area. Her mom Katie was a junior camper at Hueston Woods back in the 1990's. Her grandparents still live in the area and her granddad has a San Juan 21 at the lake. The sailing Sierra will do will take place on Northern Lake Michigan and take her from Mackinac Island, MI to Milwaukee, WI.

Sisters Under Sail have other programs for women. One is called Women Un-Wind and another is Chart Your Course for Women. Both are leadership development programs exclusively for women. Both include the tall ship sailing experience. Want to know more about Sierra's adventure or about Sisters Under Sail? Here is a link:

<http://www.sistersundersail.org/>



Answer to puzzler: Overtaking vessel, the sailboat, must keep clear.



The *S/V Denis Sullivan*, Wisconsin's official flagship, above.

Sierra at camp in 2013 on a Sunfish, at left.