The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976 | THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH | WINTER 2024

FODM 2024 Member Meetings

March 3, 3 p.m. (see p.1)

May 15, 7 p.m., Zoom, Turtles, Dr. Matt Close, Radford University

October 23, 7 p.m.

Calendar of Events

February 24, Trash Cleanup, 1 p.m.

March 10, Tree Walk, 1 p.m.

April 11, May 16, 9 a.m., Water Testing

Every Sunday, 8 a.m., Bird Walks

Twice a month, Invasive Plant Control

See www.fodm.org and our Facebook page for details.

CONTENTS

Native Plants of Northern Virginia's Tidal, Freshwater, Wetland Communities

March 3, 3 p.m.

Join us on Sunday, March 3, at 3 p.m. to learn about native plants of tidal freshwater communities in a presentation by Nelson DeBarros, **in-person, Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Bldv., Alexandria; 1 p.m. bird walk.**

Mr. DeBarros will describe the tidal plant communities in Dyke Marsh and other wetland sites in northern Virginia, like Little Hunting Creek and Mason Neck. Examples of these communities include tidal freshwater hardwood swamps, shrublands, herbaceous marshes and submerged aquatic vegetation beds.

He will discuss plant species like spatterdock, spotted jewelweed and wild rice and lesser-known plants like soft-stem bulrush, common three-stem and various sedges. He will also touch on rare species that might be observed in local marshes. While some of these species still grow in our area, others are only known from historical records, but may be hiding in plain sight.

Wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*)
Photo by Nelson DeBarros

Tidal plant communities at Dyke Marsh
Photo by Nelson DeBarros

Wetland vegetation helps improve water quality and support wildlife, like fish that use wetlands as spawning grounds and nurseries for their young.

Nelson DeBarros is a vegetation ecologist with the Fairfax County Park Authority and serves as the Botany Committee Chair for the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. He has a Master of Science in ecology from Penn State University.

The cosponsors are Plant NOVA Natives; Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited; Virginia Native Plant Society, Potowmack Chapter; Friends of Little Hunting Creek; Friends of Accotink Creek; and the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park.

Before the March 3 meeting, P.J. Dunne, will lead a bird walk in the Huntley Meadows Park wetland. Register by emailing info@fodm.org and putting March 3 Bird Walk in the subject box. Meet outside the visitor center at 1 p.m. P.J. is a Board member of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. Limited to 20 people so all can hear.

Annual Meeting and Election on March 3

At the March 3 meeting, FODM will hold an election for officers and the Board of Directors. The proposed nominees, all of whom have agreed to serve, are listed below. Other nominations can be considered at the meeting.

We have included in the paper copies of the Marsh Wren a proxy form for establishing a quorum and voting at the meeting if a member cannot attend. The form includes instructions for completing and returning it by February 28. For those who receive the newsletter by email, we will send you a separate email with the proxy and instructions. You can reply by email. Be sure to send your proxy if you cannot attend.

Two nominees are not incumbents. Katya Wanzer has extensive experience in public health, works at the Aspen Institute and is on Porto Vecchio's Waterfront Committee. Stacy Langsdale has degrees in civil engineering and hydrology and works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Both live in Alexandria.

Nominees

Glenda Booth, President
Dixie Sommers, Vice President
Katya Wanzer, Secretary
Matthew Smith, Treasurer
Carolyn Gamble
Jim Gearing
Deborah Hammer
Stacy Langsdale
Dorothy McManus
Clarence Monteiro
Randy Myers
Robert Veltkamp
Ed Eder, Past President

George Washington Memorial Parkway Superintendent's Message

BY CHARLES CUVELIER

Congratulations to FODM on your recent success with grants. Funds will provide for reprinting publications, planting trees and developing interpretive panels, all of which are excellent opportunities for education and environmental stewardship.

Other happenings in 2024: Both FODM and the Park will be signing a new multi-year agreement. It builds on our collaboration and continues the partnership into the future. The bridge replacement project across from Tulane Drive continues with good progress and should be finished this year. We are anticipating completion of the forest management plan by fall 2024, now under development with Virginia Tech and to which FODM has contributed. The park has finalized and released the South Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail Environmental Assessment.

Further south, rehabilitation work will occur on the exterior of the Non-Commissioned Officers building, rehabilitation of the restroom in area B and replacement of the playground equipment at Fort Hunt Park. Other areas of the park with design or construction activities include these: rock wall repairs near Theodore Roosevelt Island, Mount Vernon Trail pre-design; Glen Echo parking lot design; restroom rehabilitation at Great Falls and Theodore Roosevelt Island; water well, HVAC and roof replacement at Great Falls; and the North Parkway roadway rehabilitation. Excluding the large road reconstruction, these projects reflect over $10 million in re-investment this year.

Thanks for your partnership with us on the January 15 MLK Day of Service. We had to reschedule activities that day because of problematic weather, but 15 hardy volunteers collected trash anyway in the snow showers.

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www.fodm.org
or our **Facebook** page.

Board members can receive emails at info@fodm.org. *The Marsh Wren* is a publication of the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Letters and submissions to *The Marsh Wren* are welcome. Send them to the post office or email address at the left.

President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Spring is awakening, always a welcome time of renewal. Frogs, toads and salamanders are coming to life in vernal pools. Bats are emerging from their winter roosts. Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) will return soon. The miracle of bird migration is underway in North America.

Serious bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) watching is captivating many fans along the Haul Road trail. Last year, at least two Dyke Marsh bald eagle pairs fledged young. The nest across from Tulane Drive collapsed after the young fledged and we think they have "relocated" to the west side of the parkway in a homeowner's backyard where there's a new nest.

Several FODMers have spotted beavers this winter in the marsh and these large, dark brown rodents (*Castor canadensis*) have returned to west Dyke Marsh and built a dam and lodge. Several years ago, they moved out of that area, as is their wont and more cattails and wild rice moved in.

Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) built a lodge in west Dyke Marsh this winter. Photo by Glenda Booth

Raptors are always a thrill. We had over 400 fans at our Raptor Rapture event in Fort Hunt Park, a record attendance for this annual event.

Success with Grants

We are delighted to report that we have received three grants. The Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Association awarded FODM $3,500 to help finance a wayside on the boardwalk explaining the purpose of the breakwater and sills built to stabilize the marsh. Second, the Dominion Charitable Foundation awarded us $5,000 to reprint our seasonal and children's brochures. Third, Wetlands Watch and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation awarded FODM a grant of $3,250 to plant trees in Dyke Marsh and help curb erosion. We are very grateful for this support and know that these resources will help us preserve Dyke Marsh and strengthen stewardship of our environment.

We express our great appreciation to these organizations.

Barn owl (*Tyto alba*) at FODM's November 5 Raptor Rapture event Photo by Glenda Booth

Grounded Sailboat

One not-so-welcomed "visitor" to the preserve was a grounded sailboat, owned by the Belle Haven Marina which got lodged into some large logs and the mud by high tides during the January 9 storm that soaked the region with record rainfall. We urged the Park Service and marina managers to try to minimize harm to natural resources during its removal.

Projects in the Works

Your Board of Directors has approved several new projects for the coming year. We will prepare a Dyke Marsh bird checklist, upgrade our website, help finance the boardwalk sign described above, plant some trees and prepare pull-up banner describing the marsh and FODM. We will continue our wildlife camera in hopes of spotting a mink or weasel, our bi-monthly invasive plant sessions, Sunday bird and other walks, butterfly/ dragonfly surveys, the spring breeding bird survey and pumpkin ash project.

We have completed a new partner agreement and 2024 joint work plan with the National Park Service.

Forests in Trouble

NPS studies concluded that forests in 39 eastern national parks are at risk due to browsing by overabundant white-tailed deer and crowding by invasive plants. NPS has determined that no national capital area national park has adequate regeneration levels, largely because deer are eating young seedlings. GW Memorial Parkway managers contracted with Virginia Tech forestry experts to develop a forestry management plan. We thank GWMP for inviting our comments.

Turtle Alert!

Save the date, May 15, for our next member meeting on Zoom and learn all about turtles in a talk by Dr. Matt Close, a Radford University biologist. Dyke Marsh has at least seven species.

Why Save Endangered Species?

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH This article was published in the November-December Virginia Wildlife magazine.

In the 1970s, the threatened extinction of a 3½-inch-long fish called a snail darter almost derailed Tennessee's Tellico Dam. The furor, an epic battle that went to the U.S. Supreme Court, provoked heated debates about the value of the federal Endangered Species Act and questions like, "Why care about a snail darter?" Battles over little-known endangered species have periodically erupted since the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) became law in 1973. To some people, it may seem unimportant to lose an obscure bug or rodent.

The goal of the ESA is to protect both imperiled species and the ecosystems they need to survive and recover. Some extinctions naturally occur, but today's rate of extinction is higher than the natural rate, largely because of human activity, experts say.

Ecosystems are composed of many individual species. All species have a niche and a role in the environment, and as wildlife ecologist Aldo Leopold wrote, "If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not . . . To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

The passenger pigeon was declared extinct in 1914. Image by Spike Knuth/DWR

A balanced and healthy ecosystem depends on the interactions of species in the web of life. Because of this inter-dependence, the loss of one species can trigger the loss of another. The loss of one species can unravel an entire ecosystem, like pulling out the threads of a sweater. "When you try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe," wrote conservationist John Muir.

The addition or loss of a top predator can lead to what scientists called a "tropic cascade." The eradication of wolves in eastern North America contributed to larger white-tailed deer populations, many contend. The loss of pollinators could bring a decline in seed and fruit production.

"All these species, whether big or small, are essential elements of ecosys-tems," Lauren McCain, senior federal lands policy analyst at the nonprofit Defenders of Wildlife, has written. "When they are lost or depleted, nature's careful balance is disrupted. We cannot bring back the passenger pigeon or the Carolina parakeet and other extinct species, but we have the power to save the endangered species that remain and restore the biodiversity fundamental to our own well-being." In short, we should be concerned about not only individual species, but also the loss of function and niches up and down the hierarchical scale, the overall biodiversity.

Some argue for saving species in terms of their importance to people. Many medicines come from plant sources, like penicillin from Penicillium mold. Some plants and animals feed the world. Some people offer an economic rationale, such as pointing out that leveling forests can increase stormwater pollution and flooding.

"Why should we need to point to some known exceptional value of a species to humans for it to be worth saving?" asked Jason Bulluck, Virginia's Natural Heritage Program Director of Conservation and Recreation. "All species fill some ecological niche, have a purpose, or provide services to other species and have a place in nature and in the natural heritage of the commonwealth. So, why would we consider it 'okay' for any species to be removed, whether we think we fully understand its values or not?"

Every creature has intrinsic value. Our natural assets are our life support system. Their impairment or disappearance can ultimately threaten the human race. "Conservation of our resources is the fundamental question before this nation, and... our first and greatest task is to set our house in order and begin to live within our means," President Theodore Roosevelt warned in a 1909 message to the U.S. Congress. That message is even more compelling today.

FODM-funded Study Finds New Beetle Species

BY JONATHAN P. MOLINEAUX, Partnership Coordinator, George Washington Memorial Parkway; and GLENDA C. BOOTH, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

In 2023, the Friends of Dyke Marsh funded, in part, studies of beetles along the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) that yielded remarkable discoveries. The study identified 38 species of nitidulid (sap-feeding) beetles, of which 26 had never been documented in Virginia. The study also confirmed 67 tenebrionid (darkling) beetle species , twelve of which were new Virginia records. While no histerid (clown) beetles were recorded in Dyke Marsh, 23 were documented from the study area.

In partnership with the National Park Service, FODM awarded a grant to Dr. Donald Chandler, a researcher with the University of New Hampshire, to identify the beetles, who worked with Brent Steury Natural Resources Program Manager of the GWMP.

Dr. Chandler and Brent published their findings in two journals: the Maryland Entomologist and Banisteria, a publication dedicated to Virginia's natural history.

The following is a closer look at the fascinating world of these three beetle families as reported in these two journal articles and Fakoorziba et al. 2017.

Darkling beetle (*Mycetochara fraterna*)
Photo by Léo-Guy de Repentigny, 2019

Darkling beetles: This diverse and abundant family is mainly active at dusk or night. Their cryptic behavior makes them challenging to find except through nighttime trapping methods like ultraviolet light traps, pitfall traps or Malaise traps. While some adults and larvae may co-exist, others lead distinct lives in different habitats. The group whose adults and larvae live together are usually found on fungi thriving on fallen dead trees. The other group can usually be found burrowing through leaf litter and soil, munching on dry plant matter or even snacking on seeds and living roots. The larvae of these soil-dwelling darkling beetles, aptly nicknamed "wireworms" for their slender bodies, play a crucial role in decomposition, transforming dead plant matter back into fertile soil.

Sap-feeding beetle (*Cryptarcha ampla*) Photo by A.V. Evans, 2011

Sap-feeding beetles: These beetles have a surprising variety of forms, ranging from shades of brown and black to the vibrantly patterned and metallically-gleaming Glischrochilus. Their flattened bodies and prominent "clubbed" antennae make them adept at navigating tight spaces while searching for their diverse meals, which include pollen, seeds, fungi and even carrion. Interestingly, some sap beetles like Carpophilus attract mates and locate fermenting fruit and sap feasts using alluring scents released from their wing covers. Notably, certain sap beetles develop a taste for sweet corn and stored grains, and some Glischrochilus larvae even become predators of soft invertebrates, including insect larvae.

Clown beetles: Fierce hunters, clown beetles specialize in preying on maggots, fly pupae and other small insects drawn to carrion and dung. Their short, powerful legs and shovel-like forelegs equipped with digging tibiae make them excellent burrowers. Spines on their middle tibiae provide additional defense, while a clear membrane on the male fore tarsi helps them grip slippery prey. This predatory prowess makes them valuable allies in forensic investigations, helping estimate time of death by devouring other carrion insects. In essence, clown beetles play a vital role in nature's grand recycling act, keeping the ecosystem clean and functioning one bite at a time.

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By delving into the lives of nitidulid, tenebrionid and histerid beetles, we gain a deeper appreciation for their crucial roles in the tapestry of nature. These fascinating beetle families act as ecosystem guardians, decomposing waste, controlling pests and cleaning carrion. Their very presence serves as a barometer of environmental health, while their unique adaptations inspire scientific advancements and forensic insights. Studying these beetles is not just about uncovering hidden wonders. It's about acknowledging the unseen forces that keep our planet and marsh thriving.

Clown beetle (*Geomysaprinus moniliatus*)
Photo by Ludo Leclerc, 2020

The National Park Service's Mission, How They Fulfill It and Guiding Documents

BY RANDY MYERS, Member, Board of Directors

Our national parks, which in Ken Burns' documentary are described as "America's best idea," include 424 areas covering more than 85 million acres. They include national parks as well as designated monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails. The National Park Service (NPS) has approximately 20,000 permanent, temporary and seasonal employees and more than 279,000 volunteers. According to a Congressional Research Service 2022 report, while visits to national parks peaked in 2016, 2017 and 2019 with approximately 330 million visits, agency staffing levels declined by nine percent over the decade. NPS has a backlog of deferred maintenance and repairs estimated at $22.3 billion.

The most important statutory directive is found in the NPS Organic Act of 1916, NPS General Authorities Act of 1970 and its 1978 amendments. The NPS Organic Act of 1916, now codified at 54 U.S.C. § 100101, directs that the National Park Service "shall promote and regulate the use of [its] Federal areas … by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose … which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The NPS's Management Policies (2006) explain that the management of the National Park System and its programs "is guided by the Constitution, public laws, treaties, proclamations, executive orders, regulations and directives of the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. NPS policy must be consistent with these higher authorities and with appropriate delegations of authority."

The NPS Management Policies, publicly available at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/policy/upload/MP_2006.pdf, "is the basic Service-wide policy document" and "the highest of three levels of guidance documents in the NPS Directives System." The NPS Directives System, publicly available at https://www.nps.gov/policy/index.cfm, is designed "to provide NPS management and staff with clear and continuously updated information on NPS policy and required and/or recommended actions, as well as any other information that will help them manage parks and programs effectively." Level 1 is the NPS Management Policies itself, which sets the broad framework, provides direction and prescribes parameters for making management decisions. Level 2 is the NPS Director's Orders, which provide more detailed interpretation of Management Policies, delegate specific authorities and responsibilities and may articulate new or revised policy on an interim basis. Level 3 materials include NPS handbooks, reference manuals and other documents containing comprehensive information in support of field and programmatic operations.

An examination of the legal authorities, as well as the NPS regulations and internal policy documents, can give the public some insights on how the NPS is supposed to manage park areas.

As official partners of the National Park Service, the Friends of Dyke Marsh, have an agreement with NPS which defines how we work with them. We also develop together an annual work plan agreeing to jointly-managed projects, as well as participate through the NPS Volunteers-in-Parks program.

FODM volunteers installed plants in the native plant area in jointly-managed project with NPS. Photo by Glenda Booth

The Potomac River, Is It Clean?

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

The Potomac River is clearly cleaner than it was in 1965 when President Lyndon called it "a river of decaying sewage and rotten algae and since 2012 when American Rivers named it the nation's "most endangered river." Is the river healthy today? Yes and no. The May 16, 2023, Potomac Conservancy "report card" gave the river a grade of B, up from a B- in 2020, a C in 2013 and a D in 2011. In 2022, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science gave the Potomac basin a C-minus score.

Many attribute the 1972 Clean Water Act with improving water quality, but more must be done, say Conservancy officials. "It's a great comeback for the nation's river," Conservancy President Hedrick Belin said. "That progress is stalling out."

"Polluted urban runoff is the only growing source of pollution to the Potomac River," the analysis found. Stormwater runoff flows off impervious surfaces, like streets, parking lots and roofs, carrying street oils, lawn chemicals, trash and even diluted sewage directly into area streams and into the river.

More Trees and Plants

The land adjoining a river affects its health. Trees near shorelines, forest buffers, can stabilize sediments, absorb rainwater and slow down and filter runoff. The Conservancy gave forested shorelines a D+. "Rapid deforestation in the region is happening at an alarming rate . . .," the report card concludes. "We must leave behind a 20th-century mindset where we pave over forests and deal with the consequences later," said Hedrick Belin, Conservancy President.

The Conservancy did find that in 2020, "shoreline trees and plants doubled across the watershed when compared to 2018 and 2019," but noted that this is only 36 percent of the annual goal of 207 miles.

Suspended sediments from runoff, deforestation and poor sediment management can block sunlight and impede the growth of underwater grasses or submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). These grasses are struggling, the Conservancy found, noting, "A goal of 3,581 hectares of underwater grasses . . . was set for the Potomac River watershed to reach healthy levels of underwater grasses. Unfortunately, as of 2020, the Potomac was only 33 percent of the way to reaching this goal," analysts found.

Global Warming, an Added Challenge

Heat-trapping greenhouse gases are warming the planet more than is natural, climate scientists contend. The Conservancy warned, ". . . we are already experiencing the impacts of a warming climate" in the region and these impacts will worsen. Warmer atmospheric temperatures result in warmer water temperatures, which can harm aquatic life and promote algal blooms and bacteria growth.

"The region's storms are intensifying and becoming more frequent and periods of drought are becoming longer," says the report card. These events can impair water quality because drier soils cannot always absorb heavy downpours, driving more polluted stormwater into area waters.

There is some good news. Nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment are "on track" to meet 2025 pollution reduction goals. Some populations of fish, bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus)* have rebounded. At certain times, some parts of the river are swimmable and more people are spending time around the Potomac. Sports fishing licenses quadrupled in 2020.

Belin challenged government decision-makers: "We can't keep paving over our forests and putting nature last. Leaders at all levels must aggressively invest in nature-based solutions that reduce urban runoff and strengthen our community's defenses against intensifying storms and other climate impacts." A healthy and resilient Potomac River could be a reality within a decade, he said.

Visit https://potomacreportcard.org/

Potomac River Facts

The Potomac River Basin or watershed stretches 14,670 miles through five geological provinces. The river flows over 400 miles spanning Washington, D. C., and four states -- Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Its major tributaries are the Anacostia River, Antietam Creek, the Cacapon River, Catoctin Creek, Conococheague Creek, the Monocacy River, the North Branch, the South Branch, the Occoquan River, the Savage River, Seneca Creek and the Shenandoah River. Five million people in the greater Washington area depend on the river for their drinking water.

The river's habitats have 1,400 native plants and animals, including 200 globally rare species. In the late 1500s, the average population density was 2.2 people per square mile. In 2020, it was 94.

"The story of the Potomac is the story of our country: colonization, commerce, economic development, war, pollution, restoration, conservation, resource management, historic preservation and recreation. The Potomac is the nation's river." From The Potomac River, by Garrett Peck, 2012

How Did Dyke Marsh Get Its Name?

BY ELIAS N. "SONNY" LOZANO, GW Memorial Parkway Historian

The naming of Dyke Marsh leads us to Augustine Jaquelin Smith.

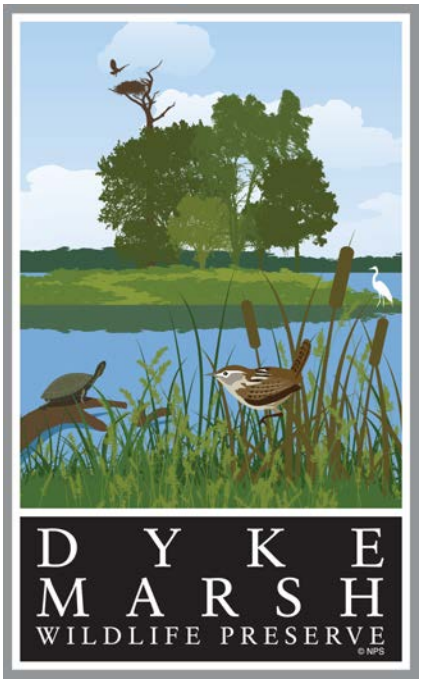
Smith was born to Augustine Smith and Margaret Boyd on May 28, 1774, in Shooter's Hill, Middlesex County, Virginia. Smith's father died only ten days after he was born and his mother died seven years later. Orphaned at such a young age, Smith went to live with his uncle, John Smith, who served as a colonel during the Revolutionary War and was later elected to represent Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Augustine J. Smith also served his country in the War of 1812 (1812-1815) as a sergeant in the Virginia Militia. Even though he was an enlisted man, he earned the title of colonel, which may have been because he served in that war. In 1814, he acquired 155 acres that once belonged to Hugh West, land known as West's Grove Plantation. Today, a subdivision on the west side of the George Washington Memorial Parkway is called "Westgrove."

When Smith took possession of the West Grove Plantation, it included a manor house, an orchard and a river landing. The plantation sat on lands extending from marshes along the Potomac River and the southern shoreline of Great Hunting Creek. Smith had earthen walls built around the Potomac River marsh to establish land free from the inundation of the ebb and flow of tides. These walls, then called "dykes" by the British, temporarily created "fast land" totaling about 1,200 acres. He used the expanded land mass as farmland to grow crops and provide grazing land for livestock.

Smith died on February 12, 1830, at 55 and is buried next to his wife, Susanna, in Alexandria's Saint Paul's Episcopal Church Cemetery at 1450 Wilkes Street.

Legend has it that Union forces burned down the plantation house in 1861, which once stood near today's Belle Haven Country Club clubhouse. The club"s website notes that Union forces burned the plantation house in 1861 in retaliation for the owner's sons serving as officers on Confederate General Robert E. Lee's staff.



Scott Hill, New NPS Volunteer Coordinator

Scott Hill, Volunteer Coordinator
Photo by National Park Service

Scott Hill is the George Washington Memorial Parkway's new Volunteer Coordinator, effective in April. Born in Texas and raised in Colorado, Scott was formerly an interpretive park ranger in the Parkway's south district, stationed at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado, with a minor in criminal justice and a master's degree in American history from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Scott has worked for the National Park Service for more than 27 years at ten different park units and for the federal government for 30 years, including almost three years at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Scott's loves include his wife, Vickie, a contract specialist at the National Museum of the Marine Corps; his daughter, Ashleigh; his two granddaughters, Brooklyn and Isabella; and all Colorado sports teams, collegiate and professional.

We FODMers send our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Trudy Roth, the Volunteer Coordinator with whom we have worked for many years. Trudy is now Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator for the Park Service's National Capital Region.

Ecological Economics

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

On October 28, 2023, Dr. Herman E. Daly, the "founder of ecological economics" and a professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, passed away at age 84.

His Washington Post obituary stated, "He argued for a fundamental shift in the way the economy is understood – not as an independent system, but rather one that exists within Earth's ecosystem and is constrained by the sources available on the planet."

The obituary continued, "For generations, the economy had been viewed, broadly speaking as a circular for money. But 'as the economy expands, it takes in more energy, more matter,' Dr. Daly noted. It takes it from where? From the biosphere. And as we consume more, we throw out more waste. Where do we throw it? Back to the biosphere. That's depletion, and that's pollution.'"

One example cited: "If there's an oil spill that we have to clean up, that adds to the gross domestic product," but "this is not a very good measure of progress," English economist Dan O'Neill said. "He really got us to question why we are pursuing certain economic goals. Is growth just a means to an end instead of an end itself . . . economists should care about what counts, not about what is merely countable."

Nature Walk Etiquette

Everyone enjoys nature walks and FODM has many expert leaders who open our eyes to nature's beauty and power. Here are a few tips on field trip etiquette. The overriding point is to be respectful to nature, trip leaders and others. There are at least three types of nature walks typical in our area: the totally-guided walk, the partly-guided walk and the self-guided walk. Here are some important points for the totally-guided walk:

- Keep up with the leader, pay attention, talk in turn and ask questions.
- Be respectful of biota.
- Stay on paths.
- If you want to examine something close up, consult with the leader. Leave flowers for pollinators and other people to enjoy.
- Don't pick up or swat at animals, like insects. Go to their level to see them.
- Don't roll over logs or other objects as a general rule. This disturbs biota. If you do move a log or rock, for example, put it back where you found it. Many animals have hiding places under these objects and they are parts of territories or habitats for some animals.
- Do not talk on cellphones or text message or engage other loud, distracting electronic devices.
- The leader should wait for people to catch up before he/she starts discussing a subject.
- Leaders should speak loudly enough to be heard by all and share all information with all participants.
- Participants should try to keep up with leaders and not make others wait too long for people to catch up with leaders.
- Dyke Marsh is in a national park. Regulations prohibit taking anything from a national park without a permit.

Leave nothing but footprints. Take nothing but memories.

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weigh up to 250 pounds. They line their nests with grasses, sod and vines. To people, the nests can look like unkempt jumbles of sticks and miscellany. They are known to put items like bottles, shoes, cans, fabric, fast food debris and children's toys in their nests. Plastic bags, balloon ribbons and fishing line can put the birds at risk of entanglement or choking.

Proficient anglers, ospreys are known as "fish hawks." They hover, scan the water and plunge feet first onto a fish. With their powerful talons, an opposable toe that can face forward or backward and barbed foot pads, they can grip slippery fish and tear them apart with their strong, curved beak. Ospreys always fly with the clutched fish's head forward, an aerodynamically favorable position that reduces wind resistance. They take their prey to a tree limb where they perch and eviscerate it or take it to its mate and young in the nest.

In late summer, young and old fly south. Next spring, the ritual will resume.

"There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night and spring after the winter." Rachel Carson, The Sense of Wonder

How Old Is Dyke Marsh?

The southern part of Dyke Marsh is around 2,500 years old and the northern part, around 500, according to Brent Steury, the GW Memorial Parkway's Natural Resources Program Manager. Estella Leopold was the first person to try to age Dyke Marsh and estimate that the marsh is 5,000 years old, says Brent. Leopold is a paleobotanist, conservationist and daughter of Aldo Leopold, best known for his book, A Sand County Almanac. Estella helped save Colorado's Florissant Fossil Beds, a National Park Service national monument. See https://www.nps.gov/flfo.

Appreciation

All FODMers send a thank you to David Barbour, Meg Jonas and Carolyn Bednarek who are not returning as members of the Board of Directors. We also thank Jessie Strother who initiated and managed our annual butterfly, dragonfly and damselfly survey for eight years. She has turned the surveys over to the able management of Jim Waggener and Laura McDonald. To help, contact Jim at jwagge3093@aol.com or info@fodm.org.

The First Alexandrians

"The earliest evidence of human activity in Alexandria dates to this period [10,000 – 5,000 years ago] and comes from Jones Point, consisting of spear points probably dropped by hunters chasing game in the woods along the Potomac River. One of the points is made of quartzite and bears serrated edges; radiocarbon dates associated with similar points suggest that it may have been made over 9,000 years ago. Another early point, known as a 'bifurcate' type because of its forked base, dates to about 8,500 years ago and was found at the Stonegate Site near Braddock Road and I-395."
– from the website of the Lyceum of Alexandria, http://oha.alexandriava.gov/lyceum/ly-exhibit-prehistory.html

"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it." -- President Lyndon B. Johnson

Welcome New FODM Members

FODM welcomes our **new members**: Jean-Pierre Bacle, Michael Beaghen, Stephen Bracken, Steven Ditmeyer, Leah Dymek, Caroline Faiella, Sharon Hall, Zach Hellmuth, Anna Marie Hicks, Krista Hoffman, Miriam and James Katsikis, Steve Kaplan, Clarice Medrano, Amy Porter, John Romano, Jennifer Sayers, Katya Wanzer, Morgan Whaley, Bill Whitacre, Scott Yochum and George Ziga. We also welcome conversions to life membership Carolyn Bednarek and Elaine Kolish.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks

Bird walks are held Sunday mornings, all seasons. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Walks are led by experienced birders and all are welcome to join us.

U.S. Park Police, Emergency Number: 202-610-7500

FODM Membership -- Dues and Contributions

Support the Friends of Dyke Marsh by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Benefits include the Friends' publication, *The Marsh Wren*; membership meetings with knowledgeable speakers; bird and nature walks and notification of activities in and around the marsh. Most importantly, your membership lends your voice in support of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, its protection and full restoration. Just click on the "Join" or "Donate" button on our membership page at www.fodm.org to make your tax-deductible contribution by credit card or from your bank account securely through PayPal. For help, email info@fodm.org. If you prefer, you can send a check, payable to FODM, P.O. Box 7183, Alexandria, Virginia 22307. The annual dues are $15.00 per household, $250.00 for life membership for an individual. You will receive a notice by mail or by email when your renewal is due. A financial statement is available upon written request from the Virginia Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs. Thank you for your support of FODM.

DUES AMOUNT..…… $ _____
ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION..…….. $ _____

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY_____ STATE ____ ZIP_____
TELEPHONE NUMBER _____
EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Please address any questions or comments about *The Marsh Wren* to Glenda Booth and about membership to Bob Veltkamp. You may contact them by mail at FODM, P.O. Box 7183, Alexandria, Virginia 22307 -7183, by telephone or by email (see page 2).

The Marsh Wren

The Friends of Dyke Marsh
P.O. Box 7183
Alexandria, VA 22307-7183

Ospreys Will Return Soon

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

Every March, ospreys (*Pandio haliaetus*) return to Northern Virginia shorelines from their southern wintering grounds in Florida, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Many people delight in watching these chestnut brown and white birds carry sticks and refurbish last year's nests. The birds usually return to the same nest every spring. Because they add materials year after year, a nest can be ten to 13 feet deep, three to six feet across and

All photos by Paula Sullivan

SEE **OSPREYS** ON PAGE **10**