

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

SPRING 2008



The Friends of Dyke Marsh

FODM Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, May 14, 2008
7:30 p.m., Huntley Meadows
Park, 3701 Lockheed Boulevard,
Alexandria, 22306. 703-
768-2525. Free to all.

Dyke Marsh Cleanup

Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m. to
12 noon. Meet at Belle Haven
restrooms. Call 703-289-2556.

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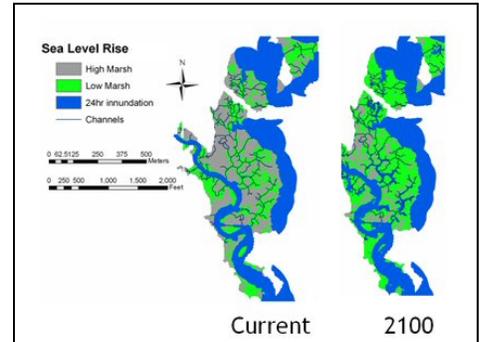
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The Restoration of Dyke Marsh

Many Factors to Consider in a Changing Environment

Join the Friends on May 14 as we welcome Dr. Katia Engelhardt, assistant professor at the University of Maryland, for a discussion on the many factors considered in undertaking the restoration of Dyke Marsh. Dr. Engelhardt writes:

Sisyphus was a king in Greek mythology who was punished by the Gods to roll a huge boulder up a hill, only to lose control as he nears the top and watch it roll down again, and be compelled to start again, repeating this for eternity. Just like Sisyphus, ecosystem management often tries to command and control an ecosystem at all costs to look a certain way or perform certain functions that humans find particularly valuable. Over-control of a system, however, often leads to disappointing results if the underlying attributes are incompatible with objectives. As discussions over the future of Dyke Marsh include the possibility of restoring portions of the marsh to halt erosion or to increase area that were previously lost to dredging, underlying attributes and objectives need to be carefully examined if a restoration of Dyke Marsh is to be successful and sustainable. Over the past 4 years, I have examined marsh structure



This map shows how sea level rise, a major factor in marsh restoration, might affect Dyke Marsh by the end of the century.

(elevation, tidal channels, and vegetation communities) and function (denitrification) at Dyke Marsh to examine the feasibility of restoring the marsh. Our results show that while the marsh landscape is relatively flat from a human perspective, marsh vegetation responds to small (<10cm) changes in marsh surface elevation and to the proximity of tidal channels. Hence, from the plant perspective, Dyke Marsh is a complex landscape that manifests itself in a diverse mix of

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National Park Service to Begin Restoration Plans

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

As we go to press, the National Park Service has announced the first public "scoping" meeting for the environmental impact statement (EIS) to restore and manage Dyke Marsh. The meeting is scheduled for April 22, 6 to 9 p.m., at Belle View Elementary School. We are very pleased that NPS is taking these steps and we hope to have a big turnout.

NPS says that the most useful types of scoping comments are the following: (1) Alternative approaches and ideas for

accomplishing the project goals, (2) The range of environmental and socioeconomic issues to be considered, (3) Other potential projects that might affect or be affected by this project, (4) Information that needs to be considered (such as related research) and why, (5) Information on how you use the park and how a project might affect that use.

The Friends of Dyke Marsh support the scientifically-guided restoration of Dyke Marsh and are working with the

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National Park Service and the Congress for restoration.

Dyke Marsh is half its former size and is a remnant of the once extensive marshes that lined the Potomac River. It has suffered from dredging, debris dumping, dikes built, invasive plants, polluted runoff, contaminated sediments, vehicle noise and emissions, lawn and golf course chemicals and shoreline erosion.

How will it be restored? We will not know the details of restoration for some time until the options are presented in a full environmental impact statement and decided. The EIS process involves the public at several points and we will try to notify you of all opportunities. Please make sure you are on our e-mail list by sending Barbara Perry (barbaraperry@hotmail.com) your e-mail address.

The announcement and other information are here: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkId=186&projectId=20293>. You can send comments electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gwmp> or in writing to Mr. David Vela, Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Park, McLean, Virginia 22101. NPS will receive public input for 45 days, through May 21, 2008.

For more information, contact NPS staffers, Dana Dierkes or Erik Oberg at 703-289-2500 and visit <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gwmp>.

If you send comments to NPS, please send me a copy. We especially need people with expertise in biology and wetlands restoration. If you do or know someone, please contact me at 703-765-5233 or gbooth123@aol.com.

NPS Internships Available

The National Park Service (NPS) is offering internships in urban ecology to graduate, undergraduate and high school students to work and learn in one of 14 national parks in the NPS's National Capital Region. Internships are a way to learn new skills and explore a possible career in the NPS. Applications are due May 15. Visit www.nps.gov/cue for details.

"When there is a conflict between conserving resources unimpaired for future generations and the use of those resources, conservation will be predominant."

Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary,
U. S. Department of Interior,
June 19, 2006 proclamation.

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for more information about us, our programs and how you can join the FODM.

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The Marsh Wren is a quarterly 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 editor at the address on the left. Board members can receive mail at this address as well. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for his assistance with our web page (www.fodm.org), and to Paula Sullivan and Ed Eder for their photography contributions to *The Marsh Wren* and the website.

Printed on recycled paper 

President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Other articles in this issue highlight many of the challenges facing Dyke Marsh, old and new. The Board of Directors is very pleased that the National Park Service's first meeting on restoration will be held soon.

The law establishing Dyke Marsh 50 years ago contemplated restoration. Finally, it is beginning! FODM hopes to work in close partnership with federal officials to restore the health of this important wetland.

Here are a few additional FODM activities of late:

Research Chairman Walter Bulmer, Sandy Spencer and NPS scientists will analyze Marsh Wren and Least Bittern trends.

FODM is inviting research proposals on the marsh. Contact Research Chair, Walter Bulmer, for information.

The National Park Service denied the request of the West Potomac Crew Boosters to hold practices out of Belle Haven Marina/Dyke Marsh. FODM urged NPS to reject this proposal. We asked Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland and Fairfax County School Board Chairman Dan Storck to help the team find a permanent home.

We continue to urge NPS to mark the eastern boundaries of Dyke Marsh and to improve the signs requiring that dogs be leashed and that dog poop be collected.

NPS officials say that four new wayside signs will be installed along the Haul Road and boardwalk this summer.

Fairfax County and Alexandria are moving ahead to develop methods for people to responsibly dispose of unused medications, thanks to our urging. Certain medications have been linked to abnormalities in fish in the Potomac River.

We have a PowerPoint presentation on Dyke Marsh so if you know of any groups that might like to learn more, let us know.

The *Washington Post* and the *Alexandria Gazette* published articles on Dyke Marsh.

Several FODMers are being trained in how to control invasive plants so we hope to do more work in Dyke Marsh.

We are working to renew our memorandum of understanding with NPS.

Michelle Williams, an American University graduate student, is making a video documentary on Dyke Marsh as part of her master's thesis.

A reported "nutria" (a non-native animal) in the marsh was actually a woodchuck! Thank goodness.

Glenda C. Booth is the President of the Friends of Dyke Marsh and active in environmental issues in Virginia.

Challenges Facing Dyke Marsh

Every week there seems to be a new development affecting Dyke Marsh. We are working on several fronts. Here are some. If you want to help, contact me at gbooth123@aol.com or 703-765-5233.

Belle View Flood Control: At Fairfax County's request, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has prepared a preliminary report outlining several options for addressing serious flooding events, like the one that occurred in the Belle View area during Hurricane Isabel in 2003. The current COE options include building flood walls and levees around the area and "flood proofing" homes. The report says that any development would have "negative environmental and recreational impacts." You can read the report at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/stormwater/bellehaven.htm>. Please share your recommendations with me.

Increased River Traffic: Alexandria is promoting "National Harbor readiness," encouraging boat customers from Maryland's National Harbor to Old Town. The second span of the enlarged Woodrow Wilson Bridge is scheduled for completion in 2008, allowing for taller vessels to pass under the bridge. Will this increased boat traffic affect Dyke Marsh by, for example, creating more wakes, erosion, pollution, trash, prohibited incursions and alien species?

National Harbor: The first phase of the National Harbor development opened in April, 1.5 miles across the Potomac River from Dyke Marsh.

Their website has said it will be a "whole new city," a 300-acre waterfront development of buildings and parking lots along one and a quarter mile of waterfront. There have been news reports that National Harbor will have hourly "Seadog Sightseeing and Speedboat Tours" on a 70-foot boat that can go 35 mph.

National Harbor will also have a 700-foot long commercial pier; water service to and from Mount Vernon, Georgetown, National Airport and the Washington, D. C., baseball stadium; high-speed cruises on the river and "thrill boat rides"; private slips for pleasure craft; opportunities for bass fishing, canoeing, kayaking, jet skiing and water skiing; and a waterfront light show, among other features, according to promotional materials.

How will this impact Dyke Marsh?

Waterfowl Hunting: Two duck blinds were constructed and used on the borders of Dyke Marsh during the 2007-2008 waterfowl hunting season. Homeowners just south of the marsh urged FODM to join them in addressing it. Should waterfowl hunting be allowed on the boundary of

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2007 Breeding Bird Survey Results

BY LARRY CARTWRIGHT

In the 2007 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey, survey teams documented 79 species at Dyke Marsh. By summer's end, we collectively confirmed 35 species as breeders, tallied 11 species as probable breeders and reported 21 species as possible breeders. An additional 12 species were present in the survey tract during the official reporting period, but deemed not to be in suitable breeding habitat.

The fortunes of two high-visibility species, the Marsh Wren and Least Bittern, may be in grave doubt. Last year, I reported that the five-year decline in the Marsh Wren population apparently had ended and that the birds seemed to be recovering. A dozen territorial males, up from eight or nine in 2005, occupied the north marsh around Haul Road and a small group of males established territories in the Big Gut for the first time since 2001. The volunteers discovered active nests at both locations. Unfortunately, the recovery seems to have ended. No Marsh Wrens were documented in the Big Gut in 2007 and only six territorial males were present in the marsh vegetation on Hog Island and the northern shoreline of Haul Road. The first male was not even tallied until June 9. The population of Marsh Wrens now seems more perilous than at any time since I became compiler 15 years ago. The volunteers found no nests in 2007 and the species failed to make the confirmed breeder list.

The status of the Least Bittern is even more surprising. Unlike the Marsh Wren, the Least Bittern seems to have consistently maintained a robust population. For example, last year volunteers documented approximately 13 territories and confirmed the species as a breeder when adults were spotted at two locations gathering food for young. In contrast, 2007 was a poor year for Least Bitterns. Despite diligent searching, volunteers in 2007 documented only a possible breeding pair at the end of the peninsula on Haul Road, another possible breeding pair on Hog Island, a single bird in the Little Gut and another lone bird near the mouth of the Big Gut. Whether this was an off year for the species or a sudden and dramatic decline in the Least Bittern population will only be determined during the 2008 survey.

On a more positive note, Ospreys are a genuine success story at Dyke Marsh. The volunteers noted 11 nests dispersed throughout the survey area. Seven of these produced healthy fledged youngsters by the end of the breeding season. It was a real treat to stand at the marina and watch adult Ospreys tend to rapidly growing nestlings in a nest not more than 20 yards offshore.

As for neotropical migrant songbirds, Eastern Kingbirds, Orchard Orioles, and Baltimore Orioles continue to prosper. Barn and Tree Swallows, as usual, nested successfully. Prothonotary Warblers should be a source of great joy. The volunteers documented two active Prothonotary Warbler nests, one in the upper portion of the Big Gut and

the other in the south marsh and adult birds were observed either feeding youngsters or carrying food at three additional locations.

Confirming nesting songbirds is always difficult at best, but 2007 was an absolutely trying experience for the survey participants. Even the Yellow Warbler, normally confirmed in May, was not documented until July 8 when an adult was observed feeding a fledgling just north of the "dogleg." Warbling Vireos, which have dramatically increased over the past few years, Red-eyed Vireos, Northern Parulas and Common Yellowthroats were all on territory during the survey period and numerous observers reported the presence of breeding pairs of all four species. Yet we were unable to confirm any of them. I spent several hours tracking singing Acadian Flycatchers and Eastern Wood-



The survey recorded the first breeding attempt of Belted Kingfishers at Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder.

Pewees, but could find no evidence of breeding beyond the presence of territorial males. I am still pondering what happened. Was there massive nest failure for all these species or did the observers just not get lucky? I don't know, but it certainly was not due to lack of effort by volunteers.

One of the most interesting stories of the 2007 survey was the first recorded breeding attempt by Belted Kingfishers at Dyke Marsh. These boisterous birds generally dig their nest burrows in steep slopes along rivers where there is a plentiful supply of aquatic life to feed their nestlings. Steep riverbank slopes are nonexistent at Dyke Marsh, so I was fascinated when I received a report on March 24 of a Belted Kingfisher pair attempting to construct a burrow in a rootball of a fallen tree just south of the marina. The birds labored over their task for perhaps a week before abandoning the effort. The project was probably doomed from the beginning because there was probably not enough dirt for a proper burrow.

The failed Belted Kingfisher nesting attempt points out a possible inherent flaw in the methodology, noted by several critics, for establishing breeding confirmation. A bird

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Message From the Superintendent

BY DAVID VELA

I am pleased to announce the opening of the public comment period for the development of the environmental impact statement (EIS) to help guide future restoration and management alternatives for Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. Comments will be accepted during a 45-day public comment period through May 21, 2008. Comments will be accepted in several ways, including electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gwmp> or in writing to me at Superintendent David Vela, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Park, McLean, Virginia 22101. In addition, comments will be accepted at a public scoping meeting on April 22, 2008, from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. at Belle View Elementary School at 6701 Fort Hunt Road in Alexandria, Virginia 22307.

Dyke Marsh, one of the last remaining tracts of tidal freshwater marsh along the Potomac River in the

Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, has existed for approximately 5,000 years. Historically, the marsh was mined for sand and gravel. This resulted in the loss of approximately 270 acres of marshland. However, in 1974, Congress passed legislation calling for the restoration of Dyke Marsh "...so that fish and wildlife development and preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount..." Today, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is administered by the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a unit of the National Park Service.

We seek your continued support and vigilance in the protection of Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. This is the time of year when turtle poachers are active. Poaching is big business, with turtles being sold for food or bait. Trapping turtles is illegal in Dyke Marsh. If you see any potential turtle poaching in the marsh, please contact the U.S. Park Police Dispatch Office at 202-619-7300.



Contact the U.S. Park Police if you see illegal turtle traps such as this one photographed in Dyke Marsh.

As always, feel free to contact park staff if you have any questions at 703-289-2500 or visit our park website at www.nps.gov/gwmp. We hope that you have a safe and enjoyable spring along the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

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plant species. This complexity will need to be restored in a restoration effort if the existing marsh is to be a model system. However, restoration of elevation, tidal channels, and vegetation will not be sustainable unless geomorphological processes, that deposit sediments at high enough rates to counter sea level rise, maintain the marsh landscape. Simple sea level rise scenarios show how marsh structure might change without sediment accretion keeping pace with sea level rise, and highlight the importance of placing Dyke Marsh into a regional context that accounts for sediment accretion and erosion processes.

Dr. Engelhardt holds a degree from Oregon State University and a masters and doctorate in ecology from Utah State University. Since 2000, Katia has been an assistant professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Appalachian Lab.

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the marsh?

Hunting Terrace: The IDI Group has proposed to "redevelop" Hunting Terrace, the apartments on Hunting Creek just west of the parkway, to build 361 luxury condominiums in two five-story buildings and two buildings up to eight to 14 stories tall. The National Park Service opposes the proposal, saying in their letter, "The radical change in the landscape setting of the area, in the vicinity of Hunting Cove, should not be allowed." On February 5, I spoke to the Alexandria Planning Commission and expressed some concerns about impacts on the natural resources of the area, citing studies finding that up to 100 million birds die per year when they collide with structures, especially buildings with a lot of glass and especially at night. For now, the commission has postponed action.

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does not have to be successful in a breeding attempt to be listed as confirmed. Ideal breeding habitat is unavailable for Belted Kingfishers at Dyke Marsh and the rootball burrow may have been the effort by inexperienced first-time breeders. Nonetheless, the attempt, however short-lived, was made and the recorded data merely shows that fact.

I want to thank all of the 2007 participants who contributed their time and effort to making the survey a success. In alphabetical order, they are Andy Bernick, Ed Eder, Myriam Eder, Sandy Farkas, Kurt Gaskill, Adam Gundlach, Bob Heilferty, Steve Johnson, Ellen Kabat, Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson, Dorothy McManus, Ginny McNair, Larry Meade, Roger Miller, Gary Myers, David Nichols, Erik Oberg, Kirk Petrovic, Bonnie Ponwith, Marc Ribaud, Rich Rieger, Don Robinson, Trish Simmons, Paula Sullivan and Margaret Wohler.

See complete report at fodm.org.

Larry Cartwright
Dyke Marsh BBS Coordinator

First Quarter 2008 Dyke Marsh Bird Sightings

BY KURT GASKILL

The Dyke Marsh birds of late winter and early spring season were typical for the preserve. Canada Geese left en masse near the beginning of March and were quickly followed by the first arriving Laughing Gull. The species diversity along Haul Road was fairly average, too. The highlight of the season was undoubtedly a Red-necked Grebe which showed along the shoreline of the picnic area in late March for about a week. Redheads showed up off and on for nearly the month of March. And there were two Brown Creepers that were found in the picnic area nearly every week for the period.

Bald Eagles of all ages were readily seen throughout the period. Even though the eagle nest near the Wilson Bridge on the Maryland side is now abandoned, it is clear breeding birds are still nearby as an adult has showed up on the Hunting Creek mudflats through March. Sometimes, first winter and second winter plumaged Bald Eagles are observed on the mudflats, too, suggesting that progeny from the old nest site are still in the area. A



Bald Eagles, like this pair perched near the marsh, were readily seen.

Cooper's Hawk delighted birders throughout the period, often found near the marina or picnic area. Red-shouldered Hawks were also relatively easy to find and were often found posing in nearby trees for the lucky photographer.

As we enter the springtime period, arriving migrants and breeders will gather our interest with their bright colors and wonderful songs. All are welcome to join us during our Sunday morning field trips, starting from the first parking lot of the picnic area near 8 a.m. (although I am sure some will arrive earlier so as to not miss any migrants!).

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every 2 weeks, and I certainly enjoyed donning my hip boots and wandering out in to the open marsh and into the forest to erect, empty, and repair the traps. This was my first formal research project of a marsh. As a field biologist, I truly like to work outdoors, but the truth of the matter is that most hours of a "field-biology" project are spent in the lab to analyze collected samples. The Malaise traps yielded about 240 jars of specimens, millions of individuals, with the majority comprising small beetles, flies, leafhoppers, moths, and wasps. Students and I have been through the samples many times to extract focal groups. This year I am trying to finish my complete second pass through all of the jars to make sure that we have extracted all individuals of more focal groups including bees, braconid wasps, flower flies, ichneumon wasps,

ladybird beetles, longhorn beetles, scorpion flies, soldier flies, and tabanid flies before we start analyzing these groups.

Since 1999, 14 Georgetown University senior-thesis students, two Master's students, and two Ph.D. students worked on DMWP arthropods. I predict that it would take over 20 scientist years (at least 40 hours per week) to analyze the already-collected DMWP samples adequately! So if I dropped everything else, much of the project might be done in 2027, when I am 81 and possibly still hobbling around. So far, students and I have made a respectable dent into the analysis. Besides the online species list, we have published papers on DMWP alderflies and soil arthropods and have submitted a paper on fireflies. My former Master's student Cathy Brown McCall completed her thesis on DMWP's noctuid moths which needs to be published. My cur-

Study Marsh Restoration Firsthand - June 21

As we work to restore Dyke Marsh, the Board of Directors invites you to a "walk and talk" on wetlands restoration at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Washington, D. C., June 21, 10 a. m. to 12 noon, rain or shine. In 1993, the National Park Service restored 77 acres of freshwater wetlands at Kenilworth Marsh on the Anacostia River. Like the Potomac River, the Anacostia once had acres of tidal wetlands along the shoreline, but in the 1920s to 1940s, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers dredged and channeled the river and used dredge spoil to create upland, which, along with other activities, seriously affected the wetlands. Stephen Syphax (202-690-5160), Chief of the Resource Management Division of National Capital Parks East, will lead the walk and explain the history, how the marsh was restored and the results. Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens is just off I-295 on the west side. Directions: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/wash/dc95.htm>.

rent DMWP publication efforts center on damselflies and dragonflies (= odonates). Dr. Oliver Flint (Smithsonian Institution) has confirmed the identities of the some 800 specimens, and he and I will be analyzing the specimens further and writing a paper about their abundances and locations in the Preserve. For unknown reasons, the traps collected only 10 species of the scores of expected DMWP species. It would be great to have an odonate specialist roam around DMWP to produce a full DMWP species list. According to intrepid odonatologist Richard Orr, about 80 odonate species are known from Washington, D.C.

Edward M. Barrows, Professor of Biology; Director, Laboratory of Entomology and Biodiversity; Director, Georgetown University Center for the Environment. Department of Biology, Reiss Building Suite 406, Georgetown U., Box 571229, Wash., D.C. 20057.

FODM Dues Will Increase on July 1

Have you renewed your membership in the Friends of Dyke Marsh for 2008? If not, now's the time. To cover our operational costs, dues will go up from \$10 to \$15 a year on July 1, the first increase in many years and still a real bargain. The mailing label for this issue of *The Marsh Wren* tells you your current status. If the number listed after your name is 2008 or later or is LM (life member), you're up-to-date. If the number is 2007 or earlier, renew now and save \$5. Of course, you could also contribute a little more to help us preserve and restore Dyke Marsh. Please welcome our new members:

LIFE MEMBERS

Delegate Brian Moran - Guy M. Thrift - Judith Uehlein

And the following new FODM members:

Brenda Gail Brown and Fred Brewer, Bonnie Coe, Thelma Dalmas, Anita Drummond, Valerie Eastwood, Glenn and Harriet Fatzinger, Arthur Henderson, Freeman Jones, Karl Hess and Camille Kurtz, Per Jartby, Peter and Alison Lattu, Harvey and Claudine Leifert, Eileen Martin, John and Betty Marie McIntyre, Kim Megginson, Dietrich Roesler, Wendin Smith and Alex Kraus, Dixie Sommers, Robert Surovell, Scott Surovell, Eleanor Whitaker and Matthew Shallbetter.

Let's Attack Invasives

The NPS will conduct training sessions this spring for volunteers to learn how to reduce invasive plants in Dyke Marsh. This is a great opportunity to partner with NPS and restore Dyke Marsh. To volunteer, e-mail gbooth123@aol.com. Check www.fodm.org for dates.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks at Dyke Marsh



Bird walks are held every Sunday morning, all year. 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. Photo by Ed Eder.

FODM Meeting Schedule for 2008

The FODM Board of Directors has established the schedule of membership meetings for calendar year 2008. A change in the meeting start time was also approved. The meetings will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Huntley Meadows Park Visitors Center, 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, VA 22306. They are scheduled for May 14, September 17 and November 19. The meetings are free and all are welcome.

FODM Membership - Dues and Contributions

Support the Friends of Dyke Marsh by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Benefits include the Friends' quarterly publication, *The Marsh Wren*; quarterly membership meetings with knowledgeable speakers; Sunday morning bird walks and notification of activities in and around the marsh. Most importantly, your membership lends your voice in support of Dyke Marsh, our local natural treasure. To renew your membership, please send your tax-deductible contribution, payable to FODM, P.O. Box 7183, Alexandria, Virginia 22307. The annual dues are \$10.00 per household; \$250.00 for life membership for an individual. Additional contributions are most welcome. These help defray FODM's operating costs and support special programs and research. The mailing label on this *Marsh Wren* indicates membership status. Next to your name, one of the following will be indicated: LM — life member; *— complimentary copy; 07, 08, etc. — the year your membership expires. If the date indicated is 07 or earlier, please renew right away to keep *The Marsh Wren* coming and to continue your support of Dyke Marsh.

DUES AMOUNT..... \$ _____
ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION..... \$ _____
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED..... \$ _____

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE ____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER _____
EMAIL ADDRESS _____

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

Demystifying Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve: A Brief Overview

BY DR. EDD BARROWS

Friends of Dyke Marsh President Booth kindly invited me to write some biological articles about Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (DMWP). Who could resist? This is the first of the articles. In future articles, I plan to tell you more about DMWP arthropods.

There is so much to study and think about regarding beautiful DMWP. Since I'm so involved with the Georgetown University Center for the Environment now, I tend to think a lot about the long-term health of our whole Earth and DMWP as part of that health. In view of the serious global change now insulting our planet, researchers need to monitor health of invaluable places like DMWP on a yearly basis, noting species present and their abundances and habitat changes. The Preserve has a highly valuable, long-term data base on birds, and lists of its vascular plants and other vertebrates. My lab has been able to put a list of many of DMWP's arthropods on line and, as time allows, will add more to the list. Go to <http://biodiversity.georgetown.edu/files/informationfile.cfm?title=dykemarshintro>.

However, so many other kinds of DMWP organisms remain to be studied. Evidently, there is not even basic information (species lists) of DMWP archaeans, bacteria,



Dr Edd Barrows leads a group of students in study along Haul Road in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Robert Smith.

fungi (including lichens), nonvascular plants, and protists. Bacteriologists have told me that most organisms probably harbor one, or more, unique bacterial species. This adds up to thousands of such species in DMWP, which are key players in its ecosystem. Some of you might remember that in 1998 and 1999, my lab ran six black-net, Townes-style Malaise traps in DMWP. Students and I emptied the traps about

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