

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

SPRING 2018



FODM Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, May 9, at 7:30 p.m., Huntley Meadows Park, Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306. Phone 703 768-2525. Free to all.

2018 Meetings

September 12, November 14

Calendar of Events

FODM has an active spring and summer schedule of events, programs, lectures and volunteer opportunities. For a complete list of dates, times and details, see calendar p. 7.

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Butterflies and Climate Change

Testing Model Predictions Using Northern Virginia Data

Join the Friends at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9 at Huntley Meadows Park, when Georgetown University biologist Dr. Leslie Reis will give a presentation on butterflies and how they are responding to climate change.

She says, "Understanding how species respond to climate change, both now and in the future is one of the most important questions in ecology and conservation today." Her team rears caterpillars in her lab at different temperatures to try and understand how they may respond to climate change. The main butterfly species she works with are the monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), the Baltimore checkerspot (*Euphydryas phaeton*) and the silver-spotted skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*).

She will summarize her work with all three species and especially focus on rearing experiments she's done on the silver-spotted skipper. These experi-



Monarch butterfly lands on a milkweed plant in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

ments can be used to predict emergence timing and number of generations that should occur in different regions and climates.

Dr. Reis increasingly relies on data collected by citizen science volunteers to help answer questions about changing

MEETING (continued on page 2)

Dyke Marsh Restoration Update

On March 27, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), on a five to two vote, approved a permit for the National Park Service to begin part of the Dyke Marsh restoration project. Generally, the restoration project in the permit application has two parts: (1) construction of a 1,500-foot breakwater to replicate the former promontory that protected the marsh and (2) restoration of 5.45 acres of wetland lost to dredging. VMRC approved the 1,500-foot riprap breakwater and stipulated that work on that can begin soon.

However, citing concerns about the impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation, VMRC only approved 1.5 acres of resto-



Restoration is needed to replace lost acreage in the marsh. Photo: Ned Stone

ration, about one fourth of what NPS sought approval for and a small fraction of the 40 acres originally envisioned in

RESTORATION (continued on page 2)

Everybody's Effort Counts

FODM has several activities coming up soon and there's an opportunity for everyone to give back and learn about our favorite wetland preserve. Be sure to see our calendar on page 7 for our nature walks and other programs. We especially hope you will volunteer to help us plant native plants on May 9 and May 19 along Haul Road and be part of our invasive plants "weed whacking" team, one time or more.



FODM volunteers with the NPS rangers plant native plants along Haul Road. Photo by Glenda Booth

MEETING (continued from page 1)

distributions at regional, continental and even global scales. She will show how she builds those predictions and how she is testing them with field data, including 25 years of data from the surveys led by FODMer and Auduboner Jim Waggener for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See related story on page 4 in this issue. Dr. Reis is an Assistant Professor in Georgetown University's Department of Biology.

This talk is co-sponsored by the American Horticultural Society, the Washington Area Butterfly Club, the Monarch Teacher Network, the Fairfax Master Naturalists, Virginia Native Plant Society/Potowmack Chapter, the Garden Club of Waynwood and the Hollin Hills Garden Club.

The program, free to all, will start at 7:30 p.m. May 9 at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center of Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria 22306. If you use a GPS device to find the park, enter the street address, not the park's name.

RESTORATION (Continued from page 1)

phase one of NPS's 2014 restoration plan, a plan that also envisions restoring up to 150 acres in future phases.

"We are very disappointed," said Doug Jacobs of NPS's National Capital Region office. "Restoring one and a half acres falls far short of our goal and it does not meet

the Congressional directive to restore Dyke Marsh. Restoration was also a key purpose of the Hurricane Sandy grant. Nonetheless, we still hope to advance the project."

In addition to Jacobs, FODMers Glenda Booth, Katherine Wychulis and Jessie Strother gave supportive testimony at the hearing. No one spoke against the application. We will give updates in future newsletters and on our website.

Editor's Note: See pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter for more on FODM's and the National Park Service's testimony. Note the special INSERT to this newsletter providing excerpts from comments supporting the restoration of the marsh. They dramatize the many aspects of Dyke Marsh that draw people to it so forcefully.



More evidence of the urgent need for restoration as erosion continues to remove acres of land. Photo by Glenda Booth

"Conservation is the foresighted utilization, preservation and . . . renewal of forests, waters, lands and minerals, for the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time."

-- Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the United States Forest Service, 1905-1910

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President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Every spring, I pull out my worn copy of *Spring in Washington*, Louis Halle's 1947 tribute to nature's unfolding along the Potomac River. Halle biked from

Washington, D.C., in the early morning and explored the multiple "layers" of the outside world, including the marsh. He observed that the news media reported the arrival of "a French functionary," but not the arrival of birds like phoebes, thrushes and marsh wrens. He celebrated the "invisible orchestra," birds "coming in chorus from every direction." After his "winter hibernation," he commented, that he "had forgotten the immeasurable richness and continuance of life. This recollected smell of fresh loam in my nostrils is the smell of eternity itself," he wrote. So, let's all go out and smell!

Spring brings more than olfactory excitement in Dyke Marsh. Spatterdock and pickerel weed emerge from the muck to bloom. On a snowy March 21, sharp-eyed FODMers Jennifer Smith and Laura Sebastianelli spotted four Wilson's snipes in Dyke Marsh west. Given the birds' cryptic coloration and secretive nature, they can be hard to see. Ed Eder photographed red-necked grebes and beautiful, returning wood ducks in early March. We think there are three active bald eagle nests in the preserve.

"Our" ospreys are back. Ed first saw a male osprey on March 15 and wrote, "Based on his left iris defect, it ap-



Ospreys came back to Dyke Marsh in mid-March; this one carrying a fish. Photo: Ed Eder

pears to be the same male who has 'owned' this territory for nine years running. The arrival date is about a week later than usual and could be due to the cooler weather which delays the yellow perch run. . . Male yellow perch begin the run first, followed by females."

The eBird website lists the Dyke Marsh Wild-

life Preserve as among the top ten eBird "hotspots" in Virginia ranked by number of species reported in eBird for all years. The other nine are all on the Eastern Shore or lower Chesapeake Bay "so Dyke Marsh is unique among the top ten," FODMer Dixie Sommers reported.

Restoration

Dyke Marsh restoration got a qualified "go-ahead" on March 27 when the Virginia Marine Resources Commission approved NPS's permit application. We discuss this in our article in this issue.

We hope many FODMers will help us restore native plants to the cleared land across from Dead Beaver Beach.

See our article in this issue. This is an ambitious and long-term undertaking and we need volunteers to give whatever time you can, once or ongoing. We hope that by starting to replace the massive invasive plant infestation, we can create more biodiversity, attract more native insects, birds and other wildlife and enhance our outdoor experiences. Several FODMers made generous donations to buy native plants and we hope more will.

A Cleaner River

Alexandria will soon submit to Virginia a plan to re-vamp its combined sewer system and stop sending around 11 million gallons of untreated sewage into the river during most rainfalls. Thanks to Dixie Sommers for representing FODM on the stakeholder group.

The Potomac Conservancy gave the Potomac River a B grade on March 28, up from a B- in 2016, a C in 2013 and a D in 2011. The report is encouraging but cautions that we have more work ahead. The Conservancy's Hedrick Belin said, "For the first time in generations, we are within reach of enjoying a healthy, thriving Potomac River. . . It's taken decades of hard work to strengthen water protections and undo the damage wrought by reckless polluters. We're at a critical tipping point and there's more work to be done. Polluted runoff, rapid deforestation and new attacks on water protections threaten to return dangerous pollution to local waters." The report also cites as problems invasive blue and flathead catfish and declines in tree plantings along vulnerable streams and creeks.

Bird and wildlife breeding and nesting are well underway. We believe we have three active bald eagle nests and many Dyke Marsh visitors are delighting in watching and photographing the "child rearing." While spring is a time of renewal and hope, we must remember the wise words of one of our founders, Ed Risley who wrote in 1995, "Dyke Marsh today remains a natural oasis in the urban landscape but is always under threat."

Hope to see you at our FODM events and in Dyke Marsh very soon.

Glenda C. Booth

Glenda C. Booth is the president of the Friends of Dyke Marsh and active in conservation issues in Virginia.



Pickerelweed (*Pontedria cordata*) emerges to bloom in Dyke Marsh in the spring. Photo by Glenda Booth

Dyke Marsh's Lepidoptera and Odonata

BY JESSICA STROTHER, Survey Coordinator

In 2017, FODM volunteer naturalists, under the leadership of Jim Waggener, documented the species and numbers of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies (Lepidoptera and Odonata) in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (see story in The Marsh Wren, Spring 2017). The project's objective was the same as in 2016, to compile an accurate documentation of target species in Dyke Marsh and several areas nearby. We surveyed from April through October, once a month in the morning and included additional confirmed sightings from other visits.

Under our National Park Service permit, we cannot capture or collect specimens. The results of the surveys are as follows:

- 13 butterfly species were added to the 2016 list, to bring the overall, two-year total to 38.
- In 2016 and 2017, we identified 20 dragonflies and nine damselfly species.



The Dion skipper represented a new record for any GWMP property. Photo by Ed Eder

A few highlights include a new record of Dion skipper (*Euphyes dion*), not previously documented on any George Washington Memorial Parkway properties and a blue-faced meadowhawk dragonfly (*Sympetrum ambiguum*), seen post season. One day on the boardwalk, we were treated

to a ruby-throated hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) competing with a swallowtail butterfly to get at a cardinal

flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*). We also saw dragonflies chasing their prey on the wing and butterflies looking for their host plants.

Looking at the overall numbers of species and individuals documented, one knowledgeable observer has noted that while the number of

species seen is better than expected, the abundance in each group of species may be low. The nature of a tidal freshwater marsh and adjacent swamp-forest could also be less productive habitat for these species. These issues reflect the importance of obtaining baseline data for this fauna.

It is exciting each year to see what will surface and to compare it to previous data collected. With support from FODM, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage program conducted a short-scale dragonfly and damselfly survey by canoe in the marsh in 2011. Christopher S. Hobson, the surveyor, identified 16 species, including four damselflies and 12 dragonflies. He wrote, "... it was suspected that a larger number of species could be found at Dyke Marsh with additional survey effort." We are building on the 2011 data.

With the hoped-for restoration of the marsh, we assume that over time, healthier and increased habitat for these and many other terrestrial and aquatic species will be available.

For people who have some identification skills, want to do in-depth learning and participate, contact me at strotherjessie@yahoo.com.



The swallowtail butterfly was one of 38 species seen on the survey. Photo by Ed Eder

Selling the GW Parkway?

The Trump Administration announced on February 12, 2018, that one option in their proposed infrastructure plan is to sell the George Washington Memorial Parkway to the private sector. The "Legislative Outline for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America," says, "Providing Federal agencies authority to divest of federal assets where the agencies can demonstrate an increase in value from the sale would optimize the taxpayer value for federal assets. To utilize this authority, an agency would delineate how proceeds would be spent and identify appropriate conditions under which sales would be made. An agency also would conduct a study or analysis to show the increase in value from divestiture." Among the examples listed are the



The George Washington Memorial Parkway as seen from the stone bridge south of Dyke Marsh. Photo by Glenda Booth

George Washington Memorial Parkway, Reagan National and Dulles International Airports.

We have not been able to determine if the parkway proposal would include selling all the units of the parkway like Dyke Marsh, Arlington Cemetery, Great Falls, U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, the Women in Military Service for American Memorial, Theodore Roosevelt Island, Jones Point Lighthouse and all the other lands and memorials of the parkway.

Congress authorized the construction of the parkway as a memorial to the nation's first president so presumably Congress would have to authorize such a sale. The fate of this proposal in the Congress is uncertain at this time.

Virginia Eighth District Congressman Don Beyer and others have expressed serious concerns.

Busy Little Blue-gray Birds

BY DIXIE SOMMERS, FODM Bird Walk Chair

You are taking a walk on the Haul Road in late April. You hear insistent raspy “spee spee spee” calls. Then you see them! Busy little blue-grayish birds with white breasts, long dark tails and a white eye-ring. As they flit quickly through the trees, you see flashes of white from their outer tail feathers. You have just encountered the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher!

These lively little birds are making their nest at Dyke Marsh, getting ready to lay 4 or 5 pale blue eggs with brown flecks. The nest is a small cup of lichens fastened together with spider webs. If you watch closely, you can see them carefully tucking the spider web into the right places.



A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher sits on a nest made from lichens fastened together with spider webs. Photo by Dixie Sommers

After both the male and female take turns on the eggs for about 2 weeks, the chicks hatch. The parents are busier than ever. They seem to be in constant motion, gleaning up and down trees and shrubs catching aphids, beetles, moths, flies, ants, spiders, caterpillars and other small insects. When they catch a larger insect, they may beat it against a branch before consuming it. Despite their

name, gnats are not a significant part of their diet.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers will spend the summer with us at Dyke Marsh, raising one or two broods of young. In the late summer they will head south to Florida, the Gulf Coast, Caribbean islands, Mexico and northern Central America.



This Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) shows its long dark tail and a white eye-ring. Photo by Dixie Sommers

Unfortunately, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are frequent victims of Brown-headed Cowbird brood parasitism at Dyke Marsh. Don't be surprised this summer if you see an adult Blue-gray Gnatcatcher feeding a much larger nestling or fledgling during your Haul Road walk. The youngster is a cowbird, which will grow to be many times the size of the tiny gnatcatcher. Adult Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are about 4 ¼ inches long and weigh 0.2 ounces; an adult cowbird is 8 ¼ inches and 1.7 ounces – twice as long and over 8 times as heavy!

Data on the population distribution shows that Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have expanded their breeding range northward, as much as 200 miles in the last century. Their population is stable or perhaps expanding, according to the National Audubon Society.

FODM and NPS Officials Testified at the Restoration Hearing

President Glenda Booth, two FODM Board of Directors members and Doug Jacobs of the National Park Service (NPS) spoke in support of Dyke Marsh restoration in testimony before the Virginia Marine Resources Commission on March 27, 2018, in Newport News, Virginia. The full testimony of all four appears on FODM's website.

Here is a summary of their comments:

Glenda Booth: President Booth provided a history of Dyke Marsh, emphasizing the urgency of restoration and the U.S. Congress directives of 1959, 1974, 2007 and 2009 to restore the marsh. The Virginia General Assembly has supported Dyke Marsh's restoration. She cited the \$3.8 million in public dollars on studies, engineering plans and other work spent to date to get to this point and noted that the Department of Interior awarded the National Park Service a \$24.9 million grant explicitly for restoration. In addition, she noted that approximately \$5 million is available from other sources. She listed peer-reviewed studies of Dyke Marsh, including the critical 2010 and 2013 U.S. Geological Survey studies, which were inexplicably not included in the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences report to VMRC. The USGS studies, she said, are the “very foundation” for the restoration. USGS scientists concluded that Dyke Marsh will

completely disappear by 2035 without action. Glenda appealed to the VMRC to fulfill their commitments under state law and the Chesapeake Bay Agreements.

FODM Board Member Katherine Wychulis:

Dyke Marsh “at one time was estimated to be as much as 380 acres . . . today, the Marsh is approximately 50 acres. . . the bottom line is that we are debating the loss of several acres of hydrilla as compared to preventing a freshwater tidal marsh from disappearing.” She examined the ecological services of wetlands as productive habitats and flood buffers, especially important in Dyke Marsh, and questioned an approach that would save the federally-classified noxious weed hydrilla rather than the important “potential gain of tidal marsh wetland.”



FODM Board Member Jessie Strother supported Dyke Marsh restoration at the March 27 hearing. Photo by G. Booth

HEARING (Continued on page 6)

Meet the Plants of Dyke Marsh - Sweet Cicely

BY PATRICIA P. SALAMONE

The lacy white flower clusters of sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*) reveal the plant's resemblance to other members of the family *Apiaceae* (also called *Umbelliferae*), which includes Queen Anne's lace, carrots, and parsley as well as the poisonous water hemlock. Other common names for the plant are sweetroot, Clayton's sweetroot, and bland sweet Cicely.

It's a perennial herb, typically growing 1-3 feet tall. The stems are covered with long, soft hairs. It's not particularly a wetland plant (its wetland indicator status in our region is facultative upland, meaning it may grow in wetlands but usually grows in non-wetlands) but it likes moist woods and wood edges, and can be found along the Haul Road. It is native to most of the eastern U.S. and Canada, as far west as the great plains.

The plant has very pretty, fernlike leaves. The leaves are compound, with multiple divisions; the leaflets are ovate and are lobed with toothed edges. The lower leaves are large (up to three inches long) and have long stalks; the upper leaves are smaller with shorter stalks, and are less deeply lobed than the lower leaves. The leaves, like the stems, are hairy, especially on the underside.

Sweet cicely is a relatively early bloomer, flowering in May and June. The small white flowers grow in flat clusters or umbels on stalks that arise from the axils of the upper leaves. Each umbel has three to six umbellets (love that word!) with four to seven flowers each. The individual flowers are quite complex for something so tiny, having five petals, five stamens, and two styles. The flowers mature into graceful looking curved seedpods about a half inch

long that persist into the winter; when ripe, the pods turn dark brown and split into two seeds.

The genus name *Osmorhiza* comes derived from the Greek words "osme," meaning fragrance, and "rhiza," meaning root, and the roots of sweet cicely are

said to have an anise-like odor when bruised. But—as one of the common names of *Osmorhiza claytonii*, bland sweet cicely, might suggest—the fragrance of sweet cicely is fainter than that of other family members like its close relative aniseroot (*Osmorhiza longistylis*). The specific epithet *claytonii* honors the early American botanist John Clayton. The common name sweet cicely probably comes not as a diminutive of the name Cecilia, but from the Greek "seselis," an ancient name for an umbelliferous plant.

To me, this plant, although wild, has what I can only describe as an herb-gardeny look, which fits with its herb-gardeny common name. It shares that common name with a similar European plant, *Myrrhis odorata*, often grown in herb gardens, including those of colonial America.

Reference: Seventeenth Century New England Garden Herbs, Ruth B. McDowell, Saugus Ironworks National Historic Site, Massachusetts.



The small white flowers of the sweet cicely grow in flat clusters. Photo credit: Stephan Bloodworth, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Ctr.

HEARING (continued from page 5)



National Park Service official Douglas Jacobs summarized why restoration of Dyke Marsh is an "incredibly important project." Photo by Glenda Booth

FODM Board Member Jessica Strother:

"I have . . . observed the almost total lack of marsh wrens today, an iconic species, that at one time were in the marsh by the hundreds. Some of us believe that a combination of toxins in the river, unnatural wave action and erosion have eliminated the bird's prey base." And

she poignantly noted, "In 1961, the regional Audubon Naturalist Society in its Field List of Birds of the District of Columbia reported. . . Downstream from Belle Haven, is the last of the great river marshes left near Washington. Hundreds of long-billed marsh wrens nest here, with equally common red-winged blackbirds, and many least bitterns and

king rails."

Douglas Jacobs, Associate Regional Director, Facilities, Design, and Construction, National Capital Region, National Park Service: Jacobs summarized why restoration of Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is "an incredibly important project to NPS and the local community", stating, that restoration "has a congressional mandate, is supported by public money, has broad support of elected officials and is a feel good project. . . saving a rapidly disappearing natural resource and the culmination of years of advocacy" and is the result of "considerable study and engineering" and is the "Environmental Impact Study's preferred alternative -- stabilization and restoration." He explained that NPS has made many changes to address concerns raised and recognized "concern about construction details and impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation," but noted, "We believe that the ecological value of the restored marsh far outweighs the impacts to SAV." His testimony reviewed Dyke Marsh's history and in some detail the path of the NPS plan for restoration and the design refinements incorporated after many suggestions. His summary: "If the project does not go forward as designed, another \$23 million will be lost. And so will the last chance to save Dyke Marsh."

Ospreys Delight All

“Our” ospreys (*Pandio haliaetus*) returned in mid-March and added sticks and other materials to their jumbled, unkempt nests along the Potomac River shoreline. Their many “addicted” fans returned too, to watch these striking brown and white raptors mate, incubate eggs and raise their young. Dyke Marsh has around nine active osprey nests most years. The very people-tolerant pair near the Belle Haven Marina boat ramp is particularly popular, easy to see from Belle Haven Park’s south shoreline.



This osprey is adding a stick to its nest along the shoreline at Dyke Marsh. Photo credit: Hien H. Nguyen

Ospreys have what ornithologists call, site fidelity. Generally, pairs mate for life and return to the same nest site every spring. The same male osprey has mated and raised young for at least nine years at the marina site. Expert birder Ed Eder knows it is the same bird because through his spotting scope he can see a familiar defect on the bird’s left iris, a tiny spot that Ed has seen every year of the last nine.

Residents of Alexandria’s Porto Vecchio are keenly watching “their” nesting pair too. At nearby Walt Whitman Middle School, atop the baseball field’s lightpole, a dutiful, repeat pair is bringing fishy morsels to the gaping mouths of their hungry chicks.

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

Welcome New FODM Members

Welcome **new members** Kathleen Aucoin, Karen Barnes, Susan Dungan, Nancy and Fred Fernald, Jane Gamble, Kushantiani Golden, Jim Hayes, Jack and Susan Jeter, Hien H. Nguyen, Cathy Noonan, Chaya Siegelbaum and Jim Voeller.

And a big welcome to our new **Life Members** Lori Bowes and Axel Lucca. Thank you!

Calendar of Events

Most events do require registration. All are free. Check www.fodm.org or our Facebook page or email info@fodm.org for more information.



May 9 and May 19 - 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Volunteers will plant native plants along the Haul Road. (Rain date is May 16). Meet at the Haul Road entrance.

May 9 - 7:30 p.m. Dr. Leslie Reis will speak about butterflies, host plants and climate change. For more info, see p. 1.

May 25 - Breeding bird survey begins, led by L. Cartwright.

June 2 - 10 a.m.-3 p.m. NPS will host National Trails Day with exhibits at Belle Haven Park.

June 9 - 10 a.m. Naturalist Charles Smith will lead an ecology walk along the Haul Road. Meet at Haul Road entrance.

July 7 - 9:30 a.m. Jessica Strother leads a butterfly and dragonfly walk along Haul Road. Meet at south Belle Haven parking lot. Limit 15. Register email strotherjessie@yahoo.com.

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.

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 the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and our efforts to advocate for full restoration of the marsh. 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, 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..... \$ _____
 TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED..... \$ _____
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Please address any questions or comments about *The Marsh Wren* to Dorothy McManus 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).

Restoring Native Plants

BY GLENDA BOOTH

FODM is undertaking a project to restore a small part of Dyke Marsh by planting native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants along the Haul Road trail and to more actively control non-native plants. Native plants support many wildlife species with which they evolved and provide food, cover and places for rearing young. Most ecologists maintain that habitats of native flora and fauna are healthier habitats than those with non-natives. In preparation for planting, National Park Service staffers have cleared a .65-acre piece of land. See our article in the last issue of The Marsh Wren, Winter 2018.

The land portion of the Preserve, especially along the Haul Road trail, is overrun with invasive plants like porcelainberry vine, stilt grass, English ivy, bush and vining honeysuckle, Asian bittersweet and garlic mustard. The area has lost much of its biodiversity. Because the trail is on disturbed land and made of fill, it is especially vulnerable to invasives. More than a decade of largely volunteer suppression efforts has had limited success.



The Pandorus sphinx moth (*Eumorpha pandorus*), wing-span of 3 ¼ to 4 ½ inches, on bear's foot plant (*Smallanthus uvedalius*). Females lay eggs on host plants, primarily grapes and Virginia creeper.

We will be using student and adult volunteers to put in hundreds of plants over several days. To complete this project, FODM needs (1) funds and (2) volunteers. The number of plants we put in will depend in part on available funds. We have received three grants and are pursuing more. We need volunteers to help plant plants and then upon completion of the project, to help monitor success and control invasive plants.

FODM is partnering with the Park Service, Earth Sangha and the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia on this project. Bringing native plants back to the preserve is one of FODM's contributions to restoring Dyke Marsh.

We hope you will send a tax-deductible donation to us at P.O. Box 7183, Alexandria, VA 22307 or visit www.fodm.org and click on "Donate." Please put "For Native Plants" in the memo line of your check or in the "Add a Note" box on the donation page. You have to log in to donate online. If you need username or password help, email info@fodm.org. If you would like to help put in plants, email us at info@fodm.org.

The
Marsh Wren

The Friends of Dyke Marsh
P.O. Box 7183
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INSERT

Many Voice Support for Restoration

In the winter 2018 issue of *The Marsh Wren*, we printed excerpts from the many letters supporting the National Park Service's permit application to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) to restore Dyke Marsh. As promised, here are more. These comments dramatize the importance of the marsh in the life of the community from multiple viewpoints.

Other officials who have expressed support for Dyke Marsh restoration include **U.S. Senator Tim Kaine**; former **U.S. Congressman Jim Moran**; former **U.S. Congressman John Dingell**; former **U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell**; former **U.S. National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis**; the **Fairfax County Board of Supervisors** and the **Alexandria City Council**.

U.S. Senator Mark R. Warner: . . . *strengthening the wetland will help stem flooding in the region and protect against hurricanes, tropical storms, and other natural disasters. Without intervention . . . Virginia will risk losing one of its most vital natural resources.* . . **U.S. Congressman A. Donald McEachin:** *Congress has recognized the importance of restoring and preserving Dyke Marsh for more than sixty years. . . . In 2013, the Department of the Interior allocated nearly thirty million to the National Park Service for preservation and restoration efforts Restoring and preserving Dyke Marsh is a key component of the larger Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort.*

Virginia Senate Minority Leader Richard L. Saslaw: *I wish to add my voice for support of the approval . . . submitted by the National Park Service to begin the first phase of Dyke Marsh restoration.* **Virginia Senators Adam P. Ebbin, Scott A. Surovell and George Barker and Virginia House of Delegates Members Paul Krizek, Mark D. Sickles and Mark Levine:** . . . *we urge you . . . to begin the first phase of Dyke Marsh restoration. . . . The Virginia Code supports "no net loss of existing wetland acreage and functions," to be realized through approaches described in the statute, wetland creation or restoration" . . . Funding is available for this project and the viability of the restoration plan is backed by many studies. . . Both Congress and the General Assembly have expressed support for Dyke Marsh restoration.* **Virginia Senator Barbara A. Favola:** *"I have many constituents who visit the marsh regularly, use it as an outdoor classroom and understand the ecological services that healthy wetlands provide. A restored Dyke Marsh can provide even more environmental services. . . .* **Virginia House of Delegates Member Richard C. (Rip) Sullivan, Jr.:** *I . . . echo the sentiments of my colleagues in the Virginia General Assembly in supporting the VMRC approval . . . to begin the first phase of Dyke Marsh restoration.* **Virginia House of Delegates Member Kaye Kory:** . . . *urge you . . . to approve . . . the first phase of Dyke Marsh restoration. . . The Virginia Code supports "no net loss of existing wetland acreage and functions" through wetland creation and restoration.* **Virginia House of Delegates Member David Bulova:** *I would like to join several of my fellow Fairfax delegation members and add my full support . . . requesting the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to approve the first phase of Dyke Marsh restoration* **Virginia House of Delegates Member Patrick A. Hope:** *In 2016, the Virginia General Assembly approved Senate Joint Resolution 190 recognizing Dyke Marsh as a "valuable natural resource" and supporting restoration of this wetland. . . Please approve permit 170921 to restore Dyke Marsh.*

Lead Ecologist and Biodiversity Focal Point, World Bank George C. Ledec, Ph.D.: . . . *Tidal Fresh Water Marsh (TFWM would expand under the Project and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), would be somewhat reduced. TFWM stands out as a higher-value ecosystem than the SAV. . . TFWM is a scarcer habitat . . . TFWM is more biologically diverse than SAV . . . at Dyke Marsh the TFWM is comprised mainly of native plant species, whereas the SAV is dominated by one non-native species. . . . the SAV around Dyke Marsh is dominated by Hydrilla Hydrilla verticillata . . . classified as a Federal Noxious Weed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.* **President and Operator of the Belle Haven Marina George Stevens:** *As the operator of the Belle Haven Marina on the northern edge of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve . . . I have personally witnessed the total erosion of once forested islands in the marsh. For many people, Belle Haven Marina is the only way to access the river . . . Dyke Marsh, like many wetlands, is a fish nursery and provides habitat for 38 known fish species . . . Dyke Marsh's disappearance would be a loss to the many recreational anglers, sailors and recreational users of the river.* **Chair, Environment and Recreation Committee, Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations Catherine C. Ledec:** *Waiting, delaying or not moving forward with the project will potentially result in adverse impacts from flooding up to and including the time when in 2035 Dyke Marsh will be gone.* **President and CEO, George Washington's Mount Vernon Douglas Bradburn, PhD:** *I write to stress the importance of restoring Dyke Marsh and to note its significance to George Washington's Mount Vernon. As early as the 1880s, proposals emerged to build a commemorative national roadway to Mount Vernon . . . In 1928, Congress authorized the construction of a memorial highway. . . to preserve and enhance the Potomac River valley, to produce a naturalistic parkway landscape and to keep both banks of the river in public ownership. Dyke Marsh is a major component of the naturalistic, undeveloped shoreline landscape.* **Chairman, Fairfax County History Commission Anne Stuntz:** *We believe that restoration will bring the marsh closer to its historic size and help restore the historic nature of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. . . . The designers sought to integrate the road's design with the undulating terrain following natural contours, winding in gentle curves, and to feature natural areas and scenic vistas of the Potomac River. The George Washington Memorial Parkway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places a severely reduced marsh or a shoreline with no marsh would not be consistent with the intentions of Congress. . . .* **Virginia Conservation Network's Mary Rafferty:** *With almost \$30 million available, this restoration project presents Virginia the rare opportunity to take a monumental step toward fulfilling its commitments under the Chesapeake Bay Agreement to preserve and to restore wetlands.*

The following people provided supportive comments at the Fairfax County Wetlands Board's September 12, 2017, public hearing: **Catherine Ledec**, Mount Vernon Council of Citizen Associations and the Wellington Civic Association; **Betsy Martin**, Friends of Little Hunting Creek; **Monica Billger**, Audubon Naturalist Society; **Joseph Canny**, Porto Vecchio Condominium Association; **Stephen Beach**, River Towers Condominium Unit Owners Association; **Arina Van Breda**; **Donald and Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson**; **Jane and David Reese**; FODM Board members **Ned Stone**, **Ed Eder**, **Trudi Hahn** and **Katherine Wychulis**.