

# The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

WINTER 2013



## The Friends of Dyke Marsh

### FODM Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, March 3, at 2:00 p.m. (new time), Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306. Phone 703-768-2525. Free to all.

### Calendar of Events

March 18, 7 p.m., Frog Watch training, place TBA, see p.7.

April 6, 9 a.m., Potomac Watershed Cleanup, Haul Road.

April 20, 10 a.m., Earth Day - Raptor Demonstration at DM.

2013 Membership Meetings  
March 3, May 15, September 11, and November 13.

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## The World of Herps

### FODM Meeting to Feature Presentation on Herpetology

Join the Friends on March 3, 2 p.m., a Sunday afternoon -- a new day and time for our winter quarterly meeting -- and learn all about herpetology, the branch of zoology dealing with snakes, skinks, salamanders, geckos, lizards, frogs, crocodiles, alligators and more. Reptiles and amphibians have gotten a bad rap in some circles, but they are an important part of the mosaic of life. Our speaker will be Caroline Seitz, Director of Reptiles Alive and a member of the Virginia Herpetology Society. We will learn the basics of herptofauna and hear about today's challenges facing this group of animals. Caroline will also talk about the herp survey conducted in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve last May.

As a child, Caroline spent hours in swamps searching for snakes, frogs, insects and other creatures and she became a Virginia licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator



Caroline Seitz holds an Eastern garter snake. Photo by Glenda Booth.

at age 18. After graduating from George Mason University, Caroline worked as a park naturalist and as a "Snake Removal Technician."

Our talk is free and open to the public. Please come join us.

## Dyke Marsh Islands Get Official Names

The multi-agency U.S. Board of Geographic Names has given four islands in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve official names -- Angel, Bird, Coconut and Dyke Island.

As we reported in our summer 2012 issue, the Friends of Dyke Marsh suggested four different names -- Osprey, Marsh Wren, Kingbird and Cormorant Islands. Congressman Jim Moran and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors agreed with FODM's suggestions.

The Board accepted names recommended by the U.S. Geological Survey scientists who prepared the comprehensive 2010 study documenting the severe erosion occurring in Dyke Marsh (<http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1269/>) and entered the new names into the Geographic

Names Information System, the official repository (<http://geonames.usgs.gov>).

Commenting on the decision, Congressman

Moran said, "Dyke Marsh is one of Northern Virginia's treasured wetlands and deference should be given to local community and local government when it comes to naming geographic sites. The Friends of Dyke Marsh proposed thoughtful and appropriate names for the four islands and I am disappointed USGS rejected the recommendations. Moving forward, we must continue working to preserve Dyke



This is now officially called Dyke Island.

ISLANDS, (Continued on page 2)

# A Tribute to Mary Chambliss, FODM Board Member



Mary Chambliss  
Photo: Chambliss family.

## BY GLENDA BOOTH

Mary Chambliss, a devoted FODM Board member, passed away on January 8. She found great solace in nature and delighted in learning about Dyke Marsh's mysteries. Mary especially enjoyed nature walks. She organized FODM's quarterly programs and cheerfully greeted people as they arrived at every FODM meeting.

Mary had a long career at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), retiring in 2006 as Deputy Administrator for Export Credits in the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). She devoted her life to public service, to feeding people throughout the world. At her January 12 memorial service, a work colleague called her the "mother of the world food program" and one of the first senior women in the FAS. Another described her as "the least pretentious powerful person I ever knew."

Her son, Dean, spoke of her "life well lived" and her "good humor." "Her last lesson was how to die with dignity and grace," he said.

Mary was from Buchanan, Virginia, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Roanoke College in economics and a Master's in government from George Washington University.

She is buried in Arlington Cemetery with her husband, the late Samuel E. Chambliss, who passed away in 2000. She is survived by her son, his wife, Pascoa, and three grandsons. The family suggests donations to the World Food Program ([usa.wfp.org](http://usa.wfp.org)) in her honor.

## ISLANDS, (Continued from page 1)

Marsh. Regardless of what the islands are named, they are important to the community."

Our 2012 article provides the rationale of the Board's decisions and for FODM's recommendations. Generally, FODM argued that the names should reflect the flora or fauna that are typically present and observed by those who know the area best.

The National Park Service told the board that they have "no objection" to the names recommended by USGS scientists. The website of the Board states that its goal is to "maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the federal government. . . In partnership with federal, state and local agencies, the Board provides a conduit through which uniform geographic name usage is applied and current names data are promulgated."

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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 editorial address above. Board members too, can receive mail at this address. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for managing our website ([www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)), and to Paula Sullivan and Ed Eder for their photography contributions to *The Marsh Wren* and website.

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Visit our website at

[www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)

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

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## President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

As the days lengthen, we have much to be thankful for – “our” Bald Eagles are courting and refurbishing nests and waterfowl are sporting their breeding hues. Spring will soon unfold and many “winged ambassadors” will migrate through or return. We have a new bulletin board near the south end of Dyke Marsh. Thank you, NPS.

In January, FODM lost a valued Board member, Mary Chambliss, a devoted volunteer who warmly welcomed all to our quarterly meetings. After retiring, Mary wanted to become more civically involved and fortunately, she chose the Friends of Dyke Marsh. We will miss her.

### Monarchs, Frogs and Raptors

Plan to attend our May 15 program at which Larry Brindza will tell you about his work tagging monarch butterflies during their fall migration through the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Here's a preview: Working from his “laboratory,” the back of his Volvo, Larry takes measurements and with surgical forceps, meticulously attaches a tiny sticker weighing one one-hundredth of a gram to the underside of the left hind wing of the monarch.

We will have a spring training session in frog identification on March 18, 7 p.m., partnering with the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. We will again co-sponsor a raptor demonstration on April 20, 10 a.m., with the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia and the NPS.

### Our Struggling River

Yet again comes a study reporting that the Potomac River is sick, titled Troubled Waters. The Potomac Conservancy says that non-point pollution is the “root cause” of the degradation along 51 percent of impaired stream miles, while agricultural practices contribute 37 percent. Unlike “point source” pollution discharged from a discrete site like a pipe, non-point pollution is diffuse and is often carried in stormwater flowing off impervious surfaces like roofs, parking lots and roads. Some findings: over half of the 2,500 stream miles designated for recreational use are impaired because of bacteria; almost one third of 3,000 stream miles designated for aquatic life have high sediment loads; and around half of the 600 stream miles designated for fish consumption are “too polluted with chemicals” to produce fish safe to eat.

The Conservancy targets pollutants like excess phosphorus, sediment, chemicals from road salt, PCBs, toxic metals, pesticides, herbicides and pharmaceuticals. Read

the study at [www.potomac.org/site/SONR\\_2012/index.php](http://www.potomac.org/site/SONR_2012/index.php).

### Birds in Trouble

Another report, from the American Bird Conservancy, found that more than one third of “American” birds need conservation attention. This study covers the full range of bird diversity in all 50 states and territories and is the first national assessment to also rank the status of subspecies: regional forms of species that differ in appearance and sometimes in habitat choice and migration patterns.

“There are more than twice as many subspecies recognized as there are full species, so these data provide a more complete picture than we have ever had previously,” said the principal author and ABC Vice President, Mike Parr.

“In addition, birds that are today classified as subspecies may tomorrow be re-classified as full species . . . ” Read more at [www.abcbirds.org/checklist](http://www.abcbirds.org/checklist).

### Parks Shortchanged

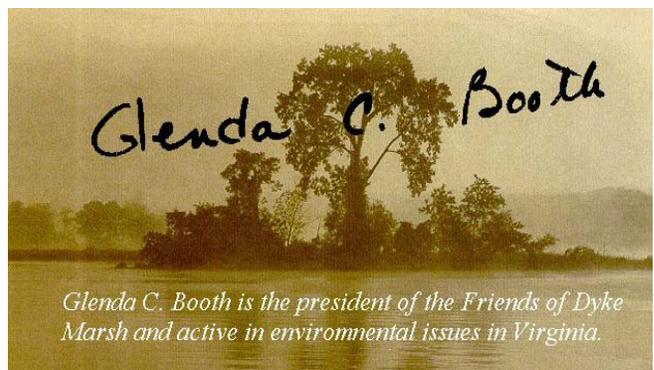
Congressional budget-wrangling means storm clouds for parks. One estimate predicted that national parks would be cut around \$200 million if the “sequester” occurs, a reduction that could eliminate as many as 9,000 NPS personnel, says the National Parks and Conservation Association, despite these facts:

- National parks are 1/14th of one percent of the federal budget.
- Since 2002, national parks have been cut by 15 %.
- 92% of Americans want Congress to fund national parks.

Here's some inspiration from Anne Thompson of NBC News: “The environment is not just something we can afford to think about when we hike in the mountains or walk along the beach. The environment is where we live. It is the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the fuel that powers our lives and jobs.”



A sticker is attached to the wing of a monarch butterfly. Photo by Glenda Booth.



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

# Dyke Marsh's Mystery and History

## Scene of the Legal and Illegal Over the Years

*This article, based on a presentation by Matthew Virta to the 90 people attending the November 14 meeting of the Friends of Dyke Marsh, was first published by Belle-Haven.Patch.com (now GreaterAlexandria.Patch.com). Matthew Virta is the Cultural Resources Program Manager for the George Washington Memorial Parkway, U.S. National Park Service.*

### Part I: Hell Hole, Diking and Occupation

From diking to daunting escapades, from bootlegging to railroading, the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve has had a fascinating human history.

Dyke Marsh is a wooded, watery, green nature preserve along the parkway at the Potomac River's edge to most people, a treasured freshwater tidal wetland, alive with beavers, birds, muskrats, snakes, dragonflies and more. In addition to its rich natural history, Dyke Marsh has had an intriguing – and a bit nefarious -- human history.

#### From Native Americans to the Civil War

Cultural resource experts have documented Native Americans' presence, hunting and fishing in mid-Atlantic wetland environments during the Archaic Period, 9,500 to 1,000 B.C. The Dyke Marsh area was used for subsistence hunting and gathering, archaeologists have concluded, based on Native American artifacts found in the area.

English explorer Captain John Smith encountered many Native American villages on his 1608 voyage up the

Potomac River and noted them on his map of Virginia. These villages were home to Algonquian-speaking Indians, including some Algonquian-speaking Nacotchtank and Tauxenent living just north and south of the present-day Dyke Marsh.

In 1653, the British issued the first land patent in the Dyke Marsh area to Giles Brent for two tracts, including a "parcel of sunken land near Hunting Creek." This "sunken land" may have been the first recorded reference to what is now known as Dyke Marsh. In 1669, John Matthews got a patent for 1,600 acres along Great Hunting Creek, probably in-

cluding parts of Dyke Marsh. Surveys labeled the wetlands as "Swamp and Pocoson."

In the 17th and 18th centuries, many land transactions occurred through inheritances, repatents, leases and sales. Farming was widespread and the area was

planted, mostly in tobacco. By the 1740s, Hugh West owned an expanse that extended from the Potomac River marshes and along the south shoreline of Great Hunting Creek. West built a home and managed a plantation called West's Grove, a name that has survived to today in northern Mount Vernon.

In the early 1800s, Colonel Augustine Smith bought portions of West's Grove and began an ambitious attempt at "reclaiming" wetlands by building earthen dikes. After his death, ads in the Alexandria Gazette newspaper boasted the West Grove property as "embracing one of the most extensive and valuable river bottoms and pocosins in this country. . . . 350 acres were redeemed from the river by a dike constructed of earth and gravel drawn from the hills. A third has been cleared and cultivated." Virta explained that Smith's intent may have been to create conditions allowing sea-going vessels to unload closer to the shoreline of his property. The dikes ultimately failed.

The West Grove plantation was sold and resold and by 1854, Charles Johnston was growing several crops and raising livestock on a portion of Dyke Marsh. By the mid-1800s, the marsh had earned the name, "Hell Hole." The Alexandria Gazette in an August 10, 1858 article extolled, "Hell Hole is a grand, wild place, and, save for the miasm and mosquitoes which reign there pre-eminent, would be a magnificent abode for those fond of following the pursuits of Nimrod and Walton." (Nimrod was a mighty hunter in the Bible and Walton was Izaak Walton, the 17th century author of the Complete Angler.)

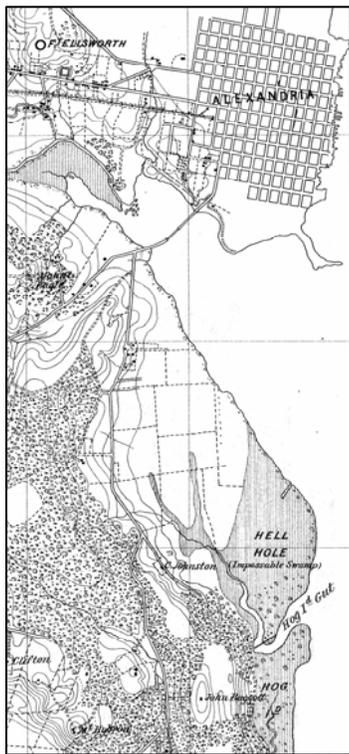
During the Civil War, Union troops occupied the city of Alexandria and controlled the Dyke Marsh area. The Union troops built forts to protect the capital city, including Fort Willard, then the southernmost fort, and in what is now the Belle Haven community. The troops most likely did not attempt to penetrate the mucky, impassable "Hell Hole."

### Part II: Bootlegging, Dredging and a National Park

After the Civil War, rowdy activities like drinking, gambling and "amorous pursuits" that had been tolerated in wartime were driven underground or to the river, Virta ex-



A view of marshland looking towards the capitol early last century. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.



This 1862 Civil War map marks the "Hell Hole" swamp. Map courtesy of NOAA.

plained, recreation that spawned the Potomac River ark boat or ark. Ostensibly a small house boat, these arks probably provided customers services beyond lodging. The arks were 24-foot-by-10-foot in size with a 12-inch draft and moored in the marsh and river where local, state and federal jurisdictional lines were fuzzy and law enforcement confusing. Also, some houses were built just off the Virginia shoreline on pilings, presumably supporting various daunting adventurers.

An early 20th century postcard advertises “Dyke” as a fishing and hunting “resort,” showing an ark moored against a surviving section of the Augustine Smith dike and connected by a small suspension bridge. Virta questions if hunting and fishing were the primary attractions, reporting that local lore has sustained tales of bootleggers operating stills in the wilds of Dyke Marsh, often visited in the blackness of the night by small skiffs commanded by armed individuals who would take products away for sale. A 1931 Washington Post article recounts that police raided Gus Quayle’s place on the Dyke near New Alexandria after watching him haul liquor from the bottom of the river and making a sale. After they arrested him, the police discovered 138 bottles of alleged home brew and seven pints of alleged liquor stashed in gunny sacks under the water.

In the early 1890s, the first developers moved into the area, just south of Great Hunting Creek. The New Alexandria Land and River Improvement Company bought 1,600 acres and began building houses and businesses, including the Carson Handle Company and Mount Vernon Spoke Company, which went bankrupt in the 1920s.



Postcard scene of The “Dyke” Resort, Alexandria, Virginia, circa 1907-1914. The image is from National Trust Library Historic Postcard Collection from University of Maryland.

Also in the 1890s, the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Railway was built, an electric rail line from Washington, D.C., to Mount Vernon estate with a stop known as “The Dyke.” The rail line paralleled the river in the Dyke Marsh area. Rail cars transported tourists to and from George Washington’s home and hauled produce from area farmers. Fredrick Tilp in his 1978 book, *This Was Potomac River*, wrote that several bawdy houses opened in New Alexandria concurrent with building the railroad. The New Alexandria Land and River Improvement Corporation then went bankrupt and one of its trustees, James Swartz, gave nearly 600 acres, including Dyke Marsh, to Pennsyl-



Dyke Marsh Pull-off aka Cigarette Turnaround. The photo is from the National Park Service Historic American Building-Historic American Engineering Record Survey.

vania’s Bucknell University. A 1913 Washington Star Rambler article focused on the diversity of birds in the wetlands.

Then came the highway builders. In 1928, Congress passed legislation authorizing a survey and construction of a memorial highway from Mount Vernon Estate to Arlington Memorial Bridge, which when completed became the first segment of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, today a national park, of which the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is a unit.

Parkway designers highlighted Dyke Marsh for its scenery and included a pull-off on the west side of the road for motorists to soak up marsh and river scenes, just north of what is today Morningside Lane. A legendary gentleman nicknamed “Cig” Dodson, essentially as a squatter, had lived, hunted, fished and operated a store and marina near the shoreline across from the pull-off. In the interest of fostering the memorial character directed by Congress, the National Park Service evicted Cig, but his legacy lives, said Virta, because the pull-off today is still known as Cigarette Turnaround.

During the 1930s, Bucknell University sold its Dyke Marsh land to the Smoot Sand and Gravel Corporation and for 40 years, Smoot dredged Dyke Marsh, dramatically reducing the size and destabilizing the wetland. Congress passed P.L. 86-41 in 1959 adding Dyke Marsh to the National Park Service system, but a compromise provision in the law allowed Smoot to continue removing sand and gravel until 1976. Congress was clear in its intent in preserving Dyke Marsh: “. . . so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount.”

Now, after 50 years, the National Park Service is preparing a restoration plan to ensure the long-term viability of the rapidly eroding marsh, documented by a 2010 U.S. Geological Survey study.

“Gone are the dredgers, highway builders, train men, land speculators, vice purveyors, farmers and native inhabitants to be replaced by nature lovers, park rangers and scientists, who share the mission of preserving this unique marsh environment,” Virta said in closing.

# Beavers Busy in Dyke Marsh

BY GLENDA BOOTH

Beavers make the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve their home, but no one knows how many are there. Freshly-chewed trees and lodges are clear evidence of beaver activity.

Beavers have girdled the large cottonwood on the island opposite the Belle Haven marina boat mooring area. The National Park Service has put chicken wire around this “iconic” tree to protect it from being completely cut down.

In the part of Dyke Marsh west of the Mount Vernon Parkway, beavers have built a dam and lodge. They and their activity are easily seen from River Towers. “The lodge is right where it’s been for a few years and it looks like the beavers are rebuilding their dam again,” Mary Jo Detweiler observed in December. “There are numerous mallards swimming in it and quacking happily,” she added. She is a River Towers resident and FODM Board member.

There’s also a large beaver lodge in the southern part of Dyke Marsh (see photo at right).

In our “sister” marsh, the non-tidal wetland in Huntley Meadows Park, beavers are building a lodge and attaching it to the beginning of the boardwalk. Park Manager Kevin Munroe, commenting on how easy it is to see beavers, said, “They are very cooperative at the moment.”

The last survey of beavers in the early 1990s found around 20 to 25 beavers in the park.

## Beaver Facts

Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) are North America’s largest rodents. In Virginia, they are found in the northern piedmont, mountains and coastal plain. They have dark brown fur, long incisors, short legs, webbed feet and a long, flat, scaly tail. Their front claws are adapted for digging and grasping tree limbs.

Beavers are usually three to four feet long and weigh between 30 to 75 pounds. They live six to 11 years. They



A freshly chewed tree felled on the boardwalk is evidence of recent beaver activity. Photo by Ned Stone.



This recently-constructed lodge in the southern part of Dyke Marsh is the largest ever seen according to the recollection of photographer Ned Stone.

have one litter a year between April and June and average three to five young. “The fundamental unit of population is a colony of four to eight related individuals with a home range size of eight acres,” according the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) website.

Known as “nature’s engineers,” beavers chew down trees to construct dams and lodges in lakes and streams, usually at night. Their dams usually form ponds. Beavers create deep water habitat to escape from their predators, Munroe says. They primarily eat herbaceous vegetation, woody and aquatic plants and store limbs and logs underwater near their lodge for winter sustenance.

Between 1911 and 1932, there were no beavers in Virginia because of over-trapping for pelts. Then, in 1932, state game managers brought 35 beavers from other states and released them in nine counties. By 1953, the beaver population had recovered and DGIF began to allow limited trapping. Today, DGIF manages beavers as a game species.

On the plus side, beavers create new habitats that help other plants and animals. Their dams can slow moving water and allow other wildlife and plants to colonize. Beaver ponds can attract waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic insects. But in some places, beaver dams can allow sediment to collect and cause flooding. They chop down trees and the higher water levels they create can kill trees.

“Beavers pose little threat to humans, their property or pets,” reports Fairfax County’s website. The website also has a report of a woman attacked by a beaver in September 2012. The beaver tested positive for rabies. The county advises people to be cautious if they see any animal acting strangely.

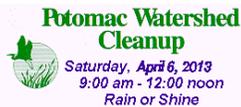
For more information, visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/?s=050069> and <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/animals/wildlife/species/beavers>.

## FODM Events and Meetings

March 18, 7 p.m., place TBA. Learn area frog species and identification techniques and practice frog call recognition. The program is led by Matt Neff, Animal Keeper, Reptile Discovery Center, National Zoo. This is in partnership with the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and FrogWatch USA. Please RSVP to Glenda Booth at [gbooth123@aol.com](mailto:gbooth123@aol.com).



Join us for the 25th Annual Alice Ferguson Potomac Watershed Cleanup, Saturday, April 6 from 9 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Haul Road entrance to Dyke Marsh. FODM and the National Park Service are co-sponsors.



To celebrate Earth Day, the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia, along with the National Park Service and FODM, will sponsor a raptor demonstration on April 20, at 10 a.m. at Dyke Marsh.



FODM's Glenda Booth in her President's report on page 3 discusses our May 15 Quarterly Meeting, on monarch butterflies. Our September 11 FODM meeting will feature Ken Lavish of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, speaking about a Whooping Cranes project. November 13's subject will be announced.



## Welcome New FODM Members

The Friends of Dyke Marsh is pleased to announce the addition of fifteen new members during the last quarter. Join us in welcoming our new **Life Member** Jerome A. Conlon. And a friendly welcome to our **New Regular Members**: James Corless, Miriam Carroll Fenton, Rick Ingram & Sheri Devouassoux, Catherine C. Ledec, Eugenie Mielczarek, David Nichols & Ginny McNair, Virginia Olin, David Pearce, Eric Raun and Missy Priest, Fred Reiner, and Jennifer Shoup.

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

## New Bulletin Board at Dyke Marsh

The National Park Service has installed a new bulletin board at the south end of Dyke Marsh next to the bicycle path and near Northdown Road. "It looks great," commented FODM Vice-President Ned Stone. Thank you, NPS. This bulletin board is a great opportunity to inform the users of the bike path about Dyke Marsh.



## Sunday Morning Bird Walks

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 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. We encourage you to save paper (trees) and mailing costs by becoming a member or renewing your membership online at [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org). Just click on the "New Member" or "Renewal" button on our membership page to make your tax-deductible contribution by credit card or from your bank account securely through PayPal. 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. Renewal reminders will no longer be sent with *The Marsh Wren*. You will receive a separate notice by mail or by email when your renewal is due. Thank you for your continuing support of FODM.

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 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).

## A Modest Birding Proposal

The loss of habitat and the limited breeding success of the Marsh Wren at Dyke Marsh has caused consternation and fear that our FODM logo bird might no longer be available to represent our cherished wetland. In anticipation of that future day when the last *Cistothorus Palustris* sings its reedy song I am proposing the adoption of a new bird to represent our Friends group.

The bird I am thinking of has stunning red legs, shining white chevrons on its chest and a constellation of white starry spots on its head, highlighted by glossy green, and mauve tones in its basic adult plumage. Golden brown edging to its wings adds further character to this bird. Its array of vocalizations are impressive, with the ability to imitate over 20 bird calls.

This highly gregarious avis species has the ability to use super-organism flocking behavior in murmurations that confuse predatory raptors by fluctuating the contour of its flock. Even Peregrine Falcons can be repelled by

this dark cloud of Sturnidae. Our newly proposed bird, by its aggressive nature, has resulted in the displacement of many species from nesting holes and vastly expanded its population over multiple continents. It will persevere at Dyke Marsh well beyond the ephemeral habitation by the Marsh Wren.

Like most of our local homo sapiens, this bird is a relative newcomer to the New World arriving in Central Park, New York in April of 1890 after its introduction by the

American Acclimatization Society in its quest to introduce every species mentioned in Shakespeare's works. The Bard would probably feel quite at home with the swirling flocks that grace our North American skies today.

Finally, the new name attached to our quarterly bulletin "The Marsh Wren" would have to be changed. The replacement moniker "The *Sternus Vulgaris*" may add to the circulation, if only for prurient interest.

Respectfully submitted, Ed Eder.  
*With thanks to Jonathan Swift, 1729.*



Adult *Sternus Vulgaris* at Dyke Marsh.  
Photo by Ed Eder.

**The  
Marsh Wren**

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