



Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) -- Brown-gray, 7-8 inches, short crest, lemon-yellow on tail tip; black mask on face outlined in white; flocks in winter; loves berries, including fruits of the winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*).



Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) -- A duck, dives to catch fish. Males have long white bodies, dark green heads and a narrow, serrated red bill; females, gray with cinnamon heads and a shaggy, brown crest.



American Coot (*Fulica americana*) – Gregarious, 15-inch, chicken-like water bird, small rounded head, sloping bill, dark gray-to-black body, white face. Dives for aquatic plants.



Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) – 17-inch body, reddish underparts, black and white banded tail; perches to hunt for mammals, frogs and snakes; often near water; when flying, rounded wings and fan-like tail.



Great Blue Heron (*Arde herodias*) – 4-foot tall, bluish-gray, wading bird, yellow sword-like bill, white face and crown, black plumes on back of the head; hunts fish and other prey while wading and uncoils neck quickly when striking prey.



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – 30-inch body and 80-inch wingspan; mature adult has white head and tail, dark brown body, yellow legs; immature mostly dark brown; active in winter, searching for fish and gathering nest material.

Fungi



Shelf Fungus (*Oxyporus populinus*) – One of hundreds of species of shelf fungus, sometimes called mossy maple polypore; common in damp woodlands.

Photographs by Ed Eder, Paula Sullivan, Ned Stone, Dixie Sommers, Jennifer Smith and Glenda Booth

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Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve
George Washington Memorial Parkway

Friends of Dyke Marsh



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What Can I See in the Winter? A Few Examples



In winter, Dyke Marsh is not as colorful as it is in other seasons. Many plants go dormant or wilt and many animals disappear into the mud, but life continues. Many species of waterfowl spend the winter on the Potomac River and in the wetland. The marsh has a stark beauty all its own.

Plants



Narrow-leaf Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) – 3-4-foot tall with straw-colored stalks and velvety, brown “hotdog” 2-6 inch flowers. Fall flower heads burst into small fuzzy seeds that are dispersed by the wind.



Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) – Leafless in winter, has hairy vines that snake up trees and can cause a skin rash. Birds eat the berries.



Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) -- Many herbaceous plant "skeletons" remain into the winter. Showy white flowers of the swamp rose mallow give way to large, lantern-shaped seed pods.

Trees and Shrubs



American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) – The outer bark peels off in large irregular flakes, leaving the inner bark in mottled shades of gray, greenish white and brown.



Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*) -- Has red fruits (drupes) that grow in large pyramid-shaped clusters; bark is smooth and gray to brown.



Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) – An evergreen; many birds eat the waxy, silvery-blue fruits (seed cones).



Honey Locust Tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) – Introduced from east-central U.S., very conspicuous 4-6-inch red thorns with 3 or more points on the trunk; dark green leaves; seed pods green to dark reddish brown.

Animals



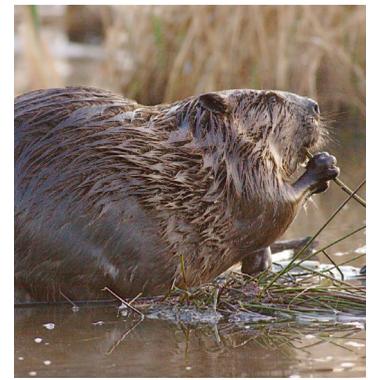
Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Silver gray with white chin and underparts, bushy tail; builds winter nests for shelter. Unusual black squirrels are a melanistic form of the same species.



Southern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*) – Gray fur, white belly, 8-9 inches in length; large black eyes; loose fold of skin between forelimbs and hindlimbs enables it to glide; active at night.



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) – Carnivores, common in edge habitats, forests and suburbia; help suppress rodent populations.



Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) – Aquatic rodent that builds dams and lodges; most easily seen from a boat. Gnawed trees are signs of beavers.



Mystery Snail (*Bellamya chinensis*) -- Invasive exotic animal; dark brown shells widespread along Potomac River shorelines.

Birds



Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – 8-9-inches, common in marsh vegetation. Male is black with showy red and yellow epaulettes; female, plain and brown.