The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976 | THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH | WINTER 2018

FODM Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, February 25, at 2:00 p.m., Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parker's Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306. Meeting is free and all are welcome to attend.

Calendar of Events

April 14 - Potomac River trash cleanup, time TBA.
April 21 - 10 a.m. to 12. Raptor Rapture, Belle Haven Park.
May 9 - 7:30 p.m. FODM Spring Quarterly Meeting with lecture by Dr. Leslie Reis on butterflies and host plants.

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Evolution and Speciation, the Marsh Wren

On February 25, 2018, Sunday at 2 p.m., join the Friends to hear Dr. Sarah Luttrell, who will discuss her work on evolution and speciation in the marsh wren (*Cistothorus palustris*).

It's easy to imagine new species forming in isolated places like remote islands, but what about right in your own backyard? The fact is, the basic processes of evolution are happening in every generation in every species, but they are typically slow and subtle. Dr. Luttrell's work aims to better understand how evolution works by studying subspecies of birds. Bird subspecies, distributions, and natural history have been well defined by hobbyists and professionals alike, making them an ideal group for understanding evolution. She will talk about how comparing multiple traits including plumage color, size and shape, vocal behavior, and genetics in marsh wrens has revealed an exciting pattern of evolution in this widely distributed coastal marsh bird.

Marsh wrens have historically nested in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

Historically, Dyke Marsh was the only known nesting area of the marsh wren in the upper Potomac River tidal zone. In 1950, observers counted 87 singing males in Dyke Marsh. In 1999, surveyors confirmed 34 territorial males and 14 breeding females. In 2014, there were at least 16 territorial males and a minimum of six nests. Sadly, surveyors have not confirmed breeding marsh

MEETING *(continued on page 2)*

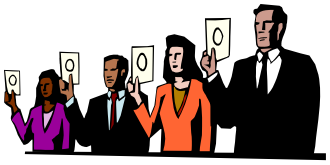
Restoration's Support Is Broad

The following are excerpts from the many letters supporting the National Park Service's permit application to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for marsh restoration. We will publish more in future issues.

U.S. Congressmen Don Beyer and Gerry Connolly: *Congress has repeatedly affirmed its support for Dyke Marsh and its restoration . . . Dyke Marsh restoration presents Virginia an opportunity to fulfill its Chesapeake Bay Agreement commitments . . . With millions on the line and years of coordination to reach this point, it's imperative that we take steps to restore this important natural resource.* **Potomac Conservancy**: *On behalf of 21,000 river advocates, Potomac Conservancy . . . As an organization working to curb pollution, restore native habitats, and achieve a cleaner river, believe that restoring Dyke Marsh will help further our goal of a healthier Potomac River . . .* **Virginia Society of Ornithology**: *Dyke Marsh is home to over 270 species of birds and at least 20,000 species of insects. This . . . is a rare opportunity . . . in a very urbanized area . . .* **Trout Unlimited**: Restoring Dyke Marsh . . . will provide significantly more and healthier habitats for fish

RESTORATION *(continued on page 7)*

2018 FODM Annual Meeting and Election



Send in Your Proxy

On February 25 at our annual meeting, we will elect officers and a Board of Directors.

The proposed nominees, all of whom have agreed to serve, are as follows:

Glenda Booth, President; Ned Stone, Vice President; Dorothy McManus, Secretary; Pat Salamone, Treasurer; Larry Cartwright, Trudi Bellardo Hahn, Laura Sebastianelli, Jessica Strother, Bob Veltkamp, Katherine Ennis Wychulis. Ed Eder, Past President, and Alex Romero, Superintendent of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, are ex officio members. Other nominations can be considered at the meeting.

For FODM members, we have included in the paper copies of the Marsh Wren a proxy form for establishing a quorum and voting at the meeting if a member cannot attend. The form includes instructions for completing and returning it by February 17. For those who receive the newsletter by email, we will send you a separate email with the proxy and instructions. You can reply by email. Please help us establish a quorum by sending your proxy if you cannot attend.

May Program - Butterflies

Save the date, May 9, when Dr. Leslie Reis, Georgetown University, will join the Friends to give a talk on butterflies' interactions with their host plants and responses to climate change.

7:30 p.m., Huntley Meadows Park, Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306.

Monarch butterfly. Photo by Ed Eder

Saving Dyke Marsh -- Restoration Update

The National Park Service (NPS) will present its permit application to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) on February 27 in Newport News, Virginia. The hearing was originally scheduled for January 23, but NPS requested that it be rescheduled because the federal government was closed and NPS personnel could not plan to travel or work during the shutdown. NPS received the first permit on September 12 from the Fairfax County Wetlands Board.

Virginia's Snakes and Lizards

Virginia has a new 172-page field guide with over 170 photos of 32 snake species, nine lizard species, their ecology, distribution and conservation needs, published by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. It's $10.00 at http://www.shopdgif.com.

MEETING *(continued from p age 1)*

wrens since 2014. Most experts contend that loss of habitat is a major contributor to the wren's decline in Dyke Marsh, but the cause has not been definitively determined.

Dr. Luttrell received her Ph. D. in Biological Sciences in August 2017 from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Cosponsors are the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the Northern Virginia Bird Club and the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia. This free, public program will be Sunday at 2:00 p.m. February 25 (**note our special winter afternoon time and place**) at the Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria 22306, between U.S. 1 and the GW/Mount Vernon Parkway, next to the fire station.

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Visit our website at
www.fodm.org
or on **Facebook.com**

Board members can receive email at info@fodm.org. *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 address at left. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for managing our website (www.fodm.org).

President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Dyke Marsh has been stunningly white and glistening this winter, given many subfreezing days. FODM Past President Ed Eder snapped some amazing shots of red foxes, including one carrying a lesser scaup, otters scampering and fishing and hooded mergansers engaging in complex courtship behavior. See our Facebook page.

The beauty and biodiversity of Dyke Marsh are counterpoints to views of swamps as dumping grounds and mysterious miasmas. (Dyke Marsh was 'Hell Hole" in the 1800s.) And shibboleths like "drain the swamp" are denigrating metaphors. Wetlands are valuable ecosystems that provide environmental services. They buffer storms, absorb floodwaters, filter pollutants, are fish nurseries and provide habitat for countless species. Virginia Institute of Marine Science scientist Kirk Havens calls them "biological supermarkets."

Nineteenth century essayist Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps . . . I derive more of my subsistence from the swamps which surround my native town than from the cultivated gardens in the village."

Good "Gerrymandering"

On October 24, I had the good fortune to hear one of my conservation heroes, Dr. Edmund O. Wilson, 88, renowned biologist, at a Capitol Hill event. Addressing the extinction crisis, he said that the extinctions rate is 100 to 1,000 times faster than before humans spread around the world and that of the 10 million species, we know two million, 80 percent unknown. In his latest of 13 books, titled Half-Earth, Dr. Wilson proposes a world in which humans use half of the planet's land mass and leave the rest human-free for Earth's known 10 million species.

This red fox was seen in Dyke Marsh foraging in the ice and snow. Photo by Ed Eder

He endorsed the National Corridor Conservation Act, a bill by Eighth District Virginia Congressman Don Beyer, whose district includes Dyke Marsh. Wilson advocated for "good gerrymandering" to create connections among natural habitats. Congressman Beyer cautioned, "Much of the danger to our most endangered species comes from habitat loss and scientists like Dr. Wilson have told us that connecting habitats to ensure safe travel between them is key to the genetic strength of threatened populations and to biodiversity as a whole."

Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) urged us to "change our mindset," saying, "We're all part of nature and are a community of all living creatures. Man cannot conquer nature." Former NPS Director Bob Stanton remarked, "We must consider the environment in its totality."

These are sobering messages, especially for Northern Virginia where so little biodiversity and natural habitat remain. Listen up, land use decision-makers -- and act.

Mixed News

On November 17, Ben Jesup photographed a blue-faced meadowhawk dragonfly (*Sympetrum ambiguum*), a new record for Dyke Marsh and for the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

This blue-faced meadowhawk dragonfly represents a new record for Dyke Marsh and the GWMP. Photo by Ben Jesup

The Odonata Central website says that this species "is partial to shaded areas and forest edges. . . perches at the tips of twigs, stems and grasses, but it often does so at greater heights than other species. . . The female lays eggs alone, but is guarded by the male, as she extrudes eggs along the shore or over a dry pond or pool where they remain undeveloped until the pond fills again."

Christmas Bird Count volunteers identified 50 bird species in the marsh on December 16. Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) may have at least three active nests in Dyke Marsh. Larry Cartwright shared the bittersweet observation that in 2018 there will be more bald eagles in the marsh than marsh wrens. Here's a Virginia bald eagle nest locator: http://www.ccbbirds.org/what-we-do/research/species-of-concern/virginia-eagles/nest-locator/.

On the sad news front, in 2017, marsh wrens (*Cisthorus palustris*) failed to breed for the third consecutive year. Larry reported, "There were as many as five territorial males, but no evidence that any had mates despite the construction of several dummy nests." He speculates that the least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) may cease to be a breeder in several years.

Fingers crossed for Dyke Marsh restoration and a good spring.

Glenda C. Booth

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

NPS Ecological Monitoring at Dyke Marsh and Beyond

BY GEOFFREY SANDERS AND MEGAN NORTRUP
NPS National Capital Region Inventory & Monitoring Network

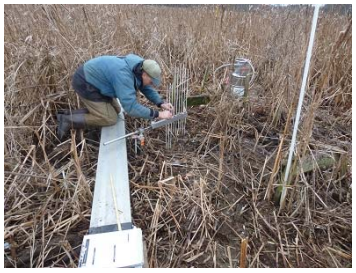
Most people recognize national parks as places of respite and recreation, but few appreciate the science that goes on behind the scenes to support park managers and those seeking to better understand and preserve natural environments and habitats everywhere.

While scientific study in parks is nothing new, a coordinated ecological monitoring program within the National Park Service was not mandated by the U.S. Congress until 1998. This spurred the development of the Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) program that today works in more than 270 parks across the country to provide national park managers with information on the long-term status and trends of natural resources in their parks.

The National Capital Region I&M Network (NCRN) serves eleven parks in Washington, DC, Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia (including the George Washington Memorial Parkway).

Inventories

Early efforts by the I&M program (2000-2005) focused on inventories to establish baseline knowledge about the status of park natural resources. Across the nation, the program inventoried geology, soils, water resources, air resources, species biodiversity, vegetation mapping, as well as available cartographic data sets and literature catalogues for parks. Here, the NCRN, inventoried targeted species including bats, mushrooms, small mammals, plants, and other biota to fill in knowledge gaps in species abundance (projects and related products: https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Collection/Edit/149). A new round of nationwide inventory projects is currently in the planning stages to address remaining data gaps.



NPS worker installs monitoring equipment at Dyke Marsh. Photo: National Park Service

Vital Signs Monitoring

After establishing baseline data through searches of existing literature and new inventories, NCRN looked next to identify key natural resource metrics or "vital signs" to use in tracking park health. We collaborated with park staff, regional NPS scientists, and subject matter experts from other agencies and academia to identify the most important metrics for National Capital Region (NCR) parks. The vital signs chosen are part of our current long-term ecological monitoring and include the categories of forest vegetation, forest breeding birds, amphibians, water quality and quantity, shoreline features and air quality.

We worked with the same collaborators to establish monitoring protocols, and between 2005 and 2007, began to collect data (https://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/monitor/index.cfm). Over the ensuing years we have gathered and analyzed copious amounts of data, and made the findings and results available to park resource managers to assist with resource management actions and decisions (https://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/publications.cfm).

NPS monitoring program collects data on Dyke Marsh. Photo: National Park Service

I&M at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve

NCRN monitoring efforts extend across eleven parks in the (NCR) including some work in and around Dyke Marsh itself. Because monitoring was planned at a regional scale, only one monitoring plot falls within Dyke Marsh. It sits in the swamp forest area of the marsh and is monitored for both forest vegetation and breeding birds. Vegetation data from the plot show that pumpkin ash (*Fraxinus profunda*) are very common but most are either dead or dying as a result of emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*). It is hard to draw broad conclusions from a single monitoring plot, but other plots in freshwater marsh areas along both the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers show similar characteristics.

Forest bird monitoring at the plot is done primarily through identification of songs and calls. This is sometimes complicated by traffic noise from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, but even so, field crews are able to accurately identify many species. Some of the more common observations at this plot over the years include red-winged blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), Baltimore orioles (*Icterus galbula*), downy woodpeckers (*Picoides pubescens*) and blue-gray gnatcatchers (*Polioptila caerulea*).

NCRN also has a project monitoring changes in the elevation of freshwater tidal marshes along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers in relation to increasing rates of sea-level rise. This includes 9 monitoring locations in Dyke Marsh. We measure elevation change and sedimentation rates in marshes to better understand the geophysical processes taking place and to determine if the surface of the marsh is trapping enough sediment from daily tides to keep pace with sea-level rise. Our goal is to provide park managers with a better understanding of how the marsh is changing and will continue to change into the future.

With this marsh elevation data in hand, NCRN recently partnered with researchers at the University of Maryland's Appalachian Laboratory to model marsh structure under different future sea-level rise scenarios. Model results show that by 2050 under the highest SLR scenario most of the swamp forest around Dyke Marsh would shift to high and mid-elevation marsh land. By 2080 the swamp forest is al-

MONITORING *(continued on page 5)*

Acoustic Monitoring of Bats in Dyke Marsh

BY DEBORAH HAMMER, FODM Member

On humid summer evenings, long after most Northern Virginians have gone to bed, our local bats are wide awake, swooping down over the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve to scoop up a bounty of insects. Though largely unseen, our resident microchiroptera (small bat species) can be heard and identified using small devices that translate a bat's echolocation into sounds audible in the human range of hearing. I utilize an Echo Meter, by Wildlife Acoustics, connected to my iPhone or IPad to to both "listen" to bats and identify species by matching each one's signature sonar spectrogram. For several years, I have conducted acoustic monitoring of primarily the western portion of Dyke Marsh. Some interesting trends have emerged:

Dr. Merlin Tuttle with Deborah showing the bat detecting Echo Meter. Photo by Andrew Hammer

1. Little brown bats (*Myotis lucifigus*), once our most common species, have largely disappeared. This is primarily due to white nose syndrome (WNS), a disease caused by a non-native, invasive fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) that killed Virginia's little brown bats as they hibernated in large numbers in mountain caves. I have only heard this species on three occasions in the past two years. Mist-netting studies across the region also document that they are now extremely rare.

2. Several other species are classified as living in Northern Virginia, but also remain elusive. One is the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), also due to loss from WNS. I heard one or more on just a few occasions this past summer. Gray bats (*Myotis grisescens*) and Indiana bats (*Myotis sodalis*) were already federally-endangered before WNS became prevalent and I have never heard them in Dyke Marsh.

3. Big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) are now our most common species. They have escaped the ravages of WNS by hibernating in local trees, attics and other crevices, rather than caves. Still, they are threatened by habitat loss, pollution (including light and sound pollution), outdoor cats and pesticides. In Dyke Marsh, they consume thousands of insects a night each, including mosquitos, stink bugs and beetles. They can live as long as 20 years but are slow to reproduce, usually giving birth to a single pup each season. The females are highly social and live together in maternal colonies. Although they are one of our biggest bats, the weight of an average adult is only about 20 grams.

4. Other local bat species that I have frequently heard include Eastern red bats (*Lasiurus borealis*), hoary bats (*Lasirurs cinereus*), silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and evening bats (*Nycticeius hueralis*). These species also hibernate in or on trees and in crevices and have so far avoided the devastation of WNS.

Eastern red bat is a local species that is frequently heard. Photo by Deborah Hammer

5. Two bat species that are not classified as Northern Virginia bats have nevertheless become ubiquitous in Dyke Marsh, for reasons that are not yet clear. One is the Seminole bat (*Lasiurs seminolus*). The other is the Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasliensis*). It is also unknown what is happening to these two species in the winter – if they are migrating south, hibernating or perishing in the cold. Although not common to this area just a few years ago, I heard both of them every week this past summer and frequently the previous summer.

Largely unappreciated, bats are critical to our ecosystem. Over 1,300 different species live across the planet. Most are insectivorous, consuming huge quantities of bugs that would otherwise damage agricultural products and forests. In fact, they are the primary consumers of nocturnal insects, including mosquitoes. Nursing female bats can consume their weight in insects every night. The effect of WNS is already showing a significant economic and environmental impact in damage to crops and increased use of pesticides in states on the East Coast. Fruit bats, which do not live in Virginia, are also considered to be a keystone species and are responsible for pollinating or propagating 80 percent of the world's fruits.

Despite the negative myths about bats, we need them if we want to eat. Bats are great mothers, highly intelligent and very social. For more information about bats, visit http://savelucythebat.org and http://www.batcon.org.

MONITORING *(continued from page 4)*

most completely gone and the marsh is composed mostly of low marsh land that is flooded for larger portions of the day. (For more information see: https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2223826.)

Conclusion

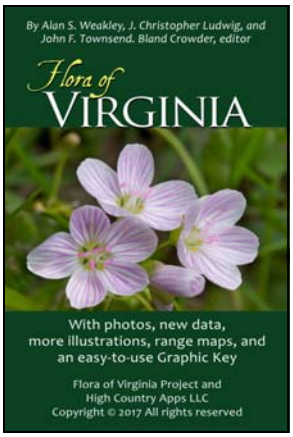
Parks in the National Capital Region, including Dyke Marsh, sit in an ever-increasing urban landscape and are faced with many threats and challenges including global climate change. To better understand this ongoing change, the NPS Inventory & Monitoring program supports park decision-making with information on the long-term ecological status and trends of their natural resources.

The Flora of Virginia Project

BY PATRICIA P. SALAMONE

Here in Virginia, we're fortunate to live in a region that has a very diverse plant community. Virginia spans many environments (coastal to mountain) and its mid-Atlantic location means it is at the southernmost end of the range for many northern plants and at the northernmost end of the range for many southern plants.

The Flora of Virginia, published in 2012, captures this diversity in its 1,554 pages. It covers 3,164 species of plants (both native to Virginia and naturalized) and includes 1,400 specially commissioned pen-and-ink drawings. It also includes plant identification keys, a chapter on the history of botanical exploration in Virginia, and a brief guide to 50 of Virginia's best botanizing spots. The Flora of Virginia is also a useful resource for botanizing in the District, Maryland, and West Virginia because there is so much overlap of plant species.



The Flora of Virginia is the authoritative guide to the state's plants.

Pulling together this vast body of information was neither easy nor fast. The non-profit Flora of Virginia Project was established in 2001 and, with its partners, raised more than $1 million in donations and grants over the years. The Natural Heritage Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provided major in-kind support to the project, including the involvement of its chief biologist and other staff. Other project partners are the Virginia Native Plant Society, the Virginia Academy of Science, the non-profit Virginia Botanical Associates, and the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. (The Virginia Academy of Science was also instrumental in publishing the Atlas of the Virginia Flora—now the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora—in 1977.)

The Flora of Virginia is the first authoritative guide to the state's plants to be published in 250 years. Its predecessor was the Flora Virginica, exhibens plantas, by Johannes Fredericus Gronovius, published in 1762. The Flora Virginica was based on the 1737 manuscript of John Clayton, an 18th century Virginia botanist. (In honor of John Clayton, the cover illustration of today's Flora and the splash screen of the mobile app both depict the delicate pink and white flowers of the Eastern spring beauty, Claytonia virginica.) The many changes in the natural environment since colonial times have made botanists eager to have an updated Flora for many years.

The Flora of Virginia Project was established in 2001 and published the guide in 2012.

The executive director of the Flora Project is Bland Crowder. Authors are Chris Ludwig, chief biologist with the Virginia DCR's Division of Natural Heritage, Alan Weakley, curator of the University of North Carolina Herbarium, and John Townsend, staff botanist with the Virginia DCR's Division of Natural Heritage. The lead illustrator is the wonderful botanic artist Lara Call Gastinger. Michael Terry illustrated the grasses, sedges, and rushes, and Roy Fuller illustrated the ferns.

The new Flora is a tremendous resource, but there's no denying that, at almost 1,600 pages and weighing 7 pounds, it's a doorstop. To make the information easier to access in the field, the Flora project developed the Flora mobile app, released on September 30, 2017. The App is available for Android and iOS devices.

For more information, please visit http://floraofvirginia.org/ or http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaflora

Toward a Healthier Habitat at Dyke Marsh

Many Dyke Marsh visitors have asked about the bare land across from "Dead Beaver Beach" along the west side of the Haul Road trail. At our suggestion, National Park Service officials cleared .065 acres of invasive plants like porcelain berry vines and garlic mustard, non-native plants that have overwhelmed and outcompeted much of the native vegetation in the preserve.

In the spring, working with NPS, we will plant a mix of native plants there, species that co-evolved with native birds and other wildlife and give them much more support than non-native plants. We have received two grants and will pursue other funds for purchasing plants.

This bare land along Haul Road has been cleared of invasive plants. Photo: Dorothy McManus

If you would like to help us purchase plants, send a check to our address on page two or visit our website. If you would like help with the planting, email gbooth123@aol.com. The area will need ongoing monitoring and invasives management so we will need continuing volunteers.

RESTORATION *(Continued from page 1)*

and other wildlife . . . **National Parks Conservation Association**: *One of the most biologically diverse habitats in the Washington, D.C. region* . . . **Potomac Riverkeeper**: *As advocates for a healthy Potomac River that we hope one day is drinkable, fishable, and swimmable, we write to urge VMRC to approve the permit* . . . **Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin**: Severe erosion of the marsh and surrounding area is *rapidly occurring and is a source of sediment . . . to the Potomac River. The area has for years been in serious need of stabilization* . . . **Mt. Vernon Area History Commissioner Glenn Fatzinger**: *Dyke Marsh's restoration . . . is needed simply to maintain the historic nature of the Parkway. . . . Today, more than 2 million people a year visit the Mt. Vernon Estate and most . . . travel the Mt Vernon Parkway*. . . **Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Mt. Vernon Supervisor Storck**: *I especially want to stress a key ecological service provided by wetlands and in this case, a restored wetland in our community. A larger, restored marsh can serve as a stronger natural defense against storms and flooding. . . . low-lying areas in my district and others such as Old Town Alexandria and parts of Arlington and Prince William counties are vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather. . . . Particularly vulnerable in my district are the Belle View and New Alexandria neighborhoods immediately west of Dyke Marsh. . . . The Mount Vernon Council of Citizen Associations supports restoration as does the Wellington Civic Association* . . . .

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

Welcome New FODM Members

We welcome our **new members** Margaret Baird, Catherine Baker, Carol Booth, Matt Bright, Cami Capuco, Daniel V. Carvajal, Gail Cassidy, Collier Cook, Janet Cady and Jeff Davidson, Mimi Friedman, Laurie Fulton, Louisa Greve, Drew and Sallie Hutcheson, Francine Jupiter, Karen Justesen, James C. Meyers, Paul G. Munch, Gavin Nichol, and David and Sharon Smallwood.

And we welcome our conversions to **Life Membership** Greg Crider, Daniel Storck and Paul Zeisset.

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.

New Automatic Annual Renewal Option

You can now set up automatic annual renewal of your membership through PayPal. You will also have the option to provide an extra donation with your automatic membership renewal. To renew online (with or without automatic renewal) you must first log in on our site, www.fodm.org. Send an email to info@fodm.org if you need help or do not know your username or password to log in or if you would like to receive detailed instructions for setting up automatic renewal. For automatic annual renewal, your payment information will be stored by PayPal and you will receive an email each year notifying you of the renewal. You can stop the automatic renewals at any time.

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..……. $ _____

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 Roving Park Ranger

BY AARON LaROCCA, Chief of Staff, GWMP

America boasts more than 4,000 food trucks nationwide, according to a May 2017 article in The Economist. The article states that despite restaurant owners fear of a threat to their business, the evidence suggests otherwise." It appears that as areas that have an increase in food trucks also see an increase in the area's number of restaurants. Well, the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) is looking to jump on this bandwagon too!

Well, maybe not exactly…

GWMP is working with a contractor to develop a park "food truck" of sorts. This is not one that will sell tacos and burgers, but one that will deliver interpretive and educational opportunities to the public. We are calling this truck, a mobile visitor center. The mobile visitor center will be able to go up and down the parkway and provide a place for visitor contacts in locations that do not have traditional visitor centers, like Dyke Marsh.

Once complete, this fully-equipped mobile visitor center will be decorated as elaborately as any of the food trucks you see on the streets of Washington, D.C., and will provide the public with an indoor visitor center experience, outdoors. The mobile visitor center will have a walk-up window, a digital weather display, audio equipment and a resource desk. With this center, the park will be able to distribute brochures, resource manuals, recycling bins and water dispensers to sites along the parkway. One of its special features will be a retractable awning to ensure that it can be used in any weather.

Shenandoah National Park, mobile visitor center unveiled in 2015. GWMP mobile visitor center is currently under development. Photo courtesy of NPS.

Currently, the GWMP has only one true visitor center, located at Great Falls Park. While there are other ranger stations along the parkway, there is nothing as dynamic as this new mobile visitor center. Just as food trucks help grow brick and mortar restaurants, the GWMP is hopeful that this new mobile visitor center will help visitors connect more with the parks they use every day and will attract many new visitors and help new audiences find their park!

The Marsh Wren

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