Habitat
In the swamp forest, one of several habitats in the preserve, the woods are wet as the ground thaws and woodland plants emerge. Wetland plants start to emerge and the marsh begins to green up.

Plants
Spatterdock or Yellow Pond Lily (Nuphar luteum) -- heart-shaped leaves emerge from the mud in early spring; roots resemble alligator hide. In late spring, the golfball-shaped yellow flowers stand just above the water’s surface.


The Friends of Dyke Marsh appreciates the support of Dominion Foundation for the printing of this brochure. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/gwmp and www.fodm.org.

Friends of Dyke Marsh

Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve
What Can I See in the Spring?
A Few Examples

Spring Azure Butterfly (Celastrina ladon) - 1.25 inches, clear sky-blue wings; females’ wings have black border

Brown Woolly Bear Caterpillar or Larval Form of the Isabella Tiger Moth (Pyrrharctia isabella) - brown or coppery red, furry; most have black bands on each end; freezes solid in winter, emerges in spring to pupate

Foam of the Spittle Bug (Cercopidae family) - many species; nymphs on host plants cover themselves with a bubbly liquid to protect from predators

Muskrat (Ondatra zibethicus) - a 16-28-inch, semi-aquatic rodent, brown fur; similar to a beaver but smaller and with a thin round tail instead of the beaver’s flat paddle

Eastern Gray Squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis) - 17 to 20 inches long, silver gray with white chin and underparts, brushy tail; raise young in spring

Turtles - As the days turn warm, turtles bask in the sun, often on logs. Eastern snapping turtle (Chelydra serpentina serpentina), 20-inches long, gray-brown, can weigh 9-35 pounds; found in aquatic vegetation and submerged brush and logs. Eastern painted turtle (Chrysemys picta picta) has red marks along bottom of dark carapace (shell) and two yellow spots behind eyes.

Spatterdock or Yellow Pond Lily (Nuphar luteum) -- heart-shaped leaves emerge from the mud in early spring; roots resemble alligator hide. In late spring, the golfball-shaped yellow flowers stand just above the water’s surface.

Eastern Garter Snake (Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis) - one of the first to awaken from hibernation in March or early April and breed

Eastern Rat Snake (Pantherophis alleghaniensis) - black back; white, blotchy belly; can be over 6 feet long; climbs and suns in trees

Common Five-lined Skink (Plestiodon fasciatus) -- 3 to 8 inches, five light stripes on dark skin, bright blue tail when young; as they mature, stripes and blue tail fades. Males have reddish-orange heads during breeding season.

American Bullfrog (Lithobates catesbeianus) - 8 inches long; green head, olive-brown blotchy back; call is baritone “jug-o-rum”
Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron tulipifera) -- a tall (80-100 feet) deciduous tree in the magnolia family. Its flowers, appearing in late spring to early summer, resemble tulips and are light greenish-yellow with an orange band on the outer part of the flower.

Red Maple (Acer rubrum) - small, deep red-orange flowers grow in clusters and are showy in late winter or early spring.

Pinxterbloom Azalea (Rhododendron periclymenoides) - a native azalea, deciduous shrub, typically grows to 3-6 feet. Showy pink blossoms appear around April.

Poison Ivy (Toxicodendron radicans) - hairy vines snake up trees; leaves unfurl. New leaves (“leaves of three, let it be”) often start out reddish but turn green as they mature. All parts of the plant can cause a rash in humans.

Wild Grape (Vitus sp.) - woody vines, can grow to over 30 feet tall; in wooded areas, sometimes attach to a tree when both plants are small and grow up together with the tree. Stems have brown, peeling bark. Clusters of small greenish-white flowers appear in late spring or early summer.

Violet (Viola sp.) - one of the most common native spring wildflowers; heart-shaped, deep green leaves; flowers typically blue-purple; some species have white or yellow flowers. Violets are host plants for the caterpillars of several species of butterfly, including the great spangled fritillary (Speyeria cybele), the silver-bordered fritillary (Boloria selene) and the meadow fritillary (Boloria bellona).

Spicebush (Lindera benzoin) -- a medium-sized, deciduous shrub, typically grows to 6-12 feet high and 6-12 feet wide; commonly grows in moist areas. Leaves, stems and flowers have a spicy scent. Clusters of tiny, lemon-yellow flowers appear in early spring and are especially noticeable since they come out before the leaves do.

Narrow-leaf Cattail (Typha angustifolia) - Some of last season’s hotdog-shaped seedheads may remain standing, though many have been beaten down by winter weather. The light green, long, bladelike new leaves emerge and can grow to 2-5 feet tall. Stands provide shelter and nesting cover for red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens and other birds.

Red Maple (Acer rubrum) - small, deep red-orange flowers grow in clusters and are showy in late winter or early spring.

Wood Duck (Aix sponsa) - stunning, colorful patterns; males have chestnut breast, green head with drooping crest; females grayish-brown with white around eye. Ducks form pairs, mate and raise young.

Redwinged Blackbird (Agelaius phoeniceus) - around 9 inches in length, males are glossy black with red and yellow shoulder patches; females streaky brown; feed on insects and seeds; loud “O-ka-lee!” call

Yellow Warbler (Dendroica petechia) - 5 inches long, bright yellow plumage, male has red streaks on underparts; likes wet areas. Many warblers migrate through in the spring and some nest and raise their young.

Eastern Bluebird (Sialia sialis) - 7 inches in length, males have a brilliant royal blue back and head, orangy belly; females gray with orange on sides of neck

Orange Sulphur Butterfly (Colias eurytheme) - 2.5 inches, gold-orange wings; black spot on each forewing

Birds

Osprey (Pandion haliaetus) -- 24 inches in length, 63-inch wingspan, a raptor also known as the “fish hawk” because it hovers and plunges feet first to catch fish; ospreys return, build nests and raise their young.

Bald Eagle (Haliaetus leucocephalus) -- 31 inches in length, 80-inch wingspan; mature eagles are chocolate brown with white heads and tails; eaglets hatch, adults take fish to nest to feed young.

Carolina Wren (Thryothorus ludovicianus) - 5 ½ inches, cinnamon plumage, white eyebrow stripe, long tail flips sideways; loud “teakettle” call

Insects

Orange Sulphur Butterfly (Colias eurytheme) - 2.5 inches, gold-orange wings; black spot on each forewing