The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976 | THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH | SUMMER 2016

FODM Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, September 14, at 7:00 p.m., **Sherwood Regional Library**, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306. Free, open to all.

Calendar of Events

September 3 - 10 a.m. to noon, Marsh Walk with Dr. Elizabeth Wells, meet at Haul Road
October 2 - 1:00 p.m. to 4 p.m., celebrate FODM at River Farm, page 2 for details
November 16 - 7:30 p.m., FODM fall quarterly meeting at Huntley Meadows Vstr. Ctr.

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Pollinators

Leading Expert to Examine their Importance and Status

Join us on September 14, **7 p.m. at the Sherwood Regional Library (note change in place and time from our usual meetings**) to hear Sam Droege, biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, and one of the country's leading experts on pollinators. He will talk about his work on native bee populations and briefly explore the role of other less obvious pollinators such as butterflies, moths, beetles and hummingbirds and will examine pollinators' importance, their threats and steps to protect them. He manages the U.S. Geological Survey's Bee Inventory and Monitoring Laboratory.

American bumblebee. Photo credit Val Bugh, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Ctr.

The world's 40,000 bee pollinators perform critical services by transporting pollen from stamens to stigmas, fertilizing both wild and cultivated plants. Over 85 percent of the world's flowering plants depend on pollinators. "The economic value of these native pollinators is estimated at $3 billion per year in the U.S.," says the Xerces Society. Loss of habitat and, in particular, the loss of diversity of plants that bees prefer are driving declines, but these can be reversed and incorporated into what we do already such as controlling invasives, creating reserves and tending the open lands we are responsible for.

Joining FODM as sponsors are the American Horticultural Society; the Virginia Native Plant Society, Potowmack

MEETING *(Continued on page 2)*

Dyke Marsh Restoration Update

The National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Corps of Engineers (COE) are moving ahead to restore Dyke Marsh.

This spring, Corps staff conducted dilatometer tests from a barge and measured soil layers and strength for building the foundation of the breakwater in the south marsh. Building a breakwater is expected to be phase one of restoration.

On June 29, Bob Vogel, NPS Regional Director, signed the record of decision (ROD), the final step in the environmental impact statement process.

In July, a NPS-COE work group met to conduct a "value analysis," a discussion of costs of the containment cells that will hold fill material. The cells are a major component of restoration.

A view of the south marsh. Photo courtesy of Dorothy McManus

In the coming months, Corps and NPS staffers will prepare design and construction documents.

In 2017, construction could start in October or November and last approxi-

RESTORATION *(Continued on page 2)*

Celebrate FODM and NPS on October 2

FODM will celebrate its 40th anniversary on October 2.

Please join FODMers, friends, elected and agency officials and community leaders for a celebration and silent auction on Sunday, October 2, 1 to 4 p.m. at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society, on the Potomac River (http://www.ahs.org/about-river-farm). We will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Friends of Dyke Marsh and the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.

Honored guests include members of Congress, state and local elected officials and Department of Interior, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials.

The Northern Virginia Mountain Dulcimers will perform and you can also explore the American Horticultural Society's beautiful grounds when the native meadow will be at its height.

Our silent auction will have over 100 items and services. Examples:

- Nature photographs, art and books
- Spotting scope, child's bicycle
- Rucksack, outdoor gear, canoe and kayak rentals
- Brunch, home décor and gardening tools
- Fly casting, bread-making, crocheting and sailing lessons
- Computer, fitness, salon and architectural services
- Handcrafted jewelry and textiles

A fund raiser, the event is $50 per person. Friends of Dyke Marsh members can expect to receive their invitations in the mail in early September.

National Parks Turn 100

The NPS centennial is not just a party. It's a call to action. NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis has told the Congress since 2010 that our national parks are seriously underfunded. In fact, Congress appropriates only half of what is needed "to keep even with the deterioration of parks, roads, bridges, tunnels, historic homes and visitor centers," he wrote in the May 13 Washington Post. NPS's maintenance backlog is around $12 billion.

MEETING *(Continued from page 1)*

Chapter; the Fairfax Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists; the Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. The **Sherwood Regional Library: 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alex., 22306**. Directions at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/sh/.

RESTORATION *(Continued from page 1)*

mately two years.

FODM continues to urge NPS and COE to move forward on restoration. The 2010 U.S. Geological Survey study found that at erosion rates occurring at that time, what remains of Dyke Marsh will be gone by 2035 without action. We are also urging that NPS take steps to start the last phase of restoration, creating culverts under the Haul Road to restore the tidal flow to the swamp forest. For the past year, we have expressed our grave concerns about the fact that the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and NPS have not worked out a transfer of the $2.5 million in airport mitigation funds committed by MWAA in 2013.

NPS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' officials will update us on restoration plans at our November 16 meeting. Visit our website for more details.

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or on **Facebook.com**

Friends of Dyke Marsh Board of Directors

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 above. Board members can also receive mail at this address. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for managing our website (www.fodm.org).

President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Volunteers are the foundation of our organization's effectiveness.

Successes and Firsts

Here are some highlights of our volunteers' recent efforts:

We participated in NPS's national BioBlitz on May 20 and 21 and helped identify 13 new spider species in the Dyke Marsh-Belle Haven Park area. Other records for Dyke Marsh: the first spring record for a Philadelphia vireo (Vireo philadelphicus); the second record for the hoary bat (Lasiurus cinereus); one new earthworm (Bimastos palustris), a native species; and two new terrestrial isopods (Porcellio laevis, Trichoniscus pusillus).

STEM students examine minnows collected in the seine net. Photo by Glenda Booth

Laura Sebastianelli led two first-ever walks, a sound walk and a cricket call. She leads the frog survey.

Jessica Strother, Jim Waggener, Ed Eder and others are conducting a butterfly and dragon/damselfly survey. Examples of dragonfly sightings: prince basket tail, black saddle bag, great blue skimmer, Needham's skimmer and big bluet. Examples of butterflies: Eastern tiger swallowtail, pearl crescent, orange sulphur and Horace's duskywing.

We introduced a group of Alexandria STEM students, NatureServ interns and 25 Potomac Riverkeeper members to Dyke Marsh. We participated in the Gum Springs Community Day and again hosted T.C. Williams International Academy students.

Jessica Strother helped NPS lead a "vision walk," a sensory and interpretive walk at Great Falls for visually-impaired people.

Fairfax County has started the project to stem sediment pollution into the marsh.

Our "weed warrior" team continues to tackle non-native plants and our bird experts lead walks every Sunday.

This salamander was observed during water quality testing. Photo by G. Booth

Challenges

Troubling challenges persist. FODMers conducted water quality testing in two streams flowing into Dyke Marsh West in April and June and found that both streams are impaired and in "unacceptable ecological condition," according to protocols used.

Alexandria sent to the state a combined sewer overflow long-range plan to curb the untreated sewage going into the Potomac River from a system dating to the 1890s. We urged the city council to accelerate the "fix" and reminded them, "The Clean Water Act became law in 1972, 44 years ago. It is long past time to update the city's sewer system and to stop polluting our streams and rivers."

We continue to press Virginia authorities to take enforcement actions against Dominion Power for the January 24, 2016, transformer leak that spewed oil into Roaches Run, the river and eventually Dyke Marsh.

Good News and Mixed News

Pumpkin ash seeds are collected from trees in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Robert Smith

As we reported in 2015, FODM is helping fund the effort to save some of the pumpkin ash trees in the marsh that are being killed by the invasive emerald ash borer. On May 16, 2016, Bartlett Tree Experts treated another four trees, in addition to the 13 treated last year. Many ash trees along the George Washington Memorial Parkway and in Dyke Marsh failed to leaf out this spring, likely because of this invasive insect. In July, Robert Smith, FODM's project manager, reported, "In contrast to the stark, leafless limbs of nearby ash trees, the 13 pumpkin ash trees treated last year and this spring are in full leaf. Several of the trees that can be readily observed from the boardwalk are heavy with seeds. This small preserve continues to do well. We hope these treatments will enhance the chances of maintaining a healthy set of pumpkin ash trees, trees that can both propagate themselves and provide seeds for use in the restoration."

A dedicated team led by Larry Cartwright conducted the annual breeding bird survey. We will have a full report in a future issue. The good news: least bitterns (Ixobrychos exilis) were confirmed as nesters. The bad news: No one confirmed marsh wrens (Cistothorus palustris) for the second consecutive year.

As the fall bird migration gets into full swing and temperatures drop, we'll take to the outdoors. I look forward to seeing you at our September 14 meeting and our October 2 celebration. Onward!

Glenda C. Booth

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

"Least" but Not Last: Looking for Rails & Bitterns in the D.C. Area

BY PATRICE NIELSON, PhD candidate, Univ, of MD

When I moved to the D.C. area in 2012, I immediately began exploring local parks and refuges. I found natural resource managers who weren't sure if rails and bitterns were in their wetlands, birders who were enthusiastic about finding these species and restoration projects underway to improve marsh bird habitat. I had previous experience doing rail and bittern surveys for the Idaho Fish and Game Department so I decided to start researching these species in the Washington, D.C., area through the University of Maryland's Environmental Science Program. Rails and bitterns are both considered secretive species, so they are more difficult to find than many other birds and there is limited information on their ecology. Information on current species present in the D.C. area is useful for habitat conservation planning and restoration.

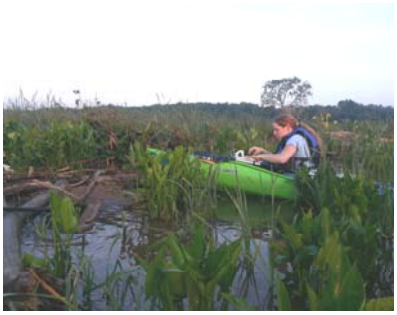
I used the Standardized North American Marshbird Monitoring Protocol to survey 25 marshes three times a year for three years. I found least bitterns at Dyke Marsh, Huntley Meadows Park, the Julie J. Metz wetland, Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge, Mattawoman Creek near Indian Head, Maryland, and Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland. I found king rails at Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge, Leesylvania State Park and Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Even though I found them in several locations, the numbers were still pretty sparse. The highest number of birds I ever found during a survey was two!

Least bittern, a secretive species found in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

I also collected detailed habitat data at every bird survey location. This data included cover of tall vegetation, cover of woody vegetation (trees and shrubs growing within the marsh), cover of vegetation that persisted over the winter, water depth, width of buffer zone, total area of the marsh, aquatic invertebrate abundance, plant species diversity and total vegetation/ water edge. These were all characteristics potentially important for marsh birds. Tall vegetation and plant species that persist over the winter may be important for nesting material and shelter. Invertebrate abundance, vegetation/ water edge and water depth are factors that could be important indicators of food abundance and foraging habitat. Width of the buffer and total marsh area were thought to be indicators of marsh disturbance, i.e., larger marshes with a wide buffer between the wetland and human development were less disturbed by human activities.

To determine which of these factors are most important for rails and bitterns, I used statistical modeling software called Program Presence. Secretive species may be present at a site, but not detected every time a site is visited. Program presence takes this into account and it calculates the likelihood that a site is occupied by marsh birds and the likelihood that the birds would be detected. The likelihood that a site is occupied is modeled as a function of those habitat characteristics that I collected. I tried creating a model based on combined least bittern and king rail detections, but the results were very poor. So, I divided up the data by species and made two separate models, one for king rails and one for least bitterns. I found that least bitterns are positively correlated with tall vegetation, but negatively correlated with woody vegetation and invertebrate abundance. Since least bitterns often feed on fish and tadpoles, too many invertebrates may have indicated lower numbers of these preferred food sources. I found that king rails are positively associated with invertebrate abundance and plant species diversity. This means that marshes with more tall vegetation, less woody vegetation and higher plant species diversity are most likely to provide the best habitat for these two secretive marsh bird species in the D.C. area.

King rail proved to be a difficult species to find in the D.C. area. Photo by Ed Eder



Patrice Nielson kayaks up to the edge of Dyke Marsh on an early morning to listen for secretive marshbirds. Photo: Latice Fuentes

A Little Background

Patrice Nelson, Alexandria resident, is a Ph.D. student in Environmental Science at the University of Maryland. She has study sites in Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. "Dyke Marsh is great in that it has lots of community involvement and birders, so people usually know what bird species are present, but not all of my sites are like that," she commented.

Explaining her work, she wrote, "Right now I am going back to each of my bird survey sites and getting aquatic invertebrate samples (as an indicator of food abundance) and identifying all the plant species and percent of area each species covers. I will use this information as an indicator of habitat quality and I am creating a mathematical habitat model to show what factors are most significant for secretive marshbird presence."

A Look Back — Dyke Marsh's "Watchdog"

In 1973, the National Park Service (NPS) hired William Cook as a "watchdog" over Dyke Marsh, according to a recently unearthed, August 5, 1973, article in the former Washington Star-News by Ned Scharff. Cook's job was to "protect the 750-acre marsh from the evils of hunters and trash haulers," Scharff wrote. Said Cook, "You can't trust people around here. They'll shoot at anything in sight and those haulers will bring in everything from old refrigerators to just plain trash."

Metal remains of dredge used to mine DM. Photo by Ned Stone

The article explains that NPS developed "a plan to restore the marsh to its original state involving building series of "retaining dikes" to hold 10 to 12 feet of marsh on top of rocky fill, a project that would cost $3 million and take 10 years. NPS awarded a contract to the Washington, D.C., government to "dump clean earth and rock on the site," and Cook's job was to prevent dumping of other unauthorized materials, like metal or tar. "If there's a single bottle or can in the load, then that driver can just take it right on home with him," he told the reporter.

Concrete slabs from when DM was a construction dump site. Photo by Ned Stone

Cook, a landfill bulldozer driver, became an amateur naturalist. "There's a pair of silver gray foxes that know me by sight. There's Canada geese here and muskrats just as fat as butterballs . . . I always did like animals, but now I think maybe I prefer 'em to people," he was quoted as saying. And he worried aloud that youngsters in 10 or 15 years would not be able to distinguish "between a duck and a rabbit."

And Cook predicted, "Right here, we're gonna have a place just as beautiful as the Florida Everglades . . . right here on the dirty old Potomac. You just wait." President's note: Fingers crossed.

The Origins of FODM's Logo

The Friends of Dyke Marsh have had a logo since the mid-1980s, featuring the marsh wren (Cistothorus palustris) perched on a cattail leaf. Roger Miller, a local architect and FODM member, designed the logo in the mid-1980s. More recently, Amy O'Donnell, a graphic artist, refined the drawing, guided by local experts on the marsh wren. The organization's founders had chosen the marsh wren as the mascot because Dyke Marsh for many years was the only known nesting area of this bird in the upper Potomac River tidal zone. The logo originated in part because FODMers wanted to conduct some outreach and raise funds so members sold t-shirts featuring the then-new logo. Roger is the son of long-time member, the late Buck Miller, who helped with FODM's breeding bird survey for many years.

The poignant side of this story is that in 2015 and 2016, observers found no breeding marsh wrens in the marsh. In his 1947 book, Spring in Washington, writer Louis Halle hailed them: "All over the marshes we heard them, singing in a steady chorus, each song a gurgling chatter, brief but repeated with hardly time for breath between. When it became light enough, we saw the singing wrens as far as the eye could reach over the marshes . . . The dots were bobbing up and down everywhere, like a natural effervescence given off by the marsh." We hope for the marsh wren's return and a restoration that creates suitable habitat for this special bird.

Discouraging Use of Plastic Bottles

Trash continues unabated and plastic bottles are a major component of the litter that ends up in Dyke Marsh. Two dozen national parks, including the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park, no longer sell water in plastic bottles, now sell reusable bottles and have installed water refill stations. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure to prohibit the NPS Director from approving "a request by a park superintendent to eliminate the sale in national parks of water in disposable, recyclable plastic bottles." You can sign a petition at Food and Water Watch to support NPS's efforts to move away from plastic bottle use and reduce trash in our national parks. The petition is on their website at foodandwaterwatch.org.

Meet the Plants of Dyke Marsh: Yellow Composites of Fall

BY PATRICIA P. SALAMONE

In late summer and early fall the marsh seems to be filled with golden yellow, often daisy-like, flowers. These striking plants are from the family Asteraceae, sometimes called the composite family or daisy family. Members of this family have flowerheads that are made up of many smaller flowers, sometimes of different sizes and shapes. Many composites have ray flowers (like the white petals of a daisy) surrounding a center of disk flowers (small tube-like flowers that are clustered together to form a flat disk, cone, or globe).

A number of these "darned yellow composites"—so called by wildflower lovers because there are so many of them that they can be tricky to identify—can be seen in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale). Sneezeweed is a medium-sized plant (2-5 feet high) with numerous flowerheads. The bright yellow ray flowers are wedge-shaped, and each has three scallops at the tip. The central disk is quite noticeable, being globular in shape; it can be greenish-yellow to golden in color. The leaves are lance-shaped (long and narrow) with a few teeth and are alternate along the stem.

Sneezeweed with numerous flowerheads. Photo: Ned Stone

The Pollinator Program at The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation has designated sneezeweed as having "Special Value to Native Bees," meaning that it is recognized by pollination ecologists as attracting large numbers of native bees. (And, no, its pollen doesn't make you sneeze—the common name comes from the former use of the powdered leaves and disk flowers as a form of snuff.)

Sneezeweed is typically found in thickets, swamps, and wet meadows. Its wetland indicator status for the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain (AGCP) region is facultative wetland (FACW). This means that it is usually a wetland plant (or hydrophyte) but is occasionally found in uplands.

Wingstem (Verbesina alternifolia, formerly known as Actinomeris alternifolia). Another bright yellow fall composite is wingstem, a tall plant (4-8 feet) that has alternating leaves that flow into "wings" (thin ridges running down the stem of the plant), hence the common name. The ray flowers are bright yellow, few in number (only 2-8 per flowerhead), and are reflexed backward from a central disk that has been described as "untidy" and "moplike."

Wingstem is typically found at wood edges and in thickets, and is not particularly a wetland plant; its wetland indicator status for the AGCP region is facultative (FAC), meaning that it commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or a non-hydrophyte. However, it can be found in DMWP along the Haul Road.

Wingstem is a real pollinator magnet. The Pollinator Program at The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation has designated wingstem as having special value to native bees, bumblebees, and honey bees.

Wingstem. Photo by Julie Makin, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflwr. Ctr.

Yellow-flowered or hairy leafcup (Smallanthus uvedalius, formerly Polymnia uvedalia). The yellow flowers of the hairy leafcup are about the same size as those of sneezeweed or wingstem, but they might not be the first thing you notice about this plant because of its size (3-10 feet tall) and its very large, distinctively shaped leaves.

The leaves can be up to a foot long (and 4-12 inches wide) and are palmately lobed, similar in shape to a maple leaf. (A palmate leaf is one in which the veins, lobes, and/or leaflets all radiate from a single point.) The leaves are opposite along the stem, and form a small cup around it at their base, hence the plant's common name.

The flowerheads are in small clusters at the end of branches. The flowerheads typically have 8-12 yellow ray flowers and a relatively flat central disk made up of 40-80 or so yellow tube-like flowers.

Leafcup. Photo by WD and Dolphia Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wldflwr. Ctr.

Yellow-flowered leafcup is not a wetland plant; it is typically found in woodland, thickets, and fields. It can be seen along the Haul Road in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

And More! This is just a small sample of fall's golden composites. Others include goldenrods (Solidago sp.), the tall coneflower (Rudbeckia laciniata) and the showy bur-marigold (Bidens laevis). Stay tuned!

Fairfax County Fish

Fairfax County's Stormwater Planning Division has created a webpage that lists around 60 fish species that can be found in Fairfax County. It includes natives like the American eel and non-natives like the large-mouth bass. The page includes descriptions and extent maps of all fish species found during the past 17 years of biological surveys. Visit http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/stormwater/fish/fishes_of_fx.htm.

Keeping Sediment Out of Dyke Marsh

Storms are severely gouging out streambanks and sending sediment into Dyke Marsh. Photo by Glenda Booth

Fairfax County's project to stop volumes of sediment from flowing into Dyke Marsh West will start on August 8 and likely last until April 2017. During storms, sediment is ripped out of the banks of an unnamed stream uphill and to the west in Mount Vernon District Park and carried downhill into the marsh. Some segments of the stream have been dubbed the "Grand Canyon" because the banks are so severely eroded and are as high as 15 feet. As we reported in our fall 2015 issue, the problem is stormwater runoff and a failing outfall. This project is designed to stabilize the area, restore the stream and stop the sediment. FODM alerted authorities when Dyke Marsh turned orangey-brown during storms and thankfully, the county responded.

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

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.

Welcome New FODM Members

We welcome to the Friends of Dyke Marsh our **new members** Teresa Blier, Marfe Ferguson Delano, Sandy Dunn, Dorothy Feldman, Barbara Goodman, Christine Lederman, Carol Lyon, Steve and Katy May, Mrs. Claire McLeay, Joel Miller, Barbara Rabanal, Rick Reardon, Sara Schreiber, Julianne Shinnick, Dr. Cynthia Sloan and Carol Jean Stalun.

And we welcome our new **Life Members** Clare Marie Shea and Katherine Ward and our conversions to **Life Membership** Mary Engle, David Ledwith, Anita van Breda and Fox Vernon. Thanks to all of you for your support.

Weather Matters

Cloud aficionado and FODMer Barry Sperling, who has given us talks on the weather at Dyke Marsh, in response to requests offers a recommendation for a book on the subject of weather and weather forecasting. The book is Eric Sloane's Weather Book, with clear illustrations and text for the interested adult. He notes as well that both the Audubon Society and the Peterson series have Field Guides to Weather.

Calendar of Events

September 3, 10 a.m. to noon, Marsh Walk: with Dr. Elizabeth Wells, meet at Haul Road, Dyke Marsh.

October 2, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Celebrate FODM and NPS at River Farm. See article page 2 for details.

November 16, 7:30 p.m., FODM fall quarterly meeting at Huntley Meadows Visitors Center.

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. We encourage you to save paper (trees) and mailing costs by becoming a member or renewing your membership online at www.fodm.org. Just click on the "Join" or "Donate" button on our membership page 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 separate notice by mail or by email when your renewal is due. 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).

Great Egrets

Perhaps you have seen numbers of them in Dyke Marsh in recent days. Birding expert Larry Cartwright observes, "They are in post-breeding dispersal and pausing in the Dyke Marsh area before commencing migration. Aquatic vegetation harbors the fish that the birds use to fatten up before starting a migration that will ultimately take them to the coast and areas further south. It is a sure sign that summer is slowly winding down and fall is in the air."

Great egrets visiting Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

The Brown Spatterdock

Spatterdock with brown leaf. Photo by Dorothy McManus

In the late summer and fall, the spatterdock, yellow pond lily or bull-head lily (*Nuphar lutea* (*L.*) *Sm. subsp. advena* (*Aiton*), a common wetland plant in Dyke Marsh, turns brown. Don't be alarmed. NPS officials say that this is normal and is due to a native beetle, *Galerucella nymphaeae* (*Linnaeus*), that eats the leaves.

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