

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

SPRING 2025



FODM 2025 Member Meetings

May 14, 7 p.m., Zoom (see p. 1)

October 22, 7 p.m., Zoom, Beavers

Calendar of Events

Every Sunday, 8 a.m., Bird Walks

Water Testing, 10 a.m. May 15

Bat Walk, 8 p.m., August 23

Ecology Walk, 10 a.m., September 6

Invasive Plant Control, 10 a.m. on May 10 and 24, and June 7 and 21; 9 a.m. on July 5 and 19 and August 2, 16 and 30

Visit www.fodm.org for details and updates.

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The Delusion of Controlling Nature

May 14, 7 p.m.

People have tried to remake landscapes and control nature for years, but some of these plans can go wrong. Join us on May 14, 7 p.m., for a Zoom talk by Stephen Robert Miller on his book, *Over the Seawall, Tsunamis, Cyclones, Drought and the Delusion of Controlling Nature*.

Mr. Miller will discuss several examples of how people were harmed by “the very thing built to protect them” and how some can be exposed to threats they never imagined.

Climate change is presenting existential challenges, he argues, and he wrote that we live on an “increasingly unforgiving planet.” He argues that adapting successfully to climate change means working with nature. Miller is an award-winning, independent journalist who teaches writing at the University of Colorado.

To register for this Zoom meeting, [click here](#) or on the link in the left column of our home page, www.fodm.org.

The meeting’s sponsors are the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions; 350 Fairfax; Sierra Club, Great Falls Group; Four Mile Run Conservancy Foundation; Friends of Huntley Meadows Park; Friends of Accotink Creek; and Friends of Little Hunting Creek.



From *Over the Seawall* by Stephen Robert Miller

Preserving Places and Working with Partners

BY ERIN BARLOW, ACTING CHIEF OF STAFF
GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

As Superintendent of the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP), Jennifer Madello leads efforts to protect the parkway’s historical and natural resources while also maintaining the park’s extensive infrastructure for the millions of parkway users. The parkway extends from McLean in the north to Mount Vernon Estate in the south, offering diverse landscapes and historical sites. The parkway plays a crucial role in connecting people to history, recreation and scenic beauty. With decades of experience in the National Park Service (NPS), Ms. Madello brings expertise in financial management, infrastructure management and interagency collaboration. (FODM published an article about Superintendent Madello in the winter Marsh Wren.)

SEE PRESERVING PLACES ON PAGE 2

Superintendent Madello’s priorities include preserving the parkway’s historic and natural resources and improving infrastructure. One major initiative is rehabilitating the parkway’s northern section to ensure safer and more efficient travel. Restoration work is also underway at the Clara Barton National Historic Site, reinforcing our commitment to historic preservation.

Collaboration with partners, community organizations and local leaders is a key part of Ms. Madello’s approach. She looks forward to engaging with groups like the Friends of Dyke Marsh. Your mission aligns closely with the NPS’s goals of environmental stewardship, habitat restoration and fostering public appreciation of this important natural resource. By working together, NPS and the Friends of Dyke Marsh can enhance conservation efforts and protect this vital ecosystem for future generations.

Superintendent Madello is grateful for the passion and support of the Friends of Dyke Marsh and looks forward to seeing the new wayside on the boardwalk that will explain the restoration-stabilization project. Joint projects like these highlight how partnerships can bring tangible improvements to our parks.

With the transition to a new Presidential administration, NPS is adapting to evolving federal priorities and policies. Superintendent Madello is committed to working with the Department of the Interior’s leadership and other federal agencies to ensure that the parkway’s projects and conservation initiatives remain a priority.

NPS is hiring seasonal workers to continue enhancing the visitor experience as we embrace new opportunities for optimization and innovation in workforce management. We want every visitor to have the chance to explore and connect with the incredible, iconic spaces of our national parks.

With a focus on conservation, infra-structure enhancements and community engagement, Superintendent Madello remains dedicated to ensuring that the George Washington Memorial Parkway and its units, like the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, remain well-preserved resources for future generations.



GWMP Superintendent
Jennifer Madello

FODM Election, Board Changes

At the February 23 FODM annual meeting, members elected the officers and Board members listed below. Shortly after the meeting, our treasurer, Matthew Smith, accepted a job offer requiring him to move out of the area and on March 24 the Board of Directors appointed Charles Jackson as our treasurer.

We send a big thank you to our long-serving, dedicated Board member and former vice president and treasurer, Dixie Sommers and to Matthew. Welcome new Board members Kay Bushman, Scott Cameron and Charles Jackson.

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or our **Facebook** page.

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Board members can receive emails at info@fodm.org. *The Marsh Wren* is a 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 post office or email address at the left.



President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Ecological Empathy

I came across an inspiring term -- “ecological empathy,” the concept and potential for reconnecting humans with nature for the mutual benefit of environmental protection, coined by Lauren Lambert, founder of a consulting firm called Future Now.

“Ecological empathy as I define it [is] essentially a framework of practice for how to use empathy as a guide to connect to the more-than-human world and integrate our interdependence and relationships with the more-than-human world in everyday thinking, everyday practice and specifically in the places where we work,” she said as quoted on Mongabay. The article cites as one example wildlife crossings under highways, like the one on the Fairfax County Parkway near Fort Belvoir.

Support Our Parks

We’ve heard many troubling reports about efforts to reduce staffing and dismantle, defund and even sell federal public lands. We joined 494 other organizations on a letter initiated by the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) objecting to arbitrary National Park Service (NPS) staff cuts. We were told that the George Washington Memorial Parkway had a 20 percent staffing deficit in early February.

For all national parks, between 2010 and 2023, staffing eroded by 20 percent while visitation grew by 16 percent, reports NPCA. NPS reported the highest visitation in its history in 2024, more than 331 million visits. As summer approaches, the stresses will multiply.

We must stand by our dedicated National Park Service employees – rangers, biologists, historians, maintenance personnel, all. Most are devoting their lives to public service, to protecting our precious natural, cultural and historic resources and encouraging the public become better stewards.

“Parks protect things we’re not even aware of . . . they provide answers to questions we haven’t thought of yet,” said Deny Galvin, a former NPS deputy director. Park employees are the lifeblood of our national parks.

Some of Our Projects

For some time, we have worked with NPS to develop a new wayside on the boardwalk explaining the restoration and stabilization project, thanks in part to a donation from the Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Association. Along those lines, a contractor, Coastal Design and Con-

struction, has added stones to the existing sills, reports Mark Maloy, Visual Information Specialist.

This work is designed to address settling of the sills installed in 2020. Mark reports that the contractors flattened out the existing stones and placed larger stones on top. Like the breakwater in the south marsh, the sills were built to help stabilize the marsh and encourage sediment accretion.

Our March 22 trash cleanup, at which we partnered with NPS and three “sister” groups, yielded 2,505 pounds. We have planted more black willow stakes to stem erosion and we continue to finance the treatment of 18 pumpkin ash trees. Our breeding bird, butterfly and dragonfly surveys will start soon. Sign up!

Stores Must Label Invasive Plants

Virginia has a new law, effective January 1, 2027, requiring retailers to post signs for certain outdoor plants indicating that the plant is an invasive species. The goal is to help educate customers and retailers about invasive plants and to encourage people to plant native plants. The law applies to 39 plants specifically named, including, for example, wisteria, English ivy, burning bush and butterfly bush. We thank the bill’s sponsors, Delegate Holly Siebold (HB1941) and Senator Saddam Salim (SB1166) for introducing the bills, the legislators who voted for them and Governor Glenn Youngkin who signed the bill into law.

Congratulations to FODM Board member Deborah Hammer who received a scholarship to attend educator’s week at Maine’s Hog Island Audubon Camp. Deborah is an autism and low-incidence specialist.

We must “. . . work hard to save the swamps. As we say in the wetlands, ‘Rib-bit-ribbit-knee-deep-ribbit,’ which means, may success and a smile



always be yours even when you’re knee-deep in the sticky muck of life.” -- Kermit the Frog, Washington Post, March 27, 2025

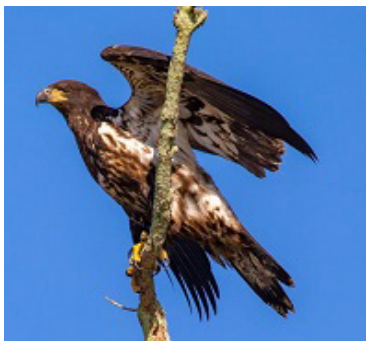
What Are the Eagles at Dyke Marsh Doing in April and May?

BY LARRY CARTWRIGHT

Many people are enjoying “our” bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) this spring. Their eggs usually hatch by early March and by April 1, nestlings are usually large enough for observers to see them.

While nestlings are still small, adults bring fish to the nest and rip them into pieces small enough for the young to swallow. The young grow rapidly and by the end of April, the nestlings are big enough to tear the fish up themselves and eat on their own. In May, nestlings begin wing flapping as they prepare for their first flight. This activity continues until the first week of June when the young fledge.

The easiest nest to observe is the one along the Haul Road Trail across from the overlook we nicknamed “Dead Beaver Beach.” The breeding pair has successfully fledged young since 2019, the year they began nesting at this location.



Juvenile bald eagle
Photo by Glenn Mai



Bald eagle pair Photo by Glenn Mai



Eagle with nestling Photo by Ed Eder

Back to Basics: What Is a Watershed?

“A watershed is an area of land where all water, whether from rain, snowmelt, springs or streams, flows toward a common body of water, such as a river, lake or even an ocean,” according to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.

The U.S. Geological Survey offers this definition: “A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay or any point along a stream channel.”

Watersheds, also called “basins” and “catchments,” can be small or thousands of square miles in size, like the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Water flows to the lowest point it can find. Water sources can include streams, rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Water from many sources flows from higher ground smaller waterbodies to progressively larger ones, all ending up at a final destination, the large waterbody.

The Potomac River watershed spans four states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Water from its 14,670 square miles drains towards the mouth of the Potomac where the river flows into the Chesapeake Bay. The Potomac basin is the second largest watershed in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For some Potomac River facts, visit <https://www.potomacriver.org/potomac-basin-facts/>.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed stretches across 64,000 square miles in five states, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland,

Virginia and West Virginia and Washington, D.C. Visit <https://www.allianceforthebay.org>.

What happens upstream has impacts downstream.



Chesapeake Bay Watershed
Map from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Mixed News on Butterflies

BY GLENDA BOOTH

The total abundance of butterflies fell by 22 percent between 2000 and 2020, concluded a study published on March 6 in Science. Declines occurred in all families.

“Our study found that the total number of butterflies declined by 1.3 percent a year. That may not sound like much, but it means that for every five butterflies seen 20 years ago, now there are only four, which adds up quickly, and it means we’ve lost more than 20 percent of butterflies in just 20 years,” said Collin Edwards, the lead author quoted by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. “This is a wake-up call for the need to conserve butterflies and their habitat.”

The study, considered to be the most complete so far, found ten times as many declining species as increasing species with 107 species declining by more than 50 percent and 22 species declining by more than 90 percent. Four species declined by 99 percent. Only nine species showed increases in numbers.

Contributing factors are habitat loss, pesticide use and climate change. “Butterflies need host plants on which to lay eggs, wildflowers on which to feed, a refuge from pesticides and sites to overwinter,” said Scott Black, director of the Xerces Society and study co-author. “There is hope for these animals if we focus on providing habitat for butterflies across all landscapes, from cities and towns to agricultural lands to natural areas.”

FODMer Larry Meade, who leads butterfly surveys, said, “As is true for the decline in bird populations, habitat loss and pesticides are major factors in the drop in



Buckeye butterflies (*Junonia coenia*) Photo by Bob Veltkamp

butterfly numbers. Fortunately, insects are more resilient than birds and their populations can recover fairly quickly if given a chance. People can help by planting native plants and advocating for reduced pesticide use in their communities.”

Some Cautious, Good Butterfly News

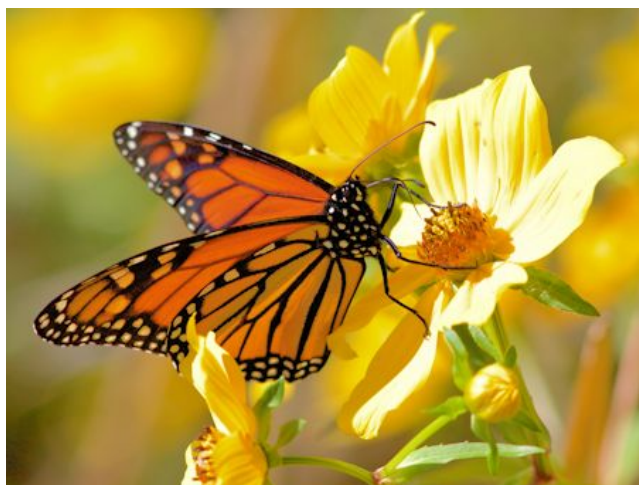
Eastern monarch butterfly numbers (*Danaus plexippus*) rebounded this winter, according to World Wildlife Fund-Mexico experts who annually survey the number of acres these butterflies cover as they gather on oyamel fir trees in Mexico’s mountains. Monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains overwinter there. (A western monarch population overwinters in California. That population declined.)

Though some fluctuations in numbers are normal, some people have had concerns in recent years about the monarchs’ status. Measuring the area where monarchs hibernate each winter is considered to be a reliable indicator of the eastern monarch’s population status.

“While an increase is great news, the numbers in Mexico are still well below historic norms,” said Scott Black, director of the Xerces Society.

These orange and black butterflies migrate through the United States and go as far north as Canada in the summer. They lay their eggs on milkweed, their host plant. FODMers and NPS have planted milkweed along the Haul Road Trail to restore disturbed habitat and support more native insects.

To encourage the monarch’s protection, in December, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed that this butterfly be listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.



Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) Photo by Ed Eder

Meet the Plants: Mayapple

BY ALYSSA SCHAAF, FODM Intern

The mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) is a native, perennial wildflower that grows in damp, nutrient-rich and partly-shaded areas of Dyke Marsh. Mayapple leaves resemble a duck's webbed feet. The common name refers to the fruit that usually appears in May. Other common names include mandrake, wild lemon, raccoon berry, wild jalap, devil's-apple, hog apple, Indian apple and umbrella plant.

These plants typically emerge in March. Their rhizomes elongate about six to 20 centimeters each year and over time, this results in colonies. The lobed leaves stoop to form an umbrella-like appearance before opening horizontally over a few weeks. Standing at about 12 to 24 inches tall and up to 12 inches wide, they may contain either one or two large leaves.

The two-leafed plant produces a single white, fragrant flower with six or more petals that appears under the leaves at the separation of the stem. The flowers are often overlooked because they are hidden from the view above. Inside the flowers, bright yellow anthers bear pollen, but the flowers do not produce nectar. The mayapple is used by many native insect species that pollinate and allow the plant to spread and form new colonies, as well as enable the plant to produce an apple fruit later in the season.

While mayapple fruits are edible when ripe, the unripe fruits and the rest of the plant are poisonous. Mayapple is a larval host for the variegated fritillary butterfly (*Euptoieta*



Mayapple plants Photo by Margaret Chatham

claudia).

In late summer, the one-two-inch apples ripen and the supporting leaf dies. The apples fall or the stalk bends under the weight, allowing them to rest on the ground, where they can be eaten by wildlife. These apples are a valuable food source for many wildlife species, including turtles, rodents, birds and insects. Box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) are important contributors to the distribution of mayapples as they often eat from the ripe fruit and excrete the seeds which are then germinated and dispersed.

Mayapples protect and strengthen the soil's structural integrity. As a rhizomatous perennial, the mayapple often survives years of adverse environmental conditions, including harsh winters, extreme heat and even trampling. Rhizomes are protective plant stems that produce roots. These roots can be as

long as six feet as they spread beneath the plant horizontally. These extensive root systems bind the soil, helping prevent erosion.

Some Indigenous people used this plant for several medicinal purposes. The plant's resinous material can help treat warts. Derivatives of podophyllotoxin, a toxic molecule, are used to treat some forms of cancer.

The Virginia Native Plant Society chose the mayapple as the wildflower of the year 2025. Visit <https://vnps.org/wildflower-of-the-year-2025-mayapple-podophyllum-peltatum/>.



Mayapple plants Photo by Nancy Vehrs

FODM's Wildlife Camera

BY MIKAELA DAY, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES STUDENT

I am a 23-year-old STEM student preparing for a degree and career in environmental sciences. I have worked with the Fairfax County Park Authority as a naturalist interpreter and am currently working with Earth Sangha's native plant nursery as a plant conservation intern.

In September, I began to assist David Barbour in his management of a camera in Dyke Marsh intended to document river otters, minks and other small mammals that live locally. As someone familiar with studying and explaining animal behavior, I have been excited to bring new perspective to the project and help attain footage of the target species.

When I started, the project was three-and-a-half years old, but for me, it was almost like being there from the beginning because David had purchased a new camera and I had the opportunity to learn about camera set-up, procedures and plans.

In mid-December, we were ready to do a few trial runs with the camera and make sure the settings were going to work well for our goals. We set up the camera and got footage of raccoons, foxes, possums, deer and other critters, but no minks, weasels or river otters, wildlife that we expect to be present in Dyke Marsh. Are any of the latter three in Dyke Marsh? We will continue to try to find out.

One of the foxes that the camera captured had a stumpy tail, possibly due to a past injury, which was an interesting and unique find. Overall, our camera, gear and set-up have worked well. We will continue to identify prime locations and capture



Mikaela Day

footage of these small mammals.

This work has been exciting and helped strengthen my experience, learning and creativity. Please stay tuned as we try to document these amazing creatures who contribute to northern Virginia ecosystems and their biodiversity.



Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) in Dyke Marsh with abnormal tail From the FODM wildlife camera

Report Turtle Sightings

Some Virginia Tech wildlife biologists who are conducting surveys of turtles ask that we report sightings of eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) and spotted turtles (*Clemmys guttata*), to support their study in 15 eastern U.S. national parks, including the GW Memorial Parkway.

What to Report

- species
- date
- time
- location. A pin on a map or precise coordinates are ideal (latitude and longitude). Otherwise, provide a comprehensive description of the exact place it was found written for someone who is not as familiar with Dyke Marsh as you are.



Photo by Michelle Weaver

On April 8, 2025, Dr. Jones came to Dyke Marsh and found a dead eastern box turtle on one of the beaches. He said the turtle was a female, “freshly dead” and at least 50 years old. He saw no signs that it was unhealthy.

What to look for

- Spotted turtles use shallow wetland and pond areas that are not too silty (hard floor), typically with available leaf litter and some vegetation. They can sometimes be found basking on logs and vegetated mounds. These areas are unlikely to be very close to the river and more likely to be on the outskirts of marsh and larger pond areas.
- Eastern box turtles use almost all forested habitat and will rarely move into water. They typically prefer medium to low canopy cover and they shelter next to fallen logs and other dense branches and understory cover.

Where to Report

Email Max Dolton Jones at maxdoltonjones@vt.edu, Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Virginia Tech

Descriptions

Eastern box turtle: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/eastern-box-turtle/>

Spotted turtle: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/spotted-turtle/>

GRAY SQUIRREL FROM PAGE 12

The gray squirrel builds a nest or drey about 30 feet off the ground, clumps of leaves and small branches, that are very visible in winter. Females have one or two litters per year, with two to three young per litter.

This mammal is active year-round and typically moves within about 200 yards daily, according to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Squirrels can be very vocal, using a range of calls from warning barks, chucks, mews, purrs and tooth chattering, for example.

Squirrels have been part of traditional Indigenous and U.S. southern cuisine, with squirrel gravy a beloved dish in some southern kitchens. Springdale, Arkansas, has an World Champion Squirrel Cook-off every year.



Photo from Lost River Cave

Alexandrians have recently reported sightings of a pure white or albino eastern gray squirrel in south Old Town. For both white and “blonde” squirrels, there’s a one in 100,000 chance of one being born.

Potomac Riverkeeper Collected Air Wreckage Debris

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

This article was published in the March 6, 2025, Mount Vernon Gazette newspaper.

On January 29 around 9 p.m., Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks was relaxing at home watching a movie on Netflix when Betsy Nicholas, his organization's vice president called and said, "Turn on the news." The news kept him up all night.

American Airlines flight 5342 from Wichita, Kansas, landing at Reagan National Airport, collided with a southbound Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River near the airport in 35-degree weather. Both plummeted into the icy waters. Around 11:30 p.m., Naujoks heard that no one had survived. That night, he debated with himself about what he could and should do.

In a February 19 online talk, Naujoks told participants that the next morning at sunrise he decided to try to help. He went to the Daingerfield Island Marina, where his boat is kept, within sight of the airport, and met Alexandria police officers. "It was eerily calm, a quiet, gray, cold day," he recalled. A man who docked his pontoon boat there had found some



FBI and Alexandria Police officers told Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper, he could go out on the river if he stayed away from the crash site. He headed down river toward Alexandria, finding debris fields and parts of the plane in an area most boats don't go or know how to access on the Maryland side. "Everything reeked of jet fuel," he said. Photo from Facebook, Potomac Riverkeeper

airplane debris on the river so the police called the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to retrieve it.

"I was there to help and provide assistance," Naujoks stressed. He got permission from the FBI to go out on the river, as long as he stayed away from the crash site. Having intimate knowledge of the river, Naujoks surmised that based on the outgoing tide and wind direction, debris would likely collect in Oxon Cove and Smoot's Cove two miles down river near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, places where most boaters rarely go.

Navigating in these coves is "tricky," he said. An inexperienced boater could run aground easily in Oxon Cove and a rock jetty in Smoot's Cove "can rip your prop off."



Airplanes arriving from the south fly over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge/I-95/I-495. Bottom left, Porto Vecchio and Bridgeyard condominiums in Alexandria. Photo by Glenda Booth

What Did He Find?

There was debris "all over the place," he said. "It was eerie." He collected items like yellow foam from the airplane, a metal handle that probably came from an emergency exit and a sweater. The largest pieces he snagged were a seat and a window. He found packets of sugar and a shredded landing gear manual. Bags of chips "perfectly intact" were floating in the water. Everything was coated in jet fuel.

Once back at the marina, he put it all in a cart and contacted the Alexandria Police Department who turned it over to the FBI. Later, others also spotted debris near Maryland's National Harbor.

On his experience, he said that "driving the boat, retrieving wreckage and dodging

SEE **DEBRIS COLLECTION** ON PAGE 10

ice floes, it was a hectic day on the river. It was very intense and I was terrified I'd come across something I did not want to see."

On the Sunday after the Wednesday crash, FBI officials called Naujoks because of his knowledge of the river. They wanted to go into Oxon and Smoot's Coves so he guided them there by phone using visual landmarks.

Jet Fuel Everywhere

Everything was covered with jet fuel, Naujoks told listeners. WTOP radio reported that many of the 300 first responders were covered with jet fuel and some developed rashes and lost their sense of taste and smell temporarily from the exposure.

Two days after the crash, people observed a fuel sheen and fish kills near Alexandria's waterfront, Naujoks said. He contacted several academic experts to learn about the fuel's chemical components and the risks of exposure to the fuel. He believes that much of the jet fuel volatilized into the air and some came down on Alexandria rooftops as atmospheric deposition.

He is hoping that a state agency or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will take some water

samples, testing that he described as very expensive. And while his network has a water testing program, they do not have the resources to do this kind of testing.

"No one knows how far south the jet fuel went," he said. To be safe, PRKN cancelled their annual "polar bear plunge" at National Harbor the weekend after the crash.

Asked if it is safe to eat fish caught in the Potomac, he recommended following the states' fish advisories. He does not know the true impact of the fuel on fish. Long-term exposures to pollutants are typically more dangerous than pollution from a one-time event, he maintained.

"I would never tell anyone to stay away from this amazing river," he said, and summarized, "I was grateful for the opportunity to help and to experience what was happening in the river. You serve as a witness to what's happening to the river, the good, bad and ugly. We are the watchdog and defender."

The Collision

The collision was the deadliest airplane crash in the country since 2001, many

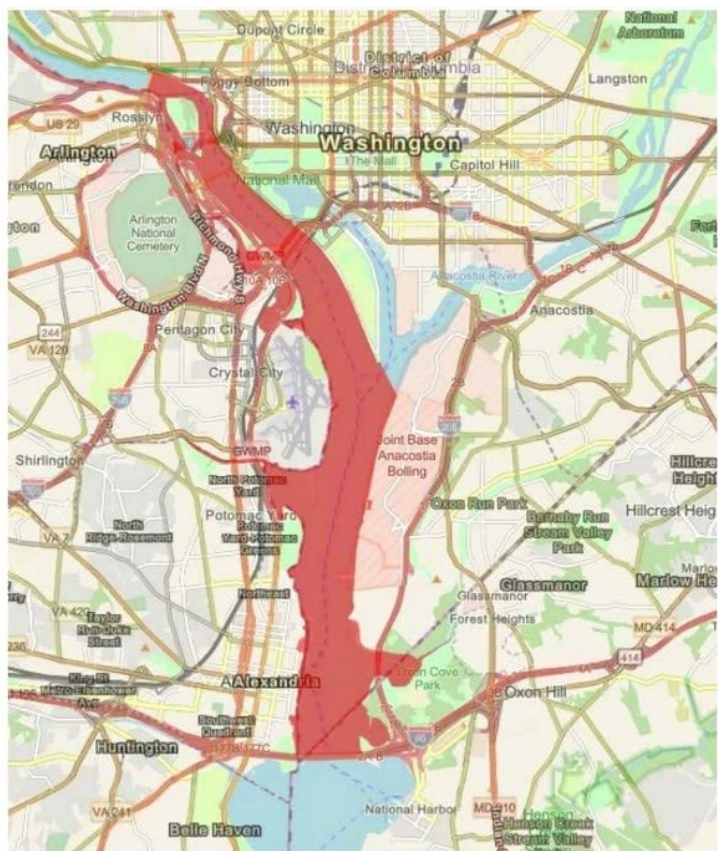
media outlets reported, when a jet slammed into a New York City neighborhood after takeoff, killing all 260 people on board and five more on the ground. A region-wide alert for the January 29 Potomac River collision brought in 300 first responders from the District, Virginia and Maryland, as far away as Baltimore and the Eastern Shore.

"It was a horrible tragedy, one of the saddest days on the Potomac River ever," Naujoks concluded.

The Potomac Riverkeeper Network's mission is "to protect the right to clean water for all communities and all those who live in and rely upon the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds by stopping pollution, making drinking water safe, protecting healthy river habitats and enhancing use and enjoyment for all." Visit www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org/

If You See Debris

If you see suspected debris from the collision, do not touch it, Naujoks advises. Call 911. Photographs of visual evidence and GPS coordinates are helpful to authorities. The network's hotline is 336-809-6041 or www.waterreporter.org/.



Restricted zone after the collision Map by U.S.Coast Guard

A Front Row "Seat" for Bird Watching

Wildlife cameras like these provide up-close looks at our avian friends raising their young this spring:

The Falcon Cam in Richmond features a peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) pair nesting on the downtown Riverfront Plaza Building. This pair has been nesting there since 2021 and have raised four chicks together every year. Check them out at <https://dwr.virginia.gov/falcon-cam/>.

You can watch a pair of ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) on Virginia's York River on the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Osprey Cam at <https://www.vims.edu/bayinfo/ospreycam/>.

In this nest at Port Tobacco, Maryland, two young bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are growing up quickly. The Fish and Wildlife Service says, "In twelve weeks, from mid-March to mid-



Peregrine falcon near Woodrow Wilson Bridge Photo by Ed Eder

June, the young eagles grow incredibly fast, and the adult-sized young will first leave the nest (fledge) in mid-June. The juvenile eagles will then spend the summer months near the river with the adults to hone their fishing and hunting skills." Visit <https://porttobaccoriver.org/eagle-cam/>.

Welcome New FODM Members

FODM welcomes our **new members**: Sheila Callahan, Jo Doumbia, Gary Keller, Patricia Kyle, Suzanne Lepple, Kezia Manese, Sherry McDonald, Marie Price, Robert Shapiro, Fred Siskind, Ted and Lynn Thompson. We welcome our **new life member** Lynda Parker.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks

FODM holds bird walks on 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.

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

FODM Membership, Dues and Contributions

Support the Friends of Dyke Marsh by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Benefits include the newsletter, The Marsh Wren; membership meetings with knowledgeable speakers; bird and nature 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, its protection and full restoration. Use the QR code below or visit www.fodm.org/membership.html to go to our membership page. Then click on the "Join" or "Donate" button to make your tax-deductible contribution by credit card or from your bank account securely through PayPal. For help, email 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 \$20 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
supporting FODM.

Use this QR code
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Please address any questions or comments about *The Marsh Wren* to Glenda Booth 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).

The Gray Squirrel, a Common Sighting

One of the most frequently seen mammals in Dyke Marsh and Northern Virginia is the gray squirrel, (*Sciurus carolinensis carolinensis*). This squirrel is normally gray with some yellow-brown on its face and a whitish belly, but some can be very light in color or even black. The gray squirrel weighs 16 to 18 ounces and is 12 to 21 inches long. It is larger than the red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus abieticola*) and smaller than the southeastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*).

Gray squirrels eat nuts, seeds, wild fruit, tree flowers and corn. They bury nuts, a process called “caching,” and do not always retrieve the nuts, which can result in trees, like oaks, reseeded. Squirrels also visit bird feeders. Because as rodents they must file down their continuously growing teeth, they leave gnawed off branches or stems on the ground at times. Their chewing can damage wood, roofs and wiring.



Most eastern gray squirrels are gray, but occasionally people spot a golden brown or cream-colored squirrel. Some scientists say this is likely caused by a genetic mutation called melanism. Others say it could be age. Photo by Glenda Booth

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