

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

WINTER 2026



FODM 2026 Member Meetings

March 8, 3 p.m. (see p.1)

May 13, 7 p.m., Zoom, Alonso Abugattas, Nature's Puzzle

Calendar of Events

Birding **every Sunday**, 8 a.m.

Butterfly/Dragonfly Workshop,

March 18, 7 p.m., online

Plant Native Plants, **April 18** (rain date May 2)

Trash Cleanup, **May 2**

See page 11 for more.

Check www.fodm.org for details.

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Virginia's Amazing Vultures

March 8, 3 p.m.

Join us on Sunday, March 8, 3 p.m., for wildlife rehabilitator Heather Shank-Givens's presentation on Virginia's fascinating vultures and meet wildlife ambassador, black vulture, Dusty.

Vultures are a critical component of the ecosystem but are frequently misunderstood and maligned. The Wildlife Center of Virginia treats from 50 to 60 injured black and turkey vultures every year. The talk will explore the natural history of vultures in Virginia, the unique biology and ecology of vultures, global conservation concerns, human-vulture conflicts and mitigation strategies.



Dusty, the black vulture
Photo by Heather Shank-Givens

Ms. Shank-Givens is a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator with Blue Ridge Wildlife Center and a wildlife educator. She holds federal and state permits for a non-releasable vulture.

In 2020, Shank-Givens traveled to South Africa and volunteered with VulPro to support the rescue, rehabilitation and captive breeding of endangered Cape vultures (*Gyps coprotheres*) and African white-backed vultures (*Gyps Africanus*). She and her spouse live with Dusty, ducks, chickens, cats, a hermit crab, snake, turtle, bees and vermiculture worms.

The meeting will be at 3 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parkers Lane in the Mount Vernon area.



Legislators Commend FODM's 50 Years

In honor of FODM's 50th anniversary in 2026, Virginia Senator Scott Surovell introduced SJ37 and Delegate Paul Krizek introduced HJ84, identical bills, in the Virginia General Assembly, commending the Friends of Dyke Marsh. The text of the proposed bills follows.

SEE LEGISLATORS COMMEND FODM ON PAGE 4

Annual Meeting and Election on March 8

At the March 8 meeting, also FODM's annual meeting, members will elect officers and the Board of Directors. The proposed nominees, all of whom have agreed to serve, are listed below. Other nominations can be considered at the meeting.

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 March 4. For people who receive the newsletter by email, we will send you a separate email with the proxy and instructions. You can reply by email. Please send your proxy if you cannot attend.

All of the candidates are incumbents except Edie Juno. Ms. Juno is an Alexandrian and environmental policy professional who focuses on climate, clean energy and land use policy and has previously worked on urban forests and wildlife management.

Nominees

Glenda Booth, President
Stacy Langsdale, Vice President
Katya Wanzer, Secretary
Charles Jackson, Treasurer
Scott Cameron
Carolyn Gamble

Jim Gearing
Deborah Hammer
Edie Juno
Dorothy McManus
Clarence Monteiro
Randy Myers
Ed Eder, Past President

Many Thanks

We send a big thank you to Bob Veltkamp who will leave the Board of Directors. For 13 years, Bob has managed our membership and for the last 10 our website, among many other tasks. Fortunately,

he will continue to be involved.

We also thank Kay Bushman for her service on the Board and are grateful that she will continue to organize our Sunday bird outings.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FROM PAGE 12

en route to Mason Neck where over 200 are spending the winter.

In this citizen science project, volunteers count all birds seen or heard within a specific 15-mile diameter circle. The trip report is here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/447163>.

This annual count dates to 1900, started as an alternative to a competition of killing birds. Between December 14 and January 5, thousands of volunteers counted birds across the U.S.

The Value of Volunteers

"The value of a volunteer in 2025 was \$34.79 per hour. With your group's contributions of 1,532 hours last year, you were a cost benefit to the government of \$53,298.28." -- Scott Hill, Acting South District Supervisor, Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator, George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Park Service

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Visit our website at

www.fodm.org

or our **Facebook** page.

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Friends of Dyke Marsh Board of Directors

President

Glenda Booth
703-765-5233

Vice President

Stacy Langsdale

Secretary

Katya Wanzer

Treasurer

Charles Jackson

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Ed Eder (Past President)

Robert Veltkamp (Membership)

Kay Bushman

Scott Cameron

Carolyn Gamble

Jim Gearing

Deborah Hammer

Dorothy McManus

Clarence Monteiro

Randy Myers

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

"Take the long view," urged Jeff Reinbold, President of the National Parks Foundation, "and be there in the long run. Don't be afraid to be bold. There's nothing more American than our national parks." Reinbold was boosting the spirits of over 100 parks' friends' groups from across the nation at their annual meeting last fall.

"We are in choppy waters," remarked Katie Nyberg, Executive Director of the National Park Friends Alliance, at a January 23 meeting of Washington-area national parks friends' groups. As stewardship of our natural resources and our national parks seem to be a low priority for many federal officials today, we charge on for the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

The Virginia General Assembly is considering two bills honoring the 50th anniversary of the Friends of Dyke Marsh. You can read one in this newsletter. Senator Scott Surovell introduced SJ37 and Delegate Paul Krizek introduced an identical bill, HJ84. We hope you will urge your state legislators to vote for the bills.

What Is FODM Doing?

Working with the Great Falls Sierra Club, we will plant some native plants this spring, thanks to a \$1,200 grant we helped them prepare. The plants will include common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), as recommended by National Park Service (NPS) staff.

Thanks to a Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation grant, we hired Invasive Plant Control to treat four areas for invasive plants. We hope NPS will also treat more soon. Invasive plants are rampant and most give little support to native insects, birds and other wildlife. We need more funds for more invasive treatments.

Our butterfly-dragonfly survey team completed 10 years of surveys this year and our expert leader, Jim Waggener, has turned over the reins to Laura McDonald. Thank you both for your dedication. Our expert birders helped with the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. We continue to manage a wildlife camera.

More News

We send a shoutout to local teen, Nico Danielson, who installed a new bench along the Haul Road Trail in December for his Eagle Scout project.

In November, Northern Virginia magazine spotlighted accessible trails. The trail paralleling the parkway through Dyke Marsh topped the list. The article said, "Northern

Virginia is home to an array of accessible trails designed to make nature more inclusive for everyone. Whether you're seeking a peaceful garden stroll, a lakeside loop, or a scenic riverside pathway, this region offers trails for all levels of mobility.

"This 4.4-mile stretch of the 18-mile Mount Vernon Trail features beautiful views of Dyke Marsh, the Potomac River and National Harbor. It's paved and mostly level, with a gentle grade under five percent, according to All Trails, though there is one steeper section with an eight percent grade where wheelchair and stroller users might need assistance. The trail is accessible year-round . . ."

We have sent many petitions to our two Virginia U.S. Senators, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, and three Northern Virginia members of the House of Representatives: Congressmen Don Beyer, James Walkinshaw and Suhas Subramanyam. We request that they not reduce national parks funds or staff.



President Glenda Booth and Eighth District Congressman Don Beyer



President Glenda Booth and Eleventh District Congressman James Walkinshaw

The National Parks Conservation Association asks national park supporters to urge members of Congress to fund our parks "so they can remain open, staffed and protected." To send a message to Congress, visit <https://www.npca.org/issues/ensuring-park-funding>.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 37

Offered January 16, 2026

Commending the Friends of Dyke Marsh.

Patrons—Surovell; Delegate: Krizek

WHEREAS, for 50 years, the Friends of Dyke Marsh has supported the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, a 480-acre freshwater tidal wetland on the Potomac River in Fairfax County and one of the last freshwater tidal marshes in the Washington, D.C., area; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the United States Congress designated Dyke Marsh as an “irreplaceable wetland” and added it to the National Park System “so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount”; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is currently managed by the U.S. National Park Service as a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve has diverse habitats of open water, tidal, narrowleaf cattail marsh, and deciduous swamp forest, that are home to at least 300 species of plants, thousands of arthropods, 38 fish, 25 reptiles, 22 amphibians, and more than 294 species of birds, including 40 species of marsh-breeding birds; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is one of the most significant temperate, climax, riverine, narrowleaf cattail marshes in the National Park System, a remnant of marshes that once lined the Potomac River; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve faces many challenges, including erosion, pollution, climate change, trash, runoff, invasive species, and noise; nearly half of the marsh's original 650 acres of wetland were undermined or destroyed by commercial dredging, which fundamentally destabilized the delicate wetland hydrology and ecology; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1970s, several Northern Virginia residents and other stakeholders became increasingly concerned about human and natural threats to the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and began to organize a community group to preserve the marsh and advocate for its survival; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh, a partner of the U.S. National Park Service, was officially incorporated in 1976 to preserve, restore, and stabilize this valuable wetland ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh supports full restoration and stabilization of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, helps garner public support, works with officials at all levels of government, and works to secure funding for restoration and stabilization; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh sponsors scientific studies, educational programs, stewardship activities, nature walks, trash cleanups, and invasive plant control work; the organization also conducts biological surveys and organizes engaging activities for the public; and

WHEREAS, after the U.S. Geological Survey determined that the marsh was in a net erosional state and could be completely gone by 2035 without action, the U.S. National Park Service prepared a marsh restoration plan in conjunction with the Friends of Dyke Marsh and local officials; and

SEE LEGISLATORS COMMEND FODM ON PAGE 5

LEGISLATORS COMMEND FODM FROM PAGE 4

WHEREAS, as part of the plan, the U.S. National Park Service constructed a breakwater in 2020 to replicate the promontory removed by past dredging and built rock sills in 2022 to help provide a buffer against storms, stem erosion, and encourage sediment accretion; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, the National Park System includes many natural treasures, recreational resources, scenic seashores, and historical monuments, grounds, and structures; in 2024, spending by more than 332,000 National Park visitors resulted in a \$56.3 million benefit to the nation's economy; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. National Park Service will commemorate its 110th anniversary in 2026, providing a historic opportunity to strengthen public and governmental commitment to the National Park System and to continue protecting and restoring the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Friends of Dyke Marsh on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 2026; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Friends of Dyke Marsh as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's ongoing commitment to supporting the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and preserving the Commonwealth's valuable natural resources.

A Confluence of Connections: The Glory of Dyke Marsh

BY DANIEL BLIER, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Partnership Coordinator

The George Washington Memorial Parkway connects people. Sometimes, it connects people to the past through our shared history. At other times, it connects people to the future through the Park Service's mission of preservation. Perhaps most profound, though, is that it connects people in the present -- to each other, to our communities and to the world around us.

At Dyke Marsh, this confluence of connections comes together to create a truly special place. A habitat that has been home to dozens of species for thousands of years reminds visitors of our natural heritage. Meanwhile, vehicles zooming up and down the south Parkway, bicyclists using the Mount Vernon Trail, planes beginning their descent into Ronald Reagan National Airport and water taxis ferrying passengers across the Potomac River situate visitors to Dyke Marsh within the community that surrounds us today.

The Friends of Dyke Marsh are an integral part of building connections to the future. Much work goes into making Dyke Marsh the best resource it can be and preserving its ecological services. Volunteer stewards control invasive plant growth, replenish native plant populations and collect litter. The Friends of Dyke Marsh extend the reach and influence of this beautiful wetland, introducing others to the marsh through walks and opportunities to learn about nature. These programs leave people with special memories and inspire stewardship.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as the George Washington Memorial Parkway's Partnership Coordinator. As a frontline visitor services employee on

the Parkway since 2020, I have witnessed firsthand the value of the work performed by the Friends of Dyke Marsh every year. Thank you for everything that you do. I am looking forward to doing whatever I can to support you. It is my fervent hope that together, our work will preserve Dyke Marsh as a treasure for the future.



Daniel Blier, Fort Hunt Lead and Partnership Coordinator (Acting) for the George Washington Memorial Parkway

How Did the Friends of Dyke Marsh Start and Why?

BY DOROTHY MCMANUS, Board of Directors

Dyke Marsh, a local and national treasure, has always drawn us, from our Indigenous ancestors of the Algonquian-speaking people of the Potomac River Valley to us moderns today. The marsh provided and continues to provide us sustenance of all kinds -- practical, philosophical, spiritual, ecological (think flood control and shoreline stabilization), educational, recreational, economic, commercial and yes, civic.

Tidal freshwater marshes like Dyke Marsh were once extensive along the coastal plain rivers of the mid-Atlantic, but after centuries of development many have been reduced to a few remnants. Dyke Marsh, greatly attenuated, is one.

Threats of losing Dyke Marsh were highlighted by naturalists like Louis Halle, Irston Barnes and Jackson Abbott, by hunters, activists, elected officials and many others, people familiar with the marsh's waterways, plants, wildlife and other irreplaceable treasures. They stressed that the marsh should be preserved.

Dredging Impaired the Marsh

In the 1930s and early 1940s, the Smoot Sand and Gravel Company began commercial dredging in the marsh and public concern grew. In 1959, Congressman John Dingell authored legislation, enacted by Congress as Public Law 86-41, adding the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve to the National Park Service (NPS) "so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount." Some dredging continued sporadically into the early 1970s. Then, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) involvement, the sounds of extraction engines and work along the road the dredgers built alarmed more people. Meetings ensued and the NPS agreed to prepare an environmental impact statement and involve the public through a continuing committee. Thus, by 1976, the Friends of Dyke Marsh was incorporated for that purpose.

One of its founders, Ed Risley, in an FODM website article, describes in some detail the back-and-forth and nitty-gritty, complex deliberations among citizens and governmental bodies that occurred in 1976. His essay, written at the end of the 20th century, is titled "Over Three Decades" and describes what happened to FODM next: years of many public meetings, education initiatives, research support, data collection on flora and fauna in the marsh, publication of an award-winning newsletter, formal agreements with NPS and advocacy for natural resource

protection, for example, during planning to expand the Wilson Bridge and build and National Harbor.

In the early 21st century, FODM and our allies continued to advocate for marsh stabilization and restoration. A U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study raised even more alarm, concluding that the marsh would be completely gone by 2035 without action.

Everyone was greatly heartened in 2012 when Congress and the Department of Interior provided \$24 million to stabilize and restore Dyke Marsh, following natural disasters that year which spotlighted climate change and severe weather's impacts. FODM played a major role in securing the funding and planning for restoration. The first step was to build a breakwater to replicate a natural promontory which had been gouged away by the dredging and had provided protection from storm surges in the Potomac. Since 2018 the NPS's contractor has also built protective sills in the marsh.

Congressman Dingell, in 1959, had urged, that "conservation requires constant vigilance and effort." FODM welcomes help in preserving and restoring Dyke Marsh and in celebrating our 50th anniversary and the marsh's future.



The image on the left from 1937 shows the extent of the marsh east of the GWM Parkway with the natural promontory on the southern end. The image on the right from 2021 shows the loss of marsh and the new breakwater at the southern end.

Restoring Dyke Marsh by Planting Vegetation

BY GLENDA BOOTH

In 2022, Coastal Design and Construction completed construction of a breakwater and five sills at the southern end of Dyke Marsh to protect the marsh from wave action and encourage sediment accretion. FODMer Dr. Terrell (Terry) N. Chandler, for her master's thesis at George Mason University, conducted a baseline environmental health assessment on the southern portion of the marsh. One of the questions she is trying to answer is, are the conditions in Dyke Marsh suitable for successfully planting native submerged vegetation (SAV)?

In the National Park Service's (NPS) 2014 plan, the agency proposed planting an emergent marsh as part of the marsh restoration and stabilization project, but the permitting agencies did not approve it.

Submerged aquatic plants are rooted, vascular, flowering plants that grow underwater in freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats. SAV can improve water quality, trap and stabilize sediments and absorb excess nutrients. SAV provides habitat, food and nursery grounds for fish and shellfish.

Chandler's team conducted their studies between May 22 and September 7, 2025, at times evenly split between low and high tide. They took measurements in five areas – the sills, the promontory, the shoreline, Hog Island Gut, the north inlet and the south side of the Haul Road Trail.

They analyzed multiple factors, including water clarity, nutrient levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, initial protection of the new SAV plantings from grazing and planting large enough beds, especially for those beds under turbid conditions. Establishing and maintaining the right nutrient levels and water clarity is essential, but equally essential is protecting the SAV when it is first planted, Chandler maintains.

The primary submerged aquatic plant in Dyke Marsh is hydrilla verticillata intermixed with spiny naiad (*Najas minor*) and coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). Chandler's team also found sago pond weed (*Stuckenia pectinata*) floating, but did not see it rooted in the marsh.

Chandler's assessment indicates that "hydrilla is currently fulfilling this ecological role at Dyke Marsh. However, encouraging SAV diversification provides for a more stable and resilient response to environmental changes and more diversification up the food chain." The National Park Service considers hydrilla to be an invasive plant.

Conclusions

- Dyke Marsh has the right conditions in certain areas for SAV survival, including water height, water quality, clarity and turbidity to successfully plant native SAV.



FODM member Jim Gearing and Terry Chandler took water measurements using a YSI Sonde instrument. Photo by Nancy Rybicki



Bryozoan, filter-feeding colonial invertebrates, are indicators of good water quality. Photo by Terry Chandler

- Dyke Marsh's soil conditions, including organic composition and grain size and nutrient load, need further investigation.
- Dyke Marsh does not have native SAV currently growing in sufficient quantities to be transplanted to other locations in the marsh.

The report recommends more refined research on water quality, sediment, turbidity and bathymetry at Dyke Marsh and investigative research of optimal locations for SAV species likely to survive in the marsh. Dr. Chandler hopes to do further research in the summer of 2026.

FODM's Pumpkin Ash Project

BY ROBERT SMITH

Until just over 10 years ago, pumpkin ash (*Fraxinus profunda*) trees lined much of the Dyke Marsh shoreline. In the fall, their purplish leaves provided colorful river views. The pumpkin ash is a relatively uncommon species of ash tree that can tolerate very moist conditions, often with its base submerged at high tides. These trees have played an important role in stabilizing the marsh.

By 2010, the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), a non-native, Asian beetle introduced inadvertently, was steadily spreading southeast across the United States from Michigan. This insect devastated ash trees, a significant portion of eastern U.S. landscapes, as the infestation progressed. In Dyke Marsh, the insect caused a heavy loss of ash trees. National Park Service (NPS) officials suggested that the Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) start a project to protect a small number of the preserve's pumpkin ash trees against this insect so we did in 2015.

FODM has relied on the expertise of Bartlett Tree Experts and NPS staff to protect 18 pumpkin ash trees as the emerald ash borer attacked virtually all the other ash trees in the marsh. This can easily be seen from the river where the shoreline is now lined with skeletal dead trees and trunks. Bartlett treats the 18 selected trees every other year by injecting the trees' bases with a powerful insecticide.

We selected trees close to each other for treatment to facilitate the windborne pollination that the trees require to successfully seed. Pumpkin ash trees have no known pollinators to transport male pollen to female stigmas. The trees are dioecious, meaning each tree has only male or female flowers.



Jim Gearing (FODM) assists Jose Sanchez (Bartlett Tree Experts) inject insecticide into the root system of one of the 18 protected pumpkin ash trees. Photo by Bill Betz



Five of the protected pumpkin ash trees face southward over a small gut. Photo by Robert Smith

The injection technique and compact area have limited any unintended side effects of using the insecticide. Additionally, we have wrapped the trees with plastic netting to protect them from beaver damage.

Trees Are Producing Seeds

Last year, we gathered a limited number of seeds from the protected trees. Earth Sangha, a local non-profit dedicated to encouraging native plants, accepted those seeds and planted the ones that seemed the most viable. This year, nine seedlings germinated and Earth Sangha placed them in individual pots. FODM, in consultation with the NPS, will soon decide when and where in the marsh to replant those seedlings. The best news is that our small population of protected trees are producing viable seeds.

We will not treat the trees this year but will observe and measure the trees and decide whether and where to replant the new seedlings. In addition to monitoring the project's trees, we are also observing substantial sprouting from the bases of dead ash trees.

This sprouting is a feature of pumpkin ash that is not common in other species and may make them naturally more resilient than other species. While many pumpkin ash trees have sent up new sprouts, it is not yet clear whether emerald ash borers will find and attack them. Additionally, while the re-sprouting does send up new shoots, it is unknown whether these sprouts will ever grow to reproduce the canopy that the pumpkin ash trees provided before the emerald ash borer's appearance.

Trees in Winter

BY JIM MCGLONE, Certified Arborist



An oak in winter Photo by Jim McGlone

Trees may appear to be dormant in winter, but they are not. They do slow down a lot, but they are full of living cells that are active throughout the cold season, especially the roots. Roots provide the tree with water and nutrients. Some of the water is used by the tree to make sugar, but most is used to transport dissolved nutrients and sugar around the tree. Trees are growing and shedding fine absorbing roots all year as they search for pockets of water and nutrients in the soil. And, if the ground isn't frozen, this process continues throughout the winter.

Trees can sense day length and on the first day of winter, when days start to get longer, they start preparing for spring. This is a slow process at first, but it speeds up as winter progresses and days get longer. Cells in buds begin to multiply. Resources that were pulled out of leaves in the fall and stored during the cold dark days are mobilized to use in this year's new foliage. Flowers begin to form and some species like willows and maples bloom in the winter. Last year my red maple finished blooming by March 1.

Sugar fuels the spring growth of trees. Trees store sugar by converting it to starch and as the days grow longer, the stored starch is turned back into sugar and pumped to the canopy along with nutrients to make new twigs, leaves and flowers. Water moves the sugar and nutrients, so trees grow roots during the "dormant" season to meet this demand.

Because roots grow during the fall and winter, late October and November are good times to plant trees so they can begin to expand their root system before the heavy demand for water for photosynthesis starts in the spring. Two to three inches of mulch can act like a blanket and keep soil warmer and help roots grow. Mulch can also help prevent winter or frost burn, which occurs in evergreens when the ground is frozen or dry. Mulch helps keep the soil warm and moist.

So, there is a lot going on in trees during the winter months, but most of it is happening below ground and most of it relies on water. To help your trees through the winter give them a good mulch blanket in the fall and water them if we have a long period without rain or snow.

1976

FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH
Celebrating 50 Years

2026



Help us celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Friends of Dyke Marsh in 2026

The **Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM)** is a volunteer group dedicated to preserving, restoring and enhancing the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. A rare freshwater tidal wetland, Dyke Marsh is one of our region's most highly valued habitats.

Local advocates founded the Friends of Dyke Marsh in 1976 to build support for a restored marsh, after extensive dredging in the mid-1900s destabilized the marsh. A restored marsh helps buffer the area against some storm activity, provides opportunities for recreation and restores native wetland plant habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife.

FODM supports efforts to stabilize the marsh, supports research, sponsors surveys and walks and offers a wide variety of **free** educational opportunities.

**FIND MORE INFORMATION AT
WWW.FODM.ORG**



*scan the QR code to
visit our website & join*

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Photo by Ed Eder

Here are some ways YOU can support the Friends of Dyke Marsh:

- **Join** and **donate** to the Friends of Dyke Marsh.
- **Visit** and **enjoy** Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.
- **Read our newsletter**, "The Marsh Wren."
- **Observe** birds and butterflies with our Dyke Marsh checklists.
- **Learn with us** on our nature and wildlife walks and educational presentations.
- **Roll up your sleeves** with us to remove invasive plants and clean up trash.
- **Display** the Friends of Dyke Marsh sticker.

**JOIN OUR
MONTHLY
NATURE
WALKS &
VOLUNTEER
EVENTS**

More Forthcoming Events

Invasive Plant Control: 10 a.m., **February 28; March 14 and 28; April 11 and 25; May 9 and 23**

Raptor Rapture, **September 12**, 1 p.m., Fort Hunt Park

Check www.fodm.org for details.

Volunteer for Your Health

Between 25 and 30 percent of Americans volunteer, according to Nathan Dietz with the Do Good Institute. Why? Some for altruism. Some for camaraderie. Some to keep active. And for most, it makes them feel good.

There are clear health benefits. According to a November National Public Radio report, former U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, said, "For an individual, the data is increasingly clear that service has a positive impact on our physical health, reducing our risk of heart disease and our overall mortality. It has an impact on reducing mental health symptoms as well, particularly depression and anxiety symptoms. It also actually improves our cognitive function. We find strong associations there in the data. But when it comes to loneliness and building community, service is one of the most powerful antidotes we have to loneliness."

After pulling invasive stiltgrass in Dyke Marsh for an hour, one FODM volunteer exclaimed, "Who needs therapy?"

Welcome New FODM Members

FODM welcomes our **new members**: Elizabeth Beyer, Nancy Galib, Stuart Hudgins, Michaela Lovejoy, Kieran Mailman, Molly McAnany and Maxine Witkin. We welcome **conversions to life membership** Carol Booth, David Frantz and Gary Weeden.

Sunday Morning Birding

FODM leads birding outings on Sunday mornings, all seasons. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Outings are led by experienced birders and all are welcome to join us.

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

"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter." -- Rachel Carson

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
to visit our
membership page.



DUES AMOUNT..... \$ _____

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION..... \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE ____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

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).

Christmas Bird Count

On the December 20, 2025 annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, when two volunteer teams surveyed the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, the 14 volunteers identified 56 species and 1,396 birds in total.

Surveyors were delighted to spot a white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*) and a Ross's goose (*Anser rossii*) near Hunting Creek. Another highlight was 10 tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) flying over the marsh, likely

