

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

SPRING 2016



FODM Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, May 11, at 7:30 p.m., Huntley Meadows Park, Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306. Phone 703 768-2525. Free to all.

Calendar of Events

May 20-21 - Bioblitz, see p. 7.
May 20 - 7:30 p.m. Bat walk
May 20 and 21 - 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Bird walk both days.
May 28-July 4 - 2016 Breeding Bird Survey, details p. 7.
July 11 - 9 a.m. to noon, water quality testing, Westgrove.

CONTENTS

Marsh Wren Decline	2
Celebrate Our Parks	2
President's Message	3
2015 BBS Results	4
Plants of Dyke Marsh	6
Arachnoblitz in DM	7
FODM Honored	8

The Wonders of Wildflowers

Join the Friends of Dyke Marsh at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday evening, May 11, at **Huntley Meadows Park** to hear Alan Ford and Laura Beaty of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. They will explore the wide range of native wildflowers in our area and suggest how native plants can help attract birds and beneficial insects to home gardens. Northern Virginia is one of the most botanically-rich areas in the mid-Atlantic region.

Virginia's native plant communities, like wild plant communities everywhere, are the foundation for complex relationships between plants and animals (insects, spiders, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals). This web of life begins with plants and evolves into amazing partnerships. Each geographical region has subtle or not so subtle differences in plant communities, based on site conditions. For each site, the greater the number and diversity of plants, the greater the diversity of wildlife.

The speakers will highlight many native plants and their relationships with wildlife, especially pollinators and leaf-



Spatterdock (*Nuphar lutea*). Credit R.W. Smith, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Ctr.

eaters. The evolutionary relationship between plants, pollinators and leaf-eaters will give insights into which animals might visit particular native plants. Successful pollination provides seeds for birds, but those same birds to enjoy consuming an early spring crop of leaf-eaters and caterpillars.

Alan Ford is President of the Potowmack Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society. Laura Beaty is on the chapter's

MEETING (Continued on page 2)

Dyke Marsh Restoration Update

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Baltimore District, in collaboration with the National Park Service, has been doing field work in Dyke Marsh to prepare the design for restoration. To determine design options, Corps staffers have completed a bathymetry survey of the river bottom and will be conducting dilatometer tests to measure different layers of soil and the strength of the soil for building the foundation of the breakwater in the south marsh, phase one of the restoration. Working with several Virginia agencies, the Corps will soon develop criteria for dredge material quality for the cells they will build to contain fill.



Corps staff conducted a bathymetric survey in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

Construction could begin in 2017. The Corps hopes to complete construction within a few years, but officials caution,

RESTORATION (Continued on page 2)

Cause of Marsh Wren Decline Unknown

As the Breeding Bird Survey on page 4 reports, marsh wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*) were not observed breeding in Dyke Marsh in 2015.

After analyzing many factors, Dr. David Luther, George Mason University biology professor, has not identified one significant cause of the steady decline of this bird in the marsh. Among other data, Dr. Luther examined bird surveys, Sandra Spencer's 2000 master's thesis, pollutants and changes in habitat area and quality, then compared the bird's decline with that information. He speculates that a major factor is the reduction in suitable habitat. Dr. Luther consulted with other experts who report that in general, marsh wren populations in the greater Potomac basin are declining in similar freshwater wetlands. Coastal salt water marsh populations are dropping also, but not as rapidly.

FODM hopes to continue monitoring marsh wrens and other birds, especially during marsh restoration and after its completion. Dr. Luther is seeking a student to conduct some marsh wren research in the greater Potomac or Chesapeake Bay watersheds and possibly design experiments to lure marsh wrens back to Dyke Marsh.



Marsh Wrens are declining in DMWP. Photo by Ed Eder

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—
— Emily Dickinson

Celebrate FODM and our National Parks

The Friends of Dyke Marsh will celebrate our 40th anniversary and the National Park Service's 100th anniversary this fall. We'll report more later, but here are some ways you can help now:



Centennial logo courtesy NPS

- Be a sponsor by providing financial support.
- Provide an item or service for our silent auction.
- Help provide food or beverages.
- Serve on the planning committee.

To help, contact Trudi Hahn at 703-683-9009 or email her at trudihahn@gmail.com.

MEETING (Continued from page 1)

propagation crew at Green Spring Gardens where she has volunteered for over 25 years.

The talk is cosponsored by the American Horticultural Society, the Fairfax County Master Gardeners, Friends of Theodore Roosevelt Island, Friends of Mason Neck State Park, Earth Sangha and the Monarch Teacher Network.

RESTORATION (Continued from page 1)

"It depends on funds." Their timeline notes that 2035 is the year "the ecosystem would be entirely lost by without restoration," as U.S. Geological Survey scientists concluded in 2010.

The Corps has posted information here: <http://go.usa.gov/cQXpj>. The NPS restoration plan is here: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfmprojectID=20293>.

Friends of Dyke Marsh Board of Directors

President - Glenda Booth	703-765-5233, GBooth123@aol.com
Vice President - Ned Stone	703-768-5441, nedstone@verizon.net
Secretary - Dorothy McManus (<i>Marsh Wren</i>)	703-960-3643, editor@fodm.org
Treasurer - Robert Smith	703-684-7041, rconwell@comcast.net
Ed Eder (Past President)	703-360-7994, nutmegz@mac.com
Kurt Gaskill (Bird Walks)	703-768-2172, KurtCapt87@verizon.net
Bob Veltkamp (Membership)	703-768-1650, rveltkamp@cox.net
John Perry	703-329-1646, johnperry@cox.net
Larry Cartwright (Breeding Bird Survey)	703-941-3142, prowarbler@verizon.net
Pat Salamone	703-329-1748, Patricia.p.salamone@gmail.com
Trudi Hahn	703-683-9009, trudihahn@gmail.com
Jessica Strother	703-309-7201, strotherjessie@yahoo.com
Katherine Wychulis	kewychulis@aol.com

The Marsh Wren is a quarterly publication of the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Inc., a non-profit 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).

Editor:

Dorothy McManus

Assistant Editor:

T. D. Hobart

Friends of Dyke Marsh
P.O. Box 7183
Alexandria, VA 22307
editor@fodm.org

Visit our website at
www.fodm.org
or on [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/fodm)

Copyright © 2016, The
Friends of Dyke Marsh, Inc.
All rights reserved.



President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

Vigilance matters, we've learned this spring.

Oil Spills

On February 3, an alert friend sent photographs of an oil sheen on the water at the Belle Haven Marina. We alerted authorities, including the National Park Service (NPS), and on February 12, Dominion Power accepted responsibility, announcing that a 13,500-gallon mineral oil spill occurred on January 24 from a Crystal City transformer station and that Dominion will "work with the agencies to ensure the remaining cleanup work is done." After investigating, the U.S. Coast Guard on February 19 turned over remediation to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). DEQ issued a notice of violation to Dominion.

At least 37 birds were oiled at Roaches Run, mostly Canada geese. On February 22, Alex Romero, NPS George Washington Parkway Superintendent, emailed FODM that NPS helped rescue oiled birds at Roaches Run, Gravelly Point, Hains Point, Constitution Gardens and the 14th Street Bridge. He wrote that NPS had no reports of oiled birds in Dyke Marsh. On February 22, FODMers assisted Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research staff in releasing rehabilitated birds in Belle Haven Park.



Blue barrels have appeared in Dyke Marsh and along the Potomac and Occoquan River. Photo by Ned Stone

As we go to press, we await DEQ's final assessment, a natural resource damage analysis and DEQ's enforcement action. Several state legislators are pressing DEQ. Senator Adam Ebbin told FODM, "I am committed to protecting and preserving the Potomac, including Roaches Run and Dyke Marsh. Delegate Paul Krizek, Senator Scott

Surovell and I will be working to make sure that the strongest regulations and laws are in place to mitigate unforeseen incidents and hold negligent actors accountable."

Speaking of spills, on October 29, 2015, around 13,000 gallons of jet fuel leaked or spilled from an aboveground storage tank at Reagan National Airport. Airport officials say that a "containment boom worked," that all but 1,700 gallons was collected. DEQ is reviewing a "corrective action plan."

The Mysterious Blue Barrels

Several people have reported blue barrels in Dyke Marsh and other points along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers (photo above). Apparently, this has been going on

for some time. The barrels may have contained some kind of window cleaner, but no one seems certain of the former contents at this time. NPS's Peter McCallum requests reports of any barrels in the Potomac River or Dyke Marsh, especially reports of any that are closed and have contents inside that he can test. Contact him at 703-419-6435 or peter_mccallum@nps.gov.

Testing Water Quality

Several FODMers are conducting biological water quality testing on an unnamed stream flowing into Dyke Marsh West, led by soil scientist Dan Schwartz, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District. In the first test on April 2, over 90 percent of the species found were tolerant of stream degradation; therefore, that sample did not provide indicators of good habitat quality. The type of invertebrates in a stream is a very good indicator of stream quality.

Stopping Pollution

Now the good news! The Virginia General Assembly approved Senate Joint Resolution 190 commending FODM (see page 8). Thank you, legislators. Fairfax County has accelerated the Quander Road-Mount Vernon Park failing stormwater outfall project and will start work soon. This outfall is sending orangy-brown sediment into Dyke Marsh during many storms, turning the wetland orange. FODM pressed the county for a solution and the county responded. Thank you, Fairfax County.

Where's Congress?

FODM's 40th anniversary and our national parks' 100th this year offer opportunities to reinforce the value of healthy natural resources and build support for our nation's 410 parks. While our national parks had 307 million visits last year, an all-time high, the George Washington Memorial Parkway has \$184.1 million in needed repairs to roads, bridges, tunnels and overlooks, according to a media report. NPS has a \$12 billion maintenance backlog nationally. Congress should respond. Volunteers and donations can help, but we cannot do it all. Look for our emails and check our website and Facebook page for ways to help.



Orange-brown sediment flowed into Dyke Marsh during storms. Photo by Laura Sebastianelli

Glenda C. Booth

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

The Results of the 2015 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey

BY LARRY CARTWRIGHT, BBS Survey Coordinator

The 2015 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey was conducted between Saturday, May 23 and Sunday, July 5, but any data collected outside of this period that confirmed a breeding species was entered into the database. This permitted us to weed out most migrants that do not use the marsh to breed. I also included information provided from the Sunday morning walks and reliable individuals. In previous years, the survey tract encompassed the Belle Haven picnic area, the marina, the open marsh, the Potomac River from the shoreline to the channel, and the surrounding woodland from the mouth of Hunting Creek to south of Morningside Lane. In 2015 we added the West Marsh to the survey tract. The West Marsh is defined as that portion of the Big Gut and the surrounding woodland that lies west of the George Washington Memorial Parkway up to River Towers.

The Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey is undertaken as part of a continuing biological inventory of the tidal wetlands. The breeding status of each species is determined by means of behavioral criteria. Species are placed into one of four categories: confirmed breeder, probable breeder, possible breeder, and present. Volunteer observers participating in the 2015 survey reported 84 species at Dyke Marsh between May 23 and July 5. The 2015 list contains 48 confirmed breeding species, four probable breeders, and 13 possible breeders. An additional 19 species were present, but either were not in suitable breeding habitat, were colonial breeding waterbird species not using a rookery inside the survey tract, or out of range.

There was a void in the marsh during the 2015 breeding season, a profound absence in the Narrowleaf Cattails that have supported the nests of Marsh Wrens for so many years. The Dyke Marsh breeding population of Marsh Wrens failed to arrive in 2015. Canoe teams reported two calling Marsh Wrens on the large island north of the Haul Road peninsula for the first time only in early July, but at that late date, I believe that these birds were possibly relocated failed breeders from another population. Whatever the case,

Marsh Wrens dropped from their normal status as Dyke Marsh confirmed breeders to merely possible breeders in 2015.

The failure of Marsh Wrens in 2015 to arrive and occupy the marsh during spring migration in May was hardly unexpected. In her

study of Marsh Wrens at Dyke Marsh in 1998 and 1999 as part of her Master's Thesis, Population Abundance and Habitat Requirements of the Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve: An Urban Conservation Challenge, Sandy Spencer found slightly less than three dozen territorial males at Dyke Marsh. Sandy pointed out that Marsh Wrens were once abundant along the Potomac River close to Washington DC, but were experiencing declines by the 1960s. Habitat loss was the overriding cause, but Sandy also saw additional problems with the Dyke Marsh breeding population, including high rates of nest predation, and narrow preferences for nesting territories. She speculated that this could put the Marsh Wren breeding population at risk over the long term.

Sandy's concern was warranted. Soon after her study, the number of territorial or singing males dropped from less than three dozen to around 18. The decline was more immediately noticed in the Big Gut portion of the south marsh. The birds disappeared from the Big Gut for several years and then briefly returned between 2011 and 2013, with an active nest documented in 2013. Then in 2014, there were no Marsh Wrens to be found anywhere in the Big Gut.

The Marsh Wren population in the north marsh was centered around the Narrowleaf Cattails to the north of the Haul



Marsh Wrens dropped from confirmed breeder status in this year's survey. Photo by Ed Eder

The 2015 Breeding Bird Survey Results

Confirmed - 48 Species: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Least Bittern, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Mourning Dove, Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch,

House Sparrow.

Probable - 4 Species: Eastern Screech-Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula.

Possible - 13 Species: Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, American Redstart, Scarlet Tanager.

Present - 19 Species: Lesser Scaup, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Greater Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Bonaparte's Gull, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, Rock Pigeon, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Northern Waterthrush, Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler.

SURVEY (Continued on page 5)

Road peninsula and the largest of the adjacent islands. After 2000, the number of singing male Marsh Wrens in the north marsh fluctuated from an estimated low of eight to a high of perhaps 16. In 2015, we had absolutely nothing except the late arriving males. The unfortunate loss of Marsh Wrens at Dyke Marsh may be a result of an overall regional decline exacerbated by conditions unique to Dyke Marsh, based on Sandy's thesis and conversations with local experts and experienced birders (see article p. 2). We hope that the absence of Marsh Wrens will be temporary as we prepare for marsh restoration, but know that there are no guarantees.

In contrast to the sad tale of Marsh Wrens, Least Bitterns appeared to have a decent breeding season. During the 2015 survey, Least Bitterns were concentrated in the tributaries of the Little Gut and the channel that separates the Haul Road peninsula from the largest island to the north. Volunteers reported smaller numbers of Least Bitterns at the end of the peninsula just east of the boardwalk, on the north side of the large island, and in the inlet adjacent to the north side of the dogleg. Numbers appeared to be slightly reduced in the Big Gut, but the birds were not impossible to find. It may be that Least Bitterns are gradually withdrawing from the southern half of the Big Gut, possibly as erosion accelerates, and concentrating in the northern half. That, however, is still speculation on my part and bears a close look during the 2016 survey.

Least Bittern youngsters were found, not surprisingly, in areas of their heaviest concentration during the 2015 survey.



A recently fledged Least Bittern improving its fishing skills. Photo courtesy of Ed Eder

ly, we conducted more Least Bittern dedicated surveys after Independence Day then we have in the past, but the effort produced positive results. Even during the regular survey, we found more breeding pairs in the marsh, including a pair copulating in one of the Little Gut tributaries, than I can remember in previous years.

I want to add that this does not mean that the Least Bittern will not meet the same fate as the Marsh Wren. One explanation might be that the birds are becoming more concentrated in remaining suitable habitat around the Haul Road peninsula as the marsh erodes in the south, and thus temporarily easier to find at these locations. However, crowded conditions may not be conducive to long term overall breeding success, and provides another reason to keep an eye on these birds in 2016.

Most of our Dyke Marsh raptors had a successful breeding year in 2015. The Morningside Bald Eagle nest was

abandoned by January, 2015, but the new nest south of Tulane Drive fledged one healthy youngster by the first week in June. Ospreys constructed a total of 11 nests in the survey tract. Two of these nests were abandoned, but the breeding pair in both cases constructed new nests at different locations. Of the nine active nests, eight fledged youngsters. The highly visible and popular breeding pair at the marina nest saw its three nestlings take their first, but truncated flights, on July 1. One of the breeding pair that abandoned its original nest and rebuilt a second one also fledged youngsters, but at the end of July. Better late than never it seems!



Here a Barred Owl looks down at its human observers. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Cowser

As far as nocturnal raptors are concerned, we hoped to confirm our Eastern Screech-Owl pair as Dyke Marsh breeders. Volunteers documented the pair together, and witnessed copulation, but we could not confirm breeding. That has been the case for several years now. We were in for quite a surprise, however. On April 12, several of us spotted a pair of Barred Owls in a tree in the wooded spot between Marina Road and the south picnic area. One of the birds was raising and lowering its head as if feeding nestlings, but we could not be sure. At least one of the owls was spotted twice after that and then on May 5, I saw the Barred Owl breeding pair near the Haul Road entrance accompanied by a fledged youngster. The Barred Owl family group was perched less than 30 feet from the traditional primary roost cavity of the Eastern Screech-Owls. That's potentially bad news for an Eastern Screech-Owl because a Barred Owl can easily make a meal out of a smaller owl.

As far as our Dyke Marsh songbirds fared, Eastern Kingbirds, Warbling Vireos, and Orchard Orioles were present in expected decent numbers, and all were confirmed as breeders by the documentation of multiple fledged young and family groups for each species.



A Song sparrow feeds a fledged youngster. Photo by Laura Sebastianelli

In one instance, a Warbling Vireo pair in the north picnic area had difficulty with Eastern Kingbird neighbors as the vireos unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the kingbirds from demolishing their nest. Although not as numerous as Eastern Kingbirds, Warbling Vireos, and Orchard Orioles, Eastern Wood-Pewees and Red-eyed Vireos also fledged nestlings, although in one case the youngster being fed by a Red-eyed Vireo parent was a Brown-headed Cow-

Meet the Plants of Dyke Marsh -- Tulip Poplar

BY PATRICIA P. SALAMONE

The tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is neither a tulip (you knew that!) nor a poplar; in fact, it is in the Magnolia family. But it is a beautiful tree well worthy of notice in all seasons.

The genus name *Liriodendron* comes from the Greek, meaning “lily tree.” The specific name *tulipifera* means “tulip-bearing.”

The tulip poplar, also called tulip tree or yellow poplar, is one of the tallest trees in the eastern U.S., typically growing to 60-90 feet tall but sometimes growing as tall as 150 feet. The trunks are typically long and straight, with few lower branches, and in mature trees can reach four to six feet in diameter.

The tree’s native range covers most of the eastern U.S. and extends into the Midwest. It is not a wetland plant—it’s national wetland indicator status in the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain (AGCP) and Eastern Mountains and Piedmont (EMP) regions is facultative upland (FACU), which means it usually occurs in uplands but is occasionally a hydrophyte—but it is common along the Haul Road in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

The leaves are relatively large (up to 8 inches across) and have an unusual four-lobed shape, sometimes described as saddle-shaped and considered by some to also resemble the shape of a tulip. They are bright green in the summer and turn a bright golden yellow in the fall. The leaf’s combination of a large surface area and a long stalk (petiole) means that



Tulip tree fall foliage. Photo by Julie Makin, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflwr. Ctr.

the leaves flutter in the wind, something like actual poplar leaves; this is probably why “poplar” appears in the tree’s common name.

The large, showy flowers are yellow with an orange band at the base of each petal; they bloom in mid to late

spring (April-June). With their cup shape, they do resemble tulips, as the species name suggests. They bloom after the leaves have come out, so they can be hard to see, especially since they are often so high above the ground. You may find petals or even whole blossoms on the ground beneath the tree, though.

The brownish green fruits that succeed the flowers bear numerous winged seeds (samaras). The large seedheads, usually referred to as cones but technically samaracetums, can remain through the winter and even into early spring, and are one good way to identify a tulip poplar in winter when the leaves are gone.

The tulip poplar is a favorite nesting tree for birds and the flowers attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees. According to the Pollinator Program at The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, the tulip poplar has special value to honey bees. It is also a host plant for the caterpillars of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio glaucus*), the state insect of Virginia.

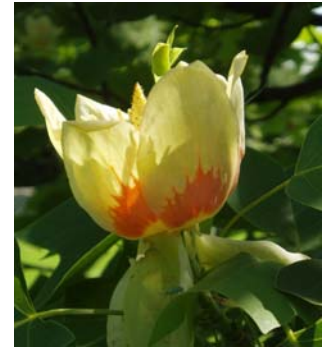
With all these virtues, it’s no wonder that the tulip poplar was one of Thomas Jefferson’s favorite trees. He once described it as “The Juno of our Groves” for its stately beauty, and he named his country retreat near Lynchburg “Poplar Forest” in its honor.

References

USDA plants database: <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=litu>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Information Network (NPIN): http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=LITU

Nancy Ross Hugo and Robert Llewellyn, *Seeing Trees: Discover the Extraordinary Secrets of Everyday Trees*.



Tulip tree flower close-up. Photo by Julie Makin, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflwr. Ctr.

SURVEY (Continued from page 5)

bird. American Crows bred at Dyke Marsh for the first time since 2003 when West Nile Virus swept through the area. Fish Crows have dominated the breeding scene at Dyke Marsh since then, but it appears that American Crows are working their way back into the picture.

Baltimore Orioles and Prothonotary Warblers were tallied in the confirmed breeder category, but neither species seemed as numerous as in previous breeding seasons. In addition, Northern Parulas, not confirmed as 2015 breeders, seemed to be singing from fewer locations than last year. Maybe this is a result of normal yearly fluctuation in population size, but in the case of Prothonotary Warblers, the

seemingly lower numbers may be a result of snags falling over at a faster rate, depriving perhaps some birds of an adequate choice of nest cavities.

Brown-headed Cowbirds appeared to have a banner breeding year at Dyke Marsh in 2015, with Eastern Phoebe, Red-eyed Vireo, Song Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal all recorded as host parent species.

I feel personally indebted to all those who have taken the time and the effort to supply data as part of a survey team or who have led the Sunday morning walks during the survey period. Some of you have volunteered for many years, even going back over two decades when I became the survey’s compiler. Thanks so much to all of you.

SURVEY (Continued on page 7)

Join the “ArachnoblitZ” in Dyke Marsh

On May 20 and 21, volunteers, scientists, naturalists and students will participate in the National Park Service’s (NPS) national BioBlitz 2016. FODMers, under guidance from NPS and other experts, will identify and record spiders. Volunteers will have nets and cages and take the spiders to a Smithsonian Institution spider taxonomist for identification. You do not have to be able to identify spider species to participate. To sign up, email Glenda Booth at gbooth123@aol.com. Part of the NPS’s centennial celebration, the BioBlitz is sponsored by National Geographic, the National Park Service and FODM. Visit <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/projects/bioblitz/washington-dc-2016/> or <https://sites.google.com/a/nps.gov/centennialbioblitz/>.



SURVEY (Continued from page 6)

Those who contributed to the 2015 Breeding Bird Survey in alphabetical order are Dave Boltz, Jennifer Cowser, Ed Eder, Myriam Eder, Sandy Farkas, Kurt Gaskill, Susan Haskew, Gerry Hawkins, Ellen Kabat, Lori Keeler, Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson, Ginny McNair, Larry Meade, Roger Miller, Nick Nichols, Marc Ribaud, Rich Rieger, Don Robinson, Laura Sebastianelli, Robert Smith, Ned Stone, Jessie Strother, Sherman Suter, John Symington, Meg Symington, Russell Taylor, Brett Wohler, Margaret Wohler and Katherine Wychulis.

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

Welcome New FODM Members

We welcome to the Friends of Dyke Marsh our **new members**: Rachel Bouallegui, Bob Connolly, Nancy Dupree, Karen Hillhouse, Derek J. Litchfield, Rebecca Young-Marquardt, Donna Loews and Homer Winter. Thanks to all of you for your support.

Calendar of Events

April 23, 10 a.m. to noon, Raptor Rapture: Belle Haven Park. Live rehabilitated raptors from the Raptor Society of VA exhibited, co-sponsored by NPS.



May 20-21. Bioblitz in Belle Haven Park and Dyke Marsh: finding and identifying as many species of spiders as possible. See article this page for details.

May 20, 7:30 p.m. Bat Walk: meet at Haul Road, Dyke Marsh, led by FODMer Deborah Hammer. Bring a flashlight.

May 20-21, 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. both days. Bird Walks: led by Ed Eder and Larry Cartwright. Celebrating the Bioblitz.

May 28-July 4. Breeding Bird Survey. To participate, email Larry Cartwright at prowarbler@verizon.net.

October. Watch for announcements about FODM and NPS anniversary celebrations. See page 2 for ways to help.

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.

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..... \$ _____

 NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE ____ ZIP _____
 TELEPHONE NUMBER _____
 EMAIL ADDRESS _____

 Please address any questions or comments about *The Marsh Wren* to Dorothy McManus and about membership to Bob Veltkamp. You may contact them by mail at FODM, P.O. Box 7183, Alexandria, Virginia 22307 -7183, by telephone or by email (see page 2).

FODM Honored by Virginia Resolution

The Virginia General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing the work of the Friends of Dyke Marsh, FODM's 40th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the national parks system in 2016. The bill's patrons were Senators Scott Surovell and Adam Ebbin and Delegates Paul Krizek and Mark Sickles. It reads:

WHEREAS, the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is a 480-acre freshwater tidal wetland on the Potomac River in Fairfax County, one of the last large freshwater tidal marshes in the Washington, D.C., area, and is managed by the U.S. National Park Service as a part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress designated Dyke Marsh as an "irreplaceable wetland" and added it to the national park system in 1959 "so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount"; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh is an area of open water, cattail marsh, wetland shrubs and plants, and deciduous swamp forest that is home to 360 known species of plants, 6,000 arthropods, 38 fish, 16 reptiles, 14 amphibians, and more than 270 species of birds (40 breeding); and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh is one of the most significant temperate, climax, riverine, narrow-leaved, cattail marshes in the national park system, but the marsh faces many challenges, including erosion, pollution, trash, runoff, invasive species, noise, and poaching; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of Dyke Marsh's original 650 acres of wetland was destroyed by commercial dredging, which fundamentally undermined the delicate wetland ecology; the U.S. Geological Survey confirmed that the marsh could be completely destroyed by 2035, and the U.S. National Park Service is preparing a restoration plan with initial proposed action to begin in 2017; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh is a conservation advocacy

organization incorporated in 1976 to preserve and restore this valuable wetland ecosystem; the organization supports full restoration of the marsh, advocates for restoration plans and funding, sponsors scientific studies, hosts trash cleanups and invasive plant control activities, encourages environmental stewardship, helps educate young people and the public, and conducts biological surveys; and

WHEREAS, the national park system includes natural treasures; recreational resources; scenic seashores; and historical monuments, grounds, and structures; the national park system attracted more than 300 million visitors in 2015, contributing to a \$646 billion outdoor recreation industry in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. National Park Service is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2016, providing a historic opportunity to encourage a renewed commitment to America's national parks and to protect and restore Dyke Marsh; 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 40th anniversary; 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 decades of stewardship of Dyke Marsh, a valuable natural resource in the Commonwealth.



Virginia General Assembly building, Richmond, VA

**The
Marsh Wren**

The Friends of Dyke Marsh
P.O. Box 7183
Alexandria, VA 22307-7183