

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

SUMMER / FALL 2020



2020 FODM Meetings

November 10 - Plants Shaped by Water, 7:30 p.m. Charles Smith, naturalist and ecologist, will discuss issues concerning water in natural communities in Northern Virginia. He has worked for many years in areas of natural resource and wildlife management. For this Zoom meeting register at info@fodm.org. Enter "November 10 program" in the subject line and your name in the text. See fodm.org and Facebook for coming events.

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Plants Shaped by Water

November 10 Member Program

Water is essential for life. Plants are composed mostly of water, which also defines reproductive strategies and vegetative community composition. On November 10, 7:30 p.m., Charles Smith will explore how these issues are expressed in natural communities in Northern Virginia and how changes in land use and climate affect the health and future of our ecosystems.

This meeting will be online using the Zoom platform and require advance registration. To sign up, please email info@fodm.org and put "November 10 program" in the subject line and your name in the body of the email. We will confirm your registration and send you instructions for joining the meeting. The American Horticultural Society, the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology and the Friends of Little Hunting Creek are cosponsors.

A native Arlingtonian, Charles is a naturalist and ecologist with 28 years of



Turtlehead in shrub wetland, Merrimac Farm, Prince William County VA. .
Photo by Charles Smith

experience in natural resource and wildlife management and monitoring. He is currently a Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division branch chief, focusing on stream and natural area restoration. He previously worked in natural resource management for the Fairfax County Park Authority and the Northern Virginia Re-

MEETING (continued on page 2)

GWMP Superintendent's Message

BY CHARLES CUVELIER, NPS

Thank you for your ongoing support of the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and the opportunity to provide an update on the park.

The changes brought by the covid-19 pandemic have most affected our park operations. We continue to support our workforce with telework, flexible leave and other mitigations. These are important to the overall health and safety of our employees and their families. At the same time, our ability to provide a level of service, which has been the hallmark of the park, has been impacted.

In addition, we have experienced consistently above-average visitation placing additional strains on the workforce. To meet basic services, we have triaged our work. Therefore, there is a significant backlog of work orders.



Charles Cuvelier.
Photo courtesy NPS

MESSAGE (continued on page 6)

FODMers Win Awards

We send congratulations to several FODMers who received well-deserved awards. Barbara Saffir placed second in John Kelly's annual Washington Post Squirrel Week Squirrel Photography Contest with a beautiful chipmunk photo. In 2019, she placed.



This chipmunk photo was a winner for Barbara Saffir.

In our spring newsletter, we reported that FODMer Jane Gamble won the 2020 contest. You can see all the photos on the internet here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2020/04/14/best-photos-washington-posts-squirrel-week-2020-contest/>.

Jane also had two photographs in Virginia Wildlife magazine's July-August 2020 annual photography showcase, images from 111 photographers. One of Jane's photos was of three blue-gray gnatcatcher nestlings begging for food. The second was a white-tailed doe deer with her fawn. The magazine is published by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.



Blue-gray gnatcatcher nestlings. Photo by Jane Gamble

FODMer Cathy Ledec was recognized yet again for her dedication to conservation with the 2020 Sally Ormsby Environmental Stewardship Award for 17 years of volunteer service at Huntley Meadows Park and for the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). FCPA officials said that her

Water Quality at Belle Haven Marina

The Potomac Riverkeeper Network's May to September 2020 water quality monitoring program found that as of August 26, water at the Belle Haven Marina met the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's primary contact water safety standards 92



Water quality at the Belle Haven Marina earned a "green" rating. Photo by D. McManus

percent of the time. Sampling at Oronoco Bay Park met the standards 77 percent of the time. Both Belle Haven Marina and Oronoco Bay Park earned a "green" rating, demonstrating that the level of E. coli at the time of sampling fell beneath the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's primary contact water safety standards, reported Nancy Stoner of the Network. E. coli is a bacterial indicator of fecal contamination in freshwater. You can learn more here: <https://www.theswimguide.org/>. If you'd like to help with next year's monitoring program, email info@fodm.org.

MEETING (continued from page 1)

gional Park Authority. Charles is a U.S. Army veteran, board member of the Virginia Native Plant Society, certified ecological restoration practitioner and Virginia Master Naturalist instructor.

work "firmly focused on improving the environment and on protecting and restoring irreplaceable natural resources, including native wildlife."

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Dorothy McManus

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

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Board members can receive email at info@fodm.org. *The Marsh Wren* is a quarterly publication of the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Letters and submissions to *The Marsh Wren* are welcome. Send them to the address at left. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for managing our website (www.fodm.org).



President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

As we cope with the seemingly interminable covid-19 pandemic and its constraints, let's remember to get outdoors, socially-distanced for some "nature therapy." Dyke Marsh is brightened with the colors of fall and the annual, southbound bird migration is well underway. The marsh is a "significant migratory resource (and urban corridor habitat) along the Atlantic Flyway in the Mid-Atlantic Region," reported the U.S. Geological Survey.

Our Surveys Spotlighted

We were honored to participate in the National Park Service's Spotlight on Resources research conference on October 7 and 8. Jessica Strother and Bob Veltkamp prepared a poster describing our almost five years of surveys of dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies in Dyke Marsh. Here are the total numbers of species documented from 2016 through 2019: butterflies, 49 species; damselflies, 12 species; dragonflies, 36 species. A 2011 survey confirmed 16 dragonfly and damselfly species in Dyke Marsh. Volunteers matter!

Saving Pumpkin Ash Trees

We are in our sixth year of treating 18 pumpkin ash trees threatened by the invasive emerald ash borer. "All of our study trees are still leafing out in the spring and the females are producing seeds," observed our project leader, Robert Smith, this summer. "This is in stark contrast with most other ash trees in Dyke Marsh." NPS officials estimate that Dyke Marsh could lose around 1,000 pumpkin ash trees. Many dead trees stand out when viewed from the river.



Volunteer Jim Gearing removes mile-a-minute plant. Photo by Glenda Booth

Saving Native Plants

Our invasive plants team tackled non-native plants in the native plant area from late spring to late October and typically hauled out eight or so bags of unwanted plants. It appears that at least 80 percent of our native plants are surviving. Controlling invasive, competing plants should help.

Breeding Birds Confirmed

Our loyal breeding bird surveyors, led by Larry Cartwright, confirmed all of Dyke Marsh's resident woodpeckers: red-bellied, downy, hairy and pileated and northern flickers, reported Larry. Laura Sebastianelli and Larry found the first ever red-shouldered hawk nest in Dyke Marsh. Observers saw Carolina chickadees and tufted tit-

mice feeding nestlings, orchard oriole nests and a Baltimore oriole nest. We'll share more highlights in Larry's future report. We posted some stunning pictures on our website, thanks to our talented photographers.



Sumac leaves turn bright red in the fall. Photo by Glenda Booth.

A Trashy Shoreline

Seventeen volunteers hauled out 42 bags of shoreline trash on September 26. The pandemic has exacerbated our usual torrent of litter, adding discarded masks, rubber gloves, wipes and even more carryout food packaging items. Local officials lament that wipes are clogging up sewer systems. Despite some labels, wipes are not "flushable."

Dyke Marsh in the Washington Post

Washington Post columnist John Kelly recounted in his June 30, 2020, column that Smoot Sand and Gravel hauled away over half of Dyke Marsh, 270 acres, between 1940 and 1972, which destabilized the wetland. Writing "Smoot Sand & Gravel almost killed something else," he was following up on a previous column about Bryant A. Lyles who died in 1917 from falling off "Smoot's Dredging Machine" in the Potomac River.

Dyke Marsh Film, Photos

On our website, you can "revisit" "On the Edge," our 2005 film that premiered at the Environmental Film Festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Dave Eckert was the videographer and producer.

Be sure to post your photos at our two Chronolog stations, one at the native plant restoration site on the Haul Road trail and one at the "Big Gut" across from Tulane Drive to document changes over time. Visit www.chronolog.io.

Onward

Let's hope 2021 is better than 2020. We assume we will have to have our member programs online for much of the year. We know that everyone longs for more normal times, like enjoying our favorite marsh, unmasked and sharing the joys of nature together.

Volunteers are our lifeblood. At info@fodm.org, get involved and thanks for your loyalty.

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 2019 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey

BY LARRY CARTWRIGHT, BBS Survey Coordinator

The 2019 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey was conducted between Saturday, May 25 and Thursday, July 4, but any data collected outside of this period that confirmed a breeding species was entered into the database. This permitted us to filter out most migrants that do not use the marsh or surrounding habitat to breed. I also included information provided from the Sunday morning walks and reliable individuals to supplement data reported by the survey teams. The survey tract encompasses the Belle Haven picnic area, the marina, the open marsh, that portion of the Big Gut known as West Dyke Marsh that extends from the George Washington Memorial Parkway west to River Towers, the Potomac River from the shoreline to the channel, and the surrounding woodland from the mouth of Hunting Creek to south of Morningside Lane.

The breeding bird survey methodology uses behavioral criteria to determine the breeding status of each species found in the survey tract. Species are placed into one of four categories: confirmed breeder, probable breeder, possible breeder, and present. We identified 71 species at Dyke Marsh during 2019. There were 40 confirmed breeding species, 10 probable breeders, and 13 possible breeders. An additional 8 species were listed as present, but either were colonial breeding waterbird species not using a rookery inside the survey tract, species in unsuitable habitat for breeding, or migrants still transiting northern Virginia to breeding areas further north.

The 2019 survey revealed some noticeable changes in songbird presence and distribution. Some species like Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, and Orchard Oriole were found in their usual abundance and all bred at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. However, for the first time since I became compiler in 1994, Yellow Warblers and Baltimore Orioles were not confirmed as breeders. Although volunteers discovered four or five territorial Baltimore Oriole males and even a male-female pair, we found no evidence of breeding. Yellow Warbler males did not even attempt to establish territory. Song Sparrows, often confirmed as breeders in past years, were also absent.

Warbling Vireos were confirmed as breeders in 2019 and although numbers were robust around Haul Road and

the Belle Haven picnic area, the density in the south marsh was dramatically diminished. Although we could easily find up to nine Warbling Vireos in the picnic area and Haul Road during a morning outing, it was extremely difficult to document more than two singing males while conducting a survey from the Big Gut Bridge and Tulane Drive south to Morningside Lane.

The results of the 2019 survey also indicated a drop in the number of songbird young that fledged, including the more common species like Eastern Kingbird and Orchard Oriole, where we found numerous nests of both species, but fewer than expected family groups. We found no Warbling Vireo nests or fledged young in 2019. Our confirmation of this species consisted of an adult carrying food to an unlocated nest.

There are several possibilities as to what happened during the 2019 breeding season. We have discussed the possible effect of unsettled weather and a warming climate, a reported drop in the insect and other arthropod prey base, the death of Pumpkin Ash at Dyke Marsh, and the likelihood that 2019 was just an off year. It may be a combination of events occurring simultaneously. The death of the Pumpkin Ash has opened many areas that used to produce canopy cover that may have concealed many songbird nests from predators. I received one report in 2019 of Fish Crows attacking and consuming Eastern Kingbird nestlings along the boardwalk at the end of Haul Road. Perhaps predation is becoming a more frequent event.

Volunteer surveyors always play close attention to two prominent birds that occupy the open marsh, Marsh Wren and Least Bittern. We have found only one active Marsh Wren nest since 2014. Despite the lack of breeding attempts, at least a few Marsh Wren males occupied the marsh, even if only briefly, since 2015. The 2019 survey recorded no Marsh Wrens at Dyke Marsh, the first time this has happened in my tenure as compiler.

The status of the Least Bittern seems more precarious than ever. One caveat is that we conducted only two canoe routes in the south marsh in 2019, but canoe teams covered the marsh around the Haul Road, Little Gut, and the western edge of the marsh south of the Little Gut to Bird Island almost weekly. These canoe teams plus a land-based team yielded only two reports in early June of a Least Bittern in

SURVEY (continued on page 5)



Adult Pileated Woodpecker shown feeding fledged youngster. Photo by Ed Eder



These Northern Flickers, listed as confirmed breeders in this year's survey, are shown copulating. Photo by Ed Eder

SURVEY (continued from page 4)

one of the tributaries of the Little Gut. The two southern canoe teams conducted their surveys in late June. Each of these teams reported one bird, both in the upper portion of the Big Gut, but at separate locations. That is the total sum of Least Bittern reports for 2019.



Adult bald eagle with one of two nestlings at the Haul Road nest site. Photo by Ed Eder

The Haul Road Bald Eagle nest was successful in its second season of existence. The novice breeding pair fledged one young bird in 2018; this year they doubled that effort with two youngsters fledging by early June. The Morningside Lane breeding pair produced at least one fledged young, but we found no fledged birds that could be

associated with the Tulane Drive nest.

Ospreys built eleven nests in 2019. A nest on Bird Island was destroyed by Memorial Day weekend apparently when part of the tree supporting it broke off and a second



A female hooded merganser is followed by her young. Photo by Laura Sebastianelli

nest built on a huge stump in the Potomac River near Porto Vecchio met a similar fate when it was washed away. Of the remaining nine nests, only half produced nestlings and fledged young. Successful nests tended to be closer to or along the

shoreline while unsuccessful nests were further out in the river on pilings or other artificial structures. I have no ready explanation or theory as to why this would be the case. I

initially toyed with the idea that something may have impacted the fish prey base in the open river, but there is no tangible evidence to prove that.

Finally, and much to my surprise, we added four first-time confirmed breeders to the Dyke Marsh list, consisting of one waterfowl species, two hawks, and a songbird. In April, one of our volunteers who resides at River Towers, spotted a Hooded Merganser hen with eight recently hatched young in West Dyke Marsh. The actions of a Red-shouldered Hawk pair courting and copulating in West Dyke Marsh throughout March culminated in the fledging of at least one youngster in July. Eastern Bluebirds bred in a cavity in an open park-like wooded area adjacent to the marsh in West Dyke Marsh. We observed a fledged youngster by late June. Finally, although the effort was abandoned, a nest-building Cooper's Hawk was documented along Haul Road in mid-April.



A Cooper's hawk attempted nest building along Haul Road. Photo by T.D. Hobart

The Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve Breeding Bird Survey would not be possible without the dedication of those citizen-scientists who collected valuable data. The Friends of Dyke Marsh and I as the compiler are pleased to acknowledge all the people who contributed time and expertise to the survey in 2019.

In alphabetical order, they are: Eldon Boes, Ed Eder, Sandy Farkas, Gerry Hawkins, Clark Herbert, Ellen Kabat, Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson, Dorothy McManus, Ginny McNair, Larry Meade, Roger Miller, Nick Nichols, Rich Rieger, Don Robinson, Laura Sebastianelli, Phil Silas, Robert Smith, Dixie Sommers, Sherman Suter, Margaret Wohler, Katherine Wychulis.

The 2019 Breeding Bird Survey Results

Confirmed - 40 Species: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Hooded Merganser, Mourning Dove, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Tree Swallow, N. Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, House Finch, Orchard Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

Probable - 10 Species: Green Heron, Barred Owl, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, American Goldfinch, Baltimore Oriole, Prothonotary Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting.

Possible - 13 Species: Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Bittern, Belted Kingfisher, Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Song Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler.

Present - 8 Species: Rock Pigeon, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Blackpoll Warbler.

Meet the Plants of Dyke Marsh - Cardinal Flower

BY PATRICIA P. SALAMONE

When cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) blooms in late summer, its brilliant red flowers really stand out. In naming cardinal flower as a plant of the week, the U.S. Forest Service wrote: "Few native plants have flowers of such intense color as this common herbaceous perennial."



Cardinal flower. Photo by Edith Bettinger, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The flowers appear in terminal spikes (racemes) about 8 inches long. (The plant itself typically grows from 1 to 4 feet high.) The individual flowers are tubular and have two lips, the upper lip having two lobes and the lower lip three. These long tubular flowers are ideally shaped for hummingbirds to feed on the nectar.

The plant overwinters as a basal rosette of evergreen leaves (or a clump of rosettes). In spring the flower stalk grows from this rosette. The leaves on the flower stalk are lance shaped, about four inches long, with finely toothed edges. They appear alternately along the stem.

Cardinal flower likes moist locations such as stream-banks, marshes, and low wooded areas. The plant's nation-

al wetland indicator status is facultative wetland (FACW), meaning that it usually grows in wetlands but may also grow in non-wetlands. It's a native wildflower across much of the continental U.S., except for the Pacific Northwest and the northern Great Plains, and is also a popular garden plant because of its beautiful flowers and their ability to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Cardinal flower is a member of the bellflower family (*Campanulaceae*). Its genus name (*Lobelia*) honors Matthias de l'Obel (1538-1616), a Flemish physician and botanist. Both the common name and the specific epithet (*cardinalis*) refer to the flower color, alluding to the scarlet color of the robes worn by cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. The Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) goes the cardinal flower one better, getting its genus name, specific epithet, and common name from the same source.



A male Northern cardinal takes flight. Photo by Ed Eder

For much of the year, cardinal flower is a fairly nondescript plant (though the basal rosettes are cute.) But when it blooms—wow.

For more information, visit https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/lobelia_cardinalis.shtml.

MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

It will take us several months if not a year to catch up, but we are committed to providing recreational opportunities and protecting the park to the best of our abilities. Evidence of some of our challenges have been the uneven mowing cycle, vegetation clearing, hazard tree mitigation and post-storm cleanup. In other cases, the work is being accomplished; however, it has taken additional time to complete. In Phase Three, our efforts to bring facilities online and reopen will be incremental as we address preventive maintenance and other issues where we can.

With some irony, we have had overall success with our large construction projects. The change in traffic patterns improved work efficiency on the Arlington Memorial Bridge. It remains on schedule to be completed in the next few months. Even with significant modifications or schedule changes the rehabilitation of Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial continues. The Netherlands Carillon, Glen Echo Carousel and Dyke Marsh restoration all have ongoing work. A project initiated in August is the \$10 million rehabilitation of the Clara Barton Parkway.

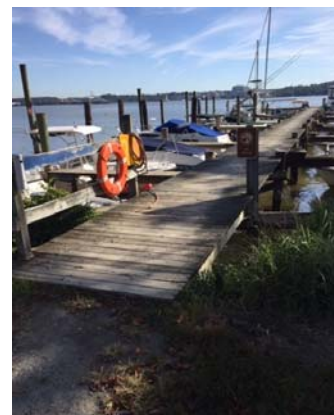
We were able to hire youth this summer which improved the overall condition of trails in the park. This group

spent time with cleanup projects, assisting at Arlington House and invasive plant removal. We appreciate their hard work and our staff's leadership in supporting them.

We appreciate the engagement the Friends of Dyke Marsh had leading up to the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. We are eager to see the implementation of the act and how it benefits the public by addressing our deferred maintenance.

In July, Tim Staples owner of Marine Evolutions, Inc., acquired the controlling interest of Belle Haven Marina. Tim and his

team have transitioned into their role well. We are very excited to have Tim as part of the GWMP concession operations providing quality visitor services in the park.



Belle Haven Marina has a new concession operator. Photo by Dorothy McManus

A Welcomed Infusion to National Parks Funds

On June 22, Virginia U.S. Senator Mark Warner came to Belle Haven Park and Dyke Marsh to announce passage of the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act which President Donald Trump signed into law on August 4. The bill will provide up to \$6.65 billion over a five-year period to address the \$12 billion maintenance backlog at national parks and adds \$900 million to protect other land and water resources throughout the U.S. The George Washington Memorial Parkway has a \$717.2 million deferred maintenance backlog. Between 2011 and 2019, the National Park Service lost 16 percent of its staff while trying to manage a 17 percent increase in visitation, says the National Parks Conservation Association. FODM thanks the members of the Virginia delegation who supported this bill and Senator Warner for his leadership.



Senator Mark Warner announced passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. Photo by Glenda Booth

“Each generation has its own rendezvous with the land. . . we are all brief tenants on this planet. By choice or default, we will carve out a land legacy for our heirs.”

-- Stuart Udall, U.S. Secretary of Interior
1961-1969

Welcome New FODM Members

FODM welcomes our **new members** Trina and Gary Bachman, Xinyi Duan, Merilee Fellows, Michael Fulkerson, Tim Hostert, Linda Howard, Charlene Johnson, Cora McHugh, Phyllis Pappas, Glenda Parker, Leila Saldanha, Jeanette Smith, Tim Staples, Pamela Webb and Janice Windau. And welcome **new Life Member** Mary Stromwall.

How's the Water? The Potomac Got a D+

The Potomac River was so hot in 2019 that it got a D+ rating by the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science in their May 2020 study. The Chesapeake Bay got a C-grade, its lowest score since 2011. The report concluded, “Benthic communities, freshwater organisms that include snails, mussels, worms and insects that live in and around the stream and river bottom, fared the worst in the extreme heat among all watershed indicators. . . Bay-wide, the benthic community score dropped sharply from 59 percent to 38 percent. High temperatures also negatively impacted aquatic grasses and lowered dissolved oxygen levels.” The low scores in 2019 were mainly due to above-average temperatures almost every month of the year, researchers reported.



Year-long high temperatures in 2019 contributed to the poor rating for the Potomac River. Photo by T.D. Hobart

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 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. Just click on the “Join” or “Donate” button on our membership page at www.fodm.org 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 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 your support of FODM.

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

The Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey, a Little History

Note on page 4 of this newsletter, we publish last year's 2019 Breeding Bird Survey results in full.

Led by Larry Cartwright, FODM volunteers conducted the 2020 Dyke Marsh breeding bird survey, covering all the traditional land routes and fewer canoe surveys because of covid-19 risks.

Preliminary 2020 data show that some migrants like Baltimore orioles and Acadian flycatchers remain below historic norms. Yellow warblers returned to breed after being absent as a Dyke Marsh breeder in 2019. Ospreys had an off year with only no more than four of eleven surveyed nests producing fledged young. Larry reported, "Bald eagles nested successfully, with the Haul Road trail breeding pair putting on a great show from early winter to June culminating in the fledging of two youngsters." Larry is completing his 2020 report which we will publish in a future issue. Hats



Larry Cartwright, in the field, surveying birds for 27 years. Photo by Ann Cartwright

off to Larry who has been conducting this important survey for 27 years.

Responding to our last newsletter, Roger Miller commended Larry for "an outstanding job of organizing the annual breeding bird survey and in compiling the data, lo these 27 years." Roger reminded us that his father, Buck Miller, started the breeding bird survey and built on the work of Jackson Abbott. Jack's records for Dyke Marsh went back to the 1940s, Roger noted. "If memory serves," Roger wrote, "Abbott was a friend of Louis Halle, author of the book, Spring in Washington." Jack was an avid birder who passed away in 1988. The Army named the Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge at Fort Belvoir for him.

And Roger added, "Certainly Larry has organized the breeding bird survey data in a more scientific and useful way than any of his predecessors. I can only applaud Larry's work." FODMers totally agree. Thank you Larry, Roger, Buck, Jack and all the others.



Refuge named for original surveyor, Jackson M. Abbott. Photo by T.D. Hobart

**The
Marsh Wren**

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