

# The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

WINTER 2012



## The Friends of Dyke Marsh

### FODM Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, March 7, at 7:30 p.m., Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306. Phone 703-768-2525. Free to all.

### Calendar of Events

February 18, Winter Walk w/ Martin Ogle, 1 -3 p.m.; April 14, Alice Ferguson Potomac River Cleanup; April 21, Earth Day, See raptors up close, Belle Haven Picnic Area.

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## Jeb Byrne (1925 - 2011)

### Founding Member of the Friends of Dyke Marsh

BY ED EDER

On November 17, Jeb Byrne, a tireless advocate for conservation and restoration of Dyke Marsh, died, attended by close family. Jeb had a deep love of nature and his activism in protecting treasured parks and wetlands in our area is observed through his multiple published articles in the *Washington Post* and other local printed media dedicated to raising public awareness of threats to our parks and wetlands. Living in the Little Hunting Creek watershed, Jeb developed a particularly close attachment to Dyke Marsh and joined Ed Risley to provide an early alert with respect to the fragility and value of this national park. Jeb's energy and enthusiasm, whether on walks through the marsh or on canoeing surveys at Dyke Marsh, was a factor in attracting acolytes in his quest to protect precious green areas in our community. Jeb's leadership was paired with a strong environmental ethic, and a determination that would not be deterred by temporary setbacks. His legacy is evident in the strong relationship between the Friends group and the National Park Service that he helped forge and the sense of community that he fostered between the Friends



Jeb Byrne at the water's edge, Dyke Marsh. Photo courtesy John Byrne.

group and affiliated conservation groups in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Jeb was a prolific reader and had a fundamental understanding of Aldo Leopold's words: "The good life of any river may depend on the perception of its music; and the preservation of some music to perceive." Jeb helped me in enhancing my perception through his passion and teaching about Dyke Marsh and for that I will always be grateful.

*Ed Eder is a past President of the Friends of Dyke Marsh.*

## Big Trees All Around Us - FODM Winter Meeting

Join us at FODM's March 7 meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center, to hear Greg Zell, Arlington County's Natural Resource Specialist, who has developed two local big tree programs. Trees are a favorite part of the natural world. The largest trees of each species are designated as champions and are often the oldest specimens. These special trees are living historical artifacts. Greg Zell

**MEETING**, (Continued on page 2)





### Homage To Ed And Jeb

As we sent one off, we sang "shall we gather at the river"  
and the big river just East ran through my mind and

Beside it two elders gazing over the river marsh, that  
was in a movie once; I saw it several times and just

One picture sticks in my mind still, it is the elders at  
the river, seeing a marsh they had seen a thousand

Times before, as if she was a loved one, an ancient  
aunt perhaps, somewhat in ruin, needing care.

They says His eye is on the sparrow and maybe  
He had seen the movie too (or maybe the real)

And His eye was on the elders, 'cause He took 'em both,  
quickly together, to bring 'em, I suppose, to

A new river and a new shore; I think there must be  
a marsh there where two elders can stand, or maybe

Sit. Eternity is a long, long time, they say.

--Jack Sullivan

*Editor's Note: Ed Risley and Jeb Byrne were founding  
members of the Friends of Dyke Marsh.*



### Dyke Marsh Goes International

Dr. Edd Barrows, Professor of Biology, Georgetown University and Director of the GU Center for the Environment, made a presentation on Dyke Marsh in Qatar on December 7. He is preparing a grant proposal which he hopes the government of Qatar will fund to survey biodiversity of freshwater wetlands. The work would involve his lab's continued Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve sample analysis. Dr. Barrows spoke to the Qatar Natural History Group at the Doha English Speaking School on "the Arthropods of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and Life on the Edge," according to an online notice. For more information about the Qatar Natural History Group, visit <http://www.qnhg.org>.

#### MEETING, (Continued from page 1)

will conduct a visual tour of some of the big trees of northern Virginia and discuss tree conservation.

You will learn that there are champions on the parkway, in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County and at the American Horticultural Society (AHS) in Mount Vernon - a national champion osage orange tree. (Photograph courtesy AHS). We welcome AHS as a cosponsor of this program.

Greg Zell has over 30 years of experience as a naturalist, park ranger, and natural resource specialist in northern Virginia and recently developed a natural resources management plan for Arlington County. After retiring in 2011, Greg returned part-time to work on the plan's implementation. His special interests are big trees and herpetology.

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*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 editorial address above. Board members too, can receive mail at this address. Special thanks to Duncan Hobart for managing our website ([www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)), and to Paula Sullivan and Ed Eder for their photography contributions to *The Marsh Wren* and website.

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[www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)

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## President's Message

Glenda C. Booth, President, Friends of Dyke Marsh

2011 closed with great sadness when our past president and beloved friend John "Jeb" Byrne passed away on November

17. Jeb was involved with the Friends since its founding and always provided sharp insights and wise guidance.

To me, Jeb was a visionary advocate, avid conservationist, master strategist, public relations guru, talented writer and a person who was great fun to be around. Who else but Jeb would express his objections to the proposed off-leash Westgrove dog park near Dyke Marsh's western boundary in the form of a poem, itself a take-off on Alexander Pope's, for a local newspaper? We are lucky to have "immortalized" Jeb in our film, *On the Edge*. It is comforting to know that his spirit will live on in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and otherwise. I

will always remember that devilish twinkle in his eye, his love of nature, his incomparable wit, his values and his leadership.

Many friends generously donated to FODM in Jeb's honor and we thank you.

We send good wishes to Dottie Marshall, former George Washington Memorial Parkway Superintendent and strong supporter of the restoration of Dyke Marsh who retired on January 1. She devoted over 30 years to the National Park Service.

Some good news:

Buoys marking the preserve's river boundaries could be in place by spring.

We will work with NPS to replace the bulletin board at the Haul Road entrance and hopefully at Northdown Road. Lewis Cabe will be FODM's liaison for the project.

Martin Tillet, a retired biology teacher, has agreed to lead programs for youngsters in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

Brent Steury, NPS Natural Resources Program Manager, has published a survey of plants (vascular flora) of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. He documented 298 new taxa in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. This brings the known flora of the parkway to 1,313 taxa. Seventeen may be the first records for Virginia. Twenty-one taxa are the first records for Fairfax County.

His summary says, "Fifteen of the newly documented taxa are listed as rare within the Commonwealth, bringing the total to 37 state-rare plants found with GWMP." Non-native plants comprise a disturbing 29 percent of the total. Brent's article is in *Banisteria*, the journal of the Virginia Natural History Society (<http://www.cmiweb.org/VNHS/banisteria/banisteria.asp#number37>).

FODM supports Belle View Elementary School with their outdoor classroom. (see page 7 of this newsletter).

Chris Hobson with Virginia's Natural Heritage Program has completed the survey of the dragonflies and damselflies of the preserve and is preparing a report, which he will present to us at FODM's May 16 meeting.

FODM weed whackers continue to attack invasive plants. Be on the lookout this spring for the resurgence of some of the native plants we put in between the "dogleg" and boardwalk.

There have been many Bald Eagle sightings this winter. We're hoping that serious pairing and nesting are underway nearby. Many of us are keeping an eagle eye on several sites.

Kurt Gaskill, our Sunday walk coordinator, reports that we had 38 Sunday field trips in calendar 2011. Thank you, Kurt, and all our very able leaders.

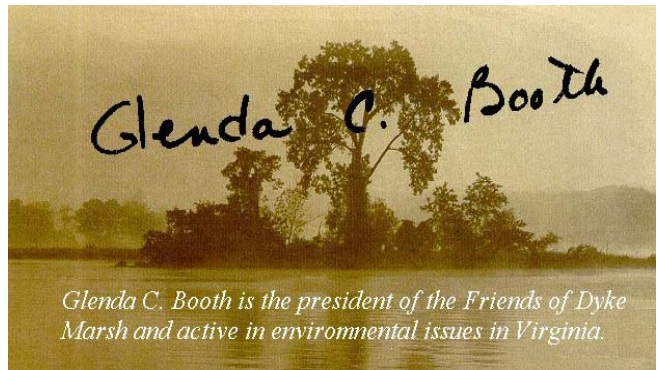
Challenges continue. The National Park Service struggles with funding shortfalls of \$11 billion or \$600 million a year, says the National Parks and Conservation Association. This means that finding funds to restore Dyke Marsh when NPS completes its plans will be a challenge. Meanwhile, erosion continues at an alarming six feet a year and is increasing, say U.S. Geological Survey experts. See our articles in previous issues and visit <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1269/>.

The Potomac River in November got a grade of "D," down from D+ in 2007, reported the Potomac Conservancy. A growing population and poor land use practices are the primary culprits. Visit [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org).

Join NPS and FODM on April 21 for another Earth Day raptor demonstration by Kent Knowles of the Raptor Conservancy. (see picture above). Check our website ([www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)) for time and place. Great for kids.



FODMers D. Robinson, G. Crider, R. Smith & L. Smith learn about raptors from K. Knowles on Earth Day 2011. Knowles will return in 2012. Photo by G. Booth.



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

# The Results of the 2011 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey

BY LARRY CARTWRIGHT, BBS Survey Coordinator

The 2011 Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey was conducted as part of a continuing biological inventory of the now rapidly eroding and endangered tidal wetland. The breeding status of each species was determined by means of behavioral criteria. Species were placed into one of four categories: confirmed breeder, probable breeder, possible breeder, and present.

The official survey was conducted between Saturday, May 28 and Monday, July 4, 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 to supplement data reported by the survey teams. The survey tract encompassed the Belle Haven picnic area, the marina, the open marsh, the Potomac River shoreline, and the surrounding woodland from the mouth of Hunting Creek to Morningside Lane. The volunteers documented 78 species at Dyke Marsh. They categorized 40 species as breeders, nine species as probable breeders, and 19 species as possible breeders. An additional 10 species were present in the survey tract during the official reporting period, but were considered not to be in suitable breeding habitat. The latter category includes a flightless and possibly injured Tundra Swan, unable to make the spring migration and forced to spend the summer near the mouth of Hunting Creek.



One of the breeding pair of Eastern Screech-Owls in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder.

The highlight this year was the first confirmation of Eastern Screech-Owl as a breeder at Dyke Marsh in the almost 20 years that I have been the survey's compiler. The breeding pair was initially discovered in the middle of the day on May 30 perched near the Haul Road entrance. The birds were relocated at dusk on June 3 and 4, and on the evening of June 6, I received a report of just fledged young with the parents near the nest cavity. Another visit the following evening confirmed the presence of three fledged young being fed by busy parents. The birds possibly relocated since they were no longer found after June 7. It is amazing that an Eastern Screech-Owl pair selected a nest cavity right off a heavily used path, laid, incubated, and hatched at least three eggs, brooded and fed nestlings, and were never discovered until a week before the young fledged. This is just an example of how challenging a survey like this can be, and normally nocturnal birds like owls present unique difficulties.

Surveys in the open marsh always focus on two high

visibility breeders, Marsh Wrens and Least Bitterns.

Marsh Wrens are still hanging on at Dyke Marsh and an estimated 10 territorial males were present in the marsh vegetation north of the Haul Road peninsula and Hog Island.

Monitors recorded the first active nest at this location during the latter half of June. Monitors also found at least three singing males in a tributary halfway up the Big Gut with one bird at a nest on June 5 and more nest construction underway on June 12. This was the first time that Marsh Wrens have been present in the south marsh since 2006, and that also was after a five year absence.

There was a maximum of no more than three Least Bitterns reported during any survey period, suggesting that Least Bitterns only sparsely populated the marsh during the breeding season. There was a vocalizing bird present at the usual location at the south end of the Haul Road peninsula near the boardwalk, but surveyors found no evidence of a mate or a nest. Indeed, the lucky observation by a canoeist in the Big Gut on June 5 of a Least Bittern carrying nesting material to a partially constructed nest was all the documentation I received that permitted me to list this species as a confirmed breeder. Of course, as secretive as Least Bitterns can be, that is not a surprise. Least Bittern population levels appeared to me below normal last year as well.

Ospreys constructed or refurbished 10 nests during the breeding season, but only five produced youngsters. The birds at the well-known marina nest provided the closest observation. Beginning in March with the repair of a dilapidated nest, through egg incubation in April, the feeding and care of three nestlings in May and June, and the successful fledgling of the trio soon after Independence Day, the Ospreys put on a fascinating show. Perhaps the most interesting Osprey pair decided to build a nest on the folded mast of a sailboat moored at the marina. By the time construction was completed, sticks drooped down over the sides of the mast, giving the impression of nest instability. Despite the nest's appearance, the sailboat breeding pair successfully raised and fledged at least two youngsters. This breeding attempt is unique not only because of the choice of a nest site, but because the sailboat nestlings did not fledge until after July 31, a full three weeks after Osprey youngsters produced in other successful nests were flying. Possibly the breeding pair got a late start or relocated after an earlier nest failure and was making a second attempt.

Four of the five failed Osprey nests in 2011 were in the southern portion of the marsh, including one on the south side of Pipeline Bay that produced young in 2010. A root-



Osprey nest on a sailboat at the marina. Photo by Glenda Booth.

ball nest located between the two islands across from the Haul Road boardwalk collapsed during the breeding season. None of the failed nests proceeded even to the nestling stage. Besides the previously mentioned marina and sailboat nests, the platform nests to the east of Hunting Creek and on the pilings in the channel across from the picnic area, and a new tree top nest along the shoreline halfway between the Little and Big Gut entrances, were successful. The tendency for northern nests to fledge young while their southern counterparts fail was also apparent last year. A closer look reveals that at least for the past two years, Osprey nests constructed on platforms generally have been more successful than those placed in trees or on rootballs, and platforms predominate in the north.

The Bald Eagle breeding pair at Morningside Lane fared better than the Ospreys in the southern portion of Dyke Marsh and successfully bred for the third straight year. The single nestling fledged sometime between May 29 and June 5 and was observed close to the nest site with its parents throughout most of June. These birds have acclimated well to human presence.

The expected cast of songbird characters bred at Dyke Marsh in 2011 and some in respectable numbers. Monitors collectively discovered 11 Eastern Kingbird nests, impressive for even this prolific species. Over a dozen Prothonotary Warblers established territories stretching from the upper Big Gut footbridge down to the southern portions of the marsh and observers found two active nest cavities. Parents were feeding nestlings in one of these cavities at Southern Point, located south of the Big Gut entrance, on May 29 while the canoe team watched from 15 feet away. Surveyors documented both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles at nests feeding young, with particularly good views being presented on the Haul Road peninsula, while observers enjoyed the sight of Great Crested Flycatcher fledglings chasing adults around while begging for food in the south picnic area. At least one Warbling Vireo pair started nesting early in 2011, with a Sunday morning walk



Prothonotary Warbler at nest cavity in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ned Stone.

group observing nest construction underway on May 22 at the Haul Road dogleg. Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and three swallow species were feeding fledged young by the middle of June. Monitors reported Yellow Warblers at the end of the Haul Road peninsula in small numbers of perhaps four breeding pairs and a nest was documented by June 4. Yellow Warblers had been reported carrying food during the previous week. Acadian Flycatchers, like Prothonotary Warblers, were concentrated from the upper Big Gut footbridge down to Morningside Lane, and a canoe team reported nesting activity from Southern Point in late June. The biggest surprise was a Swamp Sparrow ini-

tially reported on June 19 that presented no evidence of breeding, but at least briefly established a territory in the marsh vegetation adjacent to the Haul Road Channel. Perhaps the biggest disappointment



Common Yellowthroat. ©Dan Sudia  
A disappointment this year, Common Yellowthroat was not a confirmed breeder. Photo © Dan Sudia.

as the survey ended was the inability to confirm fairly common birds like Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, and Indigo Bunting. They were within the census tract in 2011 and males were on territory. We just could not confirm them.

#### The 2011 Breeding Survey Results:

**Confirmed-40 Species:** Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Least Bittern, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Tree Swallow, N. Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Marsh Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

**Probable - 9 Species:** Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Thrasher, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Swamp Sparrow, Indigo Bunting.

**Possible - 19 Species:** Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, American Crow, Purple Martin, Wood Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, American Redstart, Chipping Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird.

**Present - 10 Species:** Tundra Swan, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon.

I would now happily like to mention all the volunteers. My job as compiler would be impossible without you. A big thank you to all of you who participated in this year's survey. In alphabetical order, those who provided data are: Bob Beard, Andy Bernick, Dave Boltz, John Cushing, Ed Eder, Myriam Eder, Sandy Farkas, Kurt Gaskill, Susan Haskew, Gerry Hawkins, Bill Hoover, Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson, Dorothy McManus, Ginny McNair, Larry Meade, Roger Miller, David Nichols, Jen Nieland, Marc Ribaud, Rich Rieger, Don Robinson, Peter Ross, Molly Ross, Trish Simmons, Ned Stone, Sherman Suter, Kim Taylor, Brian Von Herzen, Margaret Wohler, Frances Zorn.

# Dyke Marsh Rate of Erosion Increasing Reports USGS

BY GLENDA BOOTH

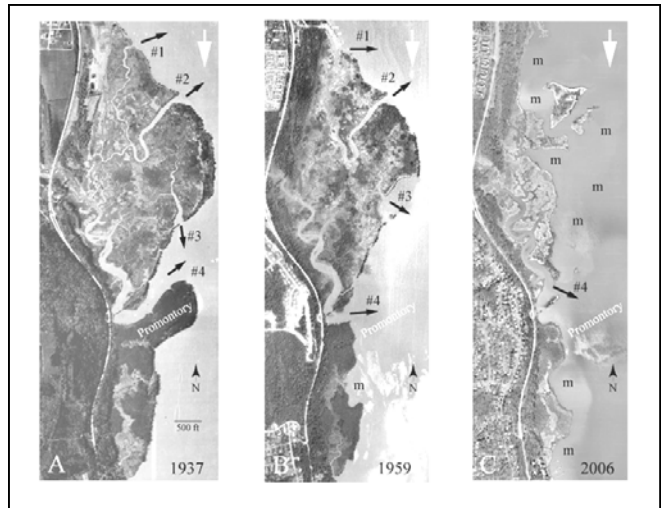
Dyke Marsh is seriously eroding and the rate of erosion is increasing, FODMers learned at the November 16 meeting. U.S. Geological Survey research scientists Ronald Litwin, Joseph Smoot and Milan Pavich presented their study documenting the wetland's destabilization.

Between 1987 and 2006, the Dyke Marsh shoreline eroded westward between six and eight feet per year. Between 1976 and 2006, the marsh lost an average of approximately three-quarters of an acre per year, reported Litwin.

Most significantly, during this same period, rates of annual acreage loss increased sequentially. From 1976 to 1987, the loss to erosion was about 0.35 acres per year; from 1987 to 2000, about 0.67 acres; and from 2002 to 2006, about 2.0 acres per year. The highest rate of erosion is ongoing, Litwin said. The 80-page landmark study found that conditions "now appear to put at risk the short term survivability of this marsh. . . ."

The destabilization of Dyke Marsh has both human and natural causes, the scientists found. Mining gouged out channels that parallel the marsh on the shallow river bottom and removed a promontory that had protected the wetland from northbound storms. The mining also consumed three of the four significant tidal channel networks, a system which had dissipated tidal energy, delivered sediment with each high tide and enabled marsh growth.

Brent Steury, Natural Resources Program Manager for the George Washington Memorial Parkway, told the group



Photographs dating from 1937 show an increasing rate of erosion at Dyke Marsh. Photos courtesy USGS.

that the National Park Service is preparing a draft restoration and management plan in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other partners. One option under discussion is a breakwater in the area of the former promontory, which Steury called a "priority." Congress mandated in 1974 that the Dyke Marsh ecosystem be restored.

The USGS study, with NPS and local academic coauthors, is posted at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1269/>.

## Alice Ferguson Foundation Trash Summit

BY NED STONE

On October 19, I attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Potomac Watershed Trash Summit, sponsored by the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Their slogan is "Trash-Free Potomac by 2013" but unfortunately that goal has been receding fast.

The amount of waterborne litter present in Dyke Marsh is appalling. Some arrives with every high tide and east wind. Much more comes from storms like those of August and September 2011, which wash out the storm drains in areas upstream. Even the wooded areas are still full of trash from historic surge events like hurricane Isabel in 2003. Most of the trash consists of bottles and cans and pieces of Styrofoam®, but almost anything that floats can find its way into the Marsh. While people on foot can remove some of this trash, most of it is accessible only by water.

The summit attracts a surprisingly large number of people who are attacking the problem including state and county government employees, non-profit organizations, and volunteers. Topics included public policy, education and persuasion, containerization, in-stream trash technologies, and particular items (cigarettes, tires, syringes, and shopping carts). Catching trash in the tributaries is an attractive but immature technology, with some devices highly



Waterborne litter, including large objects like these tires, plagues the shoreline in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ned Stone.

labor-intensive. In-stream litter traps that can be serviced like dumpsters are needed. There is no magic bullet for tires. Enforcement of dumping laws has shut off their large sources, and what are left are individual scofflaws and historic leftovers.

Unfortunately, *there is no downward trend*. In spite of enormous efforts, we are not winning. We need a VA-MD-DC beverage container deposit law, and a ban on Styrofoam® in food and beverage containers.

## FODM Supports Belle View Elementary

The Friends of Dyke Marsh have formed an alliance with Belle View Elementary School, a school near the western boundary of the wetland. Last fall, FODM members joined students, teachers and other volunteers to put



Students planting outdoor wetland classroom. Photo by Ned Stone

in over 800 plants in their new outdoor wetland classroom which is visible from Fort Hunt Road. Several Board members attended the school's November 10 ribbon-cutting to inaugurate the project. In November, FODM president Glenda Booth joined a group of Belle View first graders on a field trip to the preserve led by National Park Service Rangers Emily Zivot and Miguel Roberson.

When you drive up Fort Hunt Road this spring, watch their new wetland garden come alive!

### Sunday Morning Bird Walks

Bird walks are held every Sunday morning, all year. 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.

## Two Life Members Added to FODM

Please join us in welcoming our two newest Life Members Scott Sanborn and Robert Veltkamp and our new annual members Linda Bohannon, Emily Brady, Patrice Cochran, Agnes Dubberly, Lois Forster, Jill and Pete Grinsted, Jamie and Erin Ingram, Jim Klein and Elisabeth Lardner, Mary McAlevy, Nina Pfeiffer, Judy Phillips, Jim Poole, Barbara and Robert Pringle, Frances Raskin, Roberta Ross, and Margaret Summers. Thank you to all who donated above your dues and contributed to FODM in memory of Jeb Byrne.

U.S. Park Police, Emergency Number: 202-619-7300

## Calendar Of Events

**February 18**, 1 p.m., Winter Walk w/Martin Ogle.

**March 7**, 7:30 p.m. - FODM Winter Quarterly Meeting Membership meeting, open to all, at the Huntley Meadows Park Visitors Center. See page 1 for more information.

**March 24**, 10:00 a.m.-noon. Talk at Amer. Horticultural Society's River Farm on invasive plants in the Geo. Washington Parkway and in your own yard, and what to do, by NPS's Erik Oberg and Audubon Society of No.Va.'s Cliff Fairweather. RSVP to chair.er@mvcca.org or call 703 360 0691.

**April 14**, 10:00 a.m., Alice Ferguson Potomac River Cleanup.

**April 21**, 10:00 a.m., Earth Day; see raptors up close, Belle Haven picnic area. (See page 3, President's Report.)

**May 16**, 7:30 p.m. - FODM Spring Quarterly Meeting.

## 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. We encourage you to save paper (trees) and mailing costs by renewing your membership online at [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org). Just click on the "Renewal" button on our membership page to make your tax-deductible contribution by credit card securely through PayPal. 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. If you receive the paper copy of *The Marsh Wren* and you are not current on your dues for 2012, a second mailing label with notice that you are overdue is included near your address label. Those who receive *The Marsh Wren* by email will receive this notice in their email. Thank you for your continuing support of FODM.

**FODM's New Email and Online Systems.** The conversion to our email and online membership payment systems has been completed. Individuals can now join FODM online with the option to pay by credit card or through PayPal. Members can also renew their memberships the same way. Our Membership Chair, Bob Veltkamp, welcomes your comments.

DUES AMOUNT..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
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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).

## Bush Honeysuckle Encourages Tick-Borne Disease

BY LIZ SMITH, FODM Member, AND GLENDA BOOTH

FODM members, Boy Scouts and other volunteers have made great progress in recent years controlling bush or Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), especially along the Haul Road.

The National Park Service targeted this invasive plant for control because it is very invasive. It is very common all along the George Washington Memorial Parkway and in many suburban yards.

Bush honeysuckle is a deciduous shrub with arching branches that produce abundant red berries and is spread for miles by birds and small mammals that eat the berries. It shades out other plants, depletes soil nutrients and displaces native plants. According to the Maryland Nature Conservancy, birds nesting in it may experience higher predation rates.

These are all good reasons to try to control it. Here's



Bush honeysuckle displaces native plants and their branches produce abundant red berries. Photos by Chris Evans, Bugwood.org.



another reason. An interdisciplinary study from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., found that the presence of this invasive plant, particularly in heavy stands, actually increases the risk of human disease.

The relationship between deer and ticks and the transmission of disease is well known. The Washington University study, headed by Dr. Brian F. Allan, adds the bush honeysuckle to the mix. These researchers found that the density of white-tailed deer and that of the nymph life stage of ticks

infected with disease-causing bacteria are both higher in areas invaded by bush honeysuckle than areas without.

This finding has raised the question of whether or not other invasive plants also provide a connection to tick-borne disease. As yet there appears to be no definitive answer to that question, but studies are showing a rise in infectious disease due to the loss of biological diversity.

**The  
Marsh Wren**

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