

The Marsh Wren

SINCE 1976

THE FRIENDS OF DYKE MARSH

WINTER 2021



FODM Winter Meeting

Wednesday, February 17, at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom. See p.1.

2021 FODM Meetings

February 17, May 26 and October 20, 7 p.m.

Calendar of Events

Given the uncertainty posed by the coronavirus, many of our 2021 events are undecided at this time.

February 6 and 20, 10 a.m. to 12 noon - Remove ivy from trees. Visit www.fodm.org and our Facebook page for details and registration.

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All About Flying Squirrels

February 17 Member Program

FODM's first meeting in 2021, on February 17 at 7 p.m., will feature a presentation by naturalist, Kim Young, from Fairfax County Park Authority's Hidden Oaks Nature Center. She will explore the often-hidden life of our native southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*). These rodents are likely quite common in some habitats in Northern Virginia. "The preferred habitat is sufficient forested area for both food and tree cavity nest resources," says the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources website.

You will learn how to look for them, how to attract them to your backyard, facts about their wide-ranging diet, their adaptations for nocturnal living and the truth about their ability to "fly." Kim will share photos and a video of these remarkable creatures and she says, "You will be an aficionado for life!"



Southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*) photographed in Dyke Marsh. Photo by Ed Eder

There is a link to register for this Zoom meeting under the Flying Squirrels announcement in the left column of the FODM home page, www.fodm.org. For details on FODM's elections, see page 2.

Dyke Marsh Restoration Update

BY CHARLES CUVELIER, NPS

The George Washington Memorial Parkway is currently seeking permits for the additional length of sill, approximately 2,100 feet, to be constructed north of the recently completed breakwater and sill structure. We have submitted our application to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and are awaiting a date for the permit to be scheduled on their agenda. Pending the issuance of all permits, construction could begin in the summer of 2021. We are working to align the contract and construction schedules with the June-January window of time we can be in the river to mitigate other fisheries concerns.



Construction planned for the summer of 2021 will permit the National Park Service to extend the current sill 2,100 feet. Photo by Glenda Booth

Annual Meeting and Election, February 17

The February 17 meeting is also FODM's annual meeting and the election of officers and a Board of Directors. The proposed nominees, all



of whom have agreed to serve, are listed below. Other nominations can be considered at the meeting.

We have included in the paper copies of the Marsh Wren a proxy form for members in good standing who cannot attend for establishing a quorum and voting. The form has instructions for completing and returning it by February 12, 12 noon. Members who receive the newsletter by email will receive an email with the proxy form and instructions for replying by email. Please email your proxy by February 15, 12 noon, to info@fodm.org. Please send your proxy if you cannot attend.

Officers and Board of Directors nominees - Incumbents: Glenda Booth, President; Dixie Sommers, Vice President; Dorothy McManus, Secretary; Patricia Salamone, Treasurer; Ed Eder, Past President; David F. Barbour; Jim Gearing; Deborah Hammer; Meg Jonas; Bob Veltkamp. New nominee: Carolyn Gamble.



Carolyn Gamble

Carolyn Gamble is a lifelong nature lover. She enjoyed a 30-year career at Huntley Meadows Park starting in 1982 when the first boardwalk had just been built. She moved into the Belle View commu-

Releasing Balloons, a No-no

Who doesn't love a balloon? Usually, they bring cheer, but balloons have a downside.

They biodegrade very slowly. Marine mammals and sea turtles mistake them for food because some latex balloons look like jellyfish. When eaten, balloons can be lethal. Birds can get entangled in them, especially in their strings or ribbons. Foil balloons can cause power outages when entangled on power lines. We have found balloon debris in Dyke Marsh.

Latex balloons, foil balloons and plastic ribbons are a top source of debris on Virginia's remote beaches according to a January study by Longwood University's Clean Virginia Waterways. "Balloons and plastic ribbons are among the deadliest types of ocean trash to all kinds of wildlife including sea turtles and birds," commented Christina Trapani, a Longwood researcher.

Under Virginia's current law, people can release up to 50 balloons at one time. The Virginia General Assembly is considering a bill sponsored by Delegate Nancy Guy to limit intentional releases of balloons outdoors. As we go to press, its outcome is uncertain.

If balloons are part of your party, make sure they don't take flight.



Balloon debris in DMWP. Photo by Glenda Booth

nity in 2011 in part because of its proximity to Dyke Marsh and all its wonderful flora and fauna. Carolyn is also interested in local history and serves on the Friends of Historic Huntley Board of Directors.

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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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Meg Jonas

Board members can receive emails 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 gladly put 2020 behind us and look forward to brighter days ahead, winter is a good time to regroup, count our blessings and enjoy clear, crisp days outdoors. Most insects “hibernate” in winter in a resting period called diapause. Many birds have flown south; others have arrived. Some wetland plants have “disappeared” into the marsh bottom.

But there's life out there. Bald eagles have “refurbished” their nests and mated. In January, they began incubating eggs. On a warm, sunny day, mourning cloak butterflies might take flight.

While some life in the marsh is dormant, winter is an opportune time to study patterns in tree bark, like this sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*). A common tree in Dyke Marsh, it has a distinctive brown, gray and white exfoliating, mottled bark.



An American sycamore's exfoliating bark. Photo by Glenda Booth

In December, FODMers helped with the 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Ed Eder and Barbara Saffir spotted two female Baltimore orioles (*Icterus galbula*). Ed also photographed a migration rarity, a yellow-throated warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) foraging. On December 12, he snapped a downy woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) excavating a hornet's nest. A barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*) “sent local birders into a frenzy,” reported DCist on December 15, near Washington, D.C., a migrant rarely seen here. And speaking of birds, our Breeding Bird Survey leader Larry Cartwright reports that in the spring, prothonotary warblers (*Protonotaria citrea*) “had a terrific breeding year” with four confirmations of breeding in the marsh.

Generous Donors

Thank you everyone who kindly sent end-of-the-year donations to FODM. Whether it is \$1.00 or several hundred, every little bit helps.

Speaking of funds, in October, FODM received a \$1,000 grant from the Colburn Family Foundation based in

Reston, Virginia. Chris Ambrose, a Lorton-area resident, recommended the Friends of Dyke Marsh to Boatsetter.com, a boating organization associated with Geico Insurance, that has the goal of helping nonprofits “that align within the passion our owners have for creating a meaningful impact in the environment and planet water.”



A downy woodpecker excavating a hornet's nest. Photo by Ed Eder

Reaching Out

We try to be a welcoming, inclusive organization. On our website, you'll find a flyer prepared by former FODM Vice President Ned Stone inviting Latino and Latina friends to enjoy Dyke Marsh. We also have a flyer for Spanish-speaking youngsters. Thank you, Ned and Haroldo Suarez for helping us help children learn what's in Dyke Marsh. And we have a new poster on the bulletin board with a QR code so smart phone users can access our website quickly by clicking on it at the bulletin board. Thank you, Bob Veltkamp, for the beautiful poster, printed by Minuteman Press.

Decade of Restoration

The United Nations (U.N.) has designated 2021 to 2030 as the U.N. Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, calling for stronger protections and restoration of ecosystems around the world. The goal of this global movement is to stop the degradation of ecosystems and work toward a more sustainable future. A 2020 study published in Nature found that “Wetlands restoration has the highest positive impact for biodiversity conservation and forests the highest importance for climate change mitigation.” You can learn more here <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>.

As we prepare for spring to unfold, here's some inspiration from Ogden Nash:

The turtle trapped 'twist plated decks
Doth practically conceal its sex
I think it clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertile.

Happy 2021! The ospreys will be back soon.

Glenda C. Booth

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

“Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we will say our work is finished.”

-- Rachel Carson

Dyke Marsh of Old — Miasma, Mystery and Mischief

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

This article offers a few highlights of Dyke Marsh's human history, some of the marsh's intriguing past. It is based, in part, on a 2012 talk to FODM by Matthew Virta, Cultural Resources Program Manager/Archaeologist for the George Washington Memorial Parkway, U.S. National Park Service.



Wetlands were not always protected, even from farm animals. This is a wetland in the Washington area.

Parts of today's Dyke Marsh are around 2,200 years old, concluded the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 2013. ". . . the oldest radiometric evidence we obtained was from our percussion core . . . from the southern marsh . . . indicates that peat had developed at the site by least the Early Woodland Period (~2200 BP) . . ." reported USGS. ". . . marshland existed at least intermittently at the site for over two millennia . . ." During the Archaic Period, 9,500 to 1,000 B.C., Native Americans used the area for subsistence hunting and gathering.

English explorer Captain John Smith encountered many Native American villages on his 1608 voyage on the Potomac River and recorded them on a map. These villages were home to Algonquian-speaking Indians, including the Nacotchtank and Tauxenent living just north and south of what today we call Dyke Marsh.

Sunken Land

In 1653 and 1654, the British issued the first land patents to an individual owner for the Dyke Marsh area to Giles Brent for two tracts, including a "parcel of sunken land near Hunting Creek." This "sunken land" may have been the first recorded reference to what is now known as Dyke Marsh. In 1669, John Matthews got a patent for 1,600 acres along Great Hunting Creek, probably including parts of Dyke Marsh. Surveys labeled the wetlands as "Swamp and Pocoson."

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the area's uplands and wetlands went through many owners and were cleared, divided, farmed and modified. In the early 1800s, Colonel

Augustine Smith bought portions of the plantation, West's Grove, and tried to "reclaim" wetlands by building earthen dikes. After his death, Alexandria Gazette newspaper ads boasted that the West Grove property was "embracing one of the most extensive and valuable river bottoms and pocosins in this country . . . 350 acres were redeemed from the river by a dike constructed of earth and gravel drawn from the hills. A third has been cleared and cultivated." These dikes ultimately failed. The name "Dyke Marsh" comes from these structures, using an Old or Middle English spelling.

Hell Hole

By the mid-1800s, the marsh was called "Hell Hole." An August 10, 1858, Alexandria Gazette article extolled, "Hell Hole is a grand, wild place, and, save for the miasma and mosquitos which reign there pre-eminent, would be a magnificent abode for those fond of following the pursuits of Nimrod and Walton." (Nimrod was a Biblical hunter and Walton was Izaak Walton, the 17th century Complete Angler author.)

During the Civil War, Union troops occupied the city of Alexandria and controlled the Dyke Marsh area. The troops most likely did not attempt to penetrate "Hell Hole," according to Virta. Kevin Green, a local unofficial "historian," believes that some secessionists hid out in Dyke Marsh.

Railway along the River

In 1892, the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Railroad built an electric railway along the Potomac shoreline which carried travelers in trolleys from Washington, D.C., to Mount Vernon Estate and hauled produce from area farmers. The line included a stop on the marsh's shoreline called "The Dyke." The railway ceased operating in the 1920s when car and bus travel became popular. (Today's circular road at Mount Vernon Estate was the turnaround for the trolley.) Several bawdy houses popped up in New Alexandria concurrent with building the railroad,



Postcard scene of The "Dyke" Resort, Alexandria, Virginia, circa 1907-1914. The image is from National Trust Library Historic Postcard Collection from University of Maryland.

OLD DYKE MARSH (continued on page 5)

OLD DYKE MARSH (continued from page 4)

according to Fredrick Tilp in his 1978 book, *This Was Potomac River*. When the New Alexandria Land and River Improvement Corporation went bankrupt, a trustee, James Swartz, gave nearly 600 acres, including Dyke Marsh, to Pennsylvania's Bucknell University.

Dyke Marsh's Nefarious Side

Dense marshes, where jurisdictional lines are fuzzy, invite various nefarious pursuits. At some point after the Civil War, "arks" appeared, 24-foot by 10-foot boats with a 12-inch draft, moored in the marsh and river. Also, people built shacks or cottages just off the Virginia shoreline on pilings, presumably providing services beyond lodging and fishing supplies. An early 20th century postcard advertises "Dyke" as a fishing and hunting "resort," showing an ark moored against a surviving section of the Augustine Smith dike and connected by a small suspension bridge.

One local, now deceased, said that many of the arks "were survivors of the arks shut out of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at the time of its closure. Many arks survived for years . . . as off-shore means to offer those amenities to the populace legally unavailable within the Virginia boundaries," he wrote.

Local lore has spread tales of bootleggers operating stills in Dyke Marsh with small skiffs showing up in the black of night commanded by armed individuals who left with "products." A 1931 Washington Post article reported that police raided Gus Quayle's place on the Dyke near New Alexandria after watching him haul liquor from the bottom of the river and making a sale. After they arrested him, officers found 138 bottles of alleged home brew and seven pints of alleged liquor stashed in gunny sacks under the water.

Cigarette Dodson was an enigmatic, locally well-known "entrepreneur." Two local residents have shared their memories of Cig. They believe he operated a still in the marsh and smuggled cigarettes "from the South." Mount Vernon resident Eugene D. Vinogradoff knew Cig and shared this reminiscence: "Cig was a trapper, mostly. He caught muskrats, beavers and occasionally foxes and rabbits and sold their pelts. He also had a fishnet or two (The nets were held up by lines of wooden poles driven into the muddy bottom of the Potomac. The ice pulled them up each winter, so they had to be re-driven in the spring.), and he caught mostly white perch and carp.

"During the hunting season, Cig also had several duck blinds, which he rented out to folks like my dad and me. But he told us that he made most of his money from trapping. My dad and I went duck hunting with Cig in 1956 and 1957. When we shot a duck, Cig would send his dog, a

Chesapeake retriever, to swim out and pull the duck back to shore.

"When I grew older, my father told me that there were rumors among our neighbors that Cig had also made money as a bootlegger during Prohibition. But other than the rumors, I have no knowledge of that.

"Cig and his wife lived in a wooden shack, with a tarpaper roof, built on top of a wooden barge located in the inlet just offshore from today's 'Cigarette Turnaround,' called 'Pipeline Bay' by some. Their barge and shed were located on the south side of this inlet, tied by ropes to a couple of trees that grew on the shore. The shore was, and still is, high enough that it does not flood during normal high tides.

"I visited Cig's shack several times. It had a metal, wood-burning stove in it. It was one big room, with a small dining table, couch and beds against the back wall (i.e., the wall facing south, up against the shoreline). I never used the bathroom, but of course, I do know where it emptied. More 'fertilizer' for the Dyke Marsh flora.

"Cig drank bourbon and, as his nickname suggests, he smoked (we all did back then). In the afternoon and evening, he offered visitors a shot of bourbon, followed by a glass of water. Cig collected rainwater and, when that ran short, he also took water from a spring on the shore."

The Park Service evicted the Dodsons to foster the George Washington Memorial Parkway's commemorative character. Eugene recalled, "I remember when Cig had to leave the marsh. He had a small-ish outboard motor on the back of a skiff, a flat-bottom wooden rowboat, which was pushing from behind his barge with their shack on it. He and his wife set off down the Potomac River. I took my boat out and met them in the channel to say goodbye. I remember that Cig said he did not know where they would try to settle. He was just going to play it day by day for a while, getting further and further down the river."

The Parkway

In 1928, Congress passed legislation authorizing a survey and construction of a memorial highway (referred to as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway) from Mount Vernon Estate to Arlington Memorial Bridge, which when completed was the first segment of what later became the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Designers highlighted Dyke Marsh for its scenery and included a pull-off today still called "Cigarette Turnaround" by some locals. By 1932, NPS removed the railway tracks and the parkway opened as a memorial to George Washington on the 200th anniversary of his birth.



A duck blind on the Potomac River. Photo by Ned Stone



An "ark" in Dyke Marsh. Photo by John Andrews

the river and making a sale. After they arrested

OLD DYKE MARSH (continued on page 7)

The Potomac River's Health, Is It Stalling?

For the first time in a decade, the Potomac River's health has declined, according to the Potomac Conservancy's "report card," falling from a grade of B to a B-. While cleaner than it was in 2011 when it got a D, "its recovery is plateauing," say Conservancy officials. The Potomac provides drinking water to five million people. It is still unsafe for swimming or fishing.

The report card graded pollution, fish, habitat, land and people, using 2018 data.

Polluted Runoff and More

Polluted stormwater runoff is the fastest growing pollutant and "threatens to undo decades of progress," the Conservancy concludes. Impervious surfaces like streets, parking lots and roofs prevent the natural absorption of precipitation and instead often send stormwater water, trash, sediments and excess nutrients into waterways. Overwhelmed stormwater systems can carry diluted sewage into waterways during intense storms.

Land use got a C+. "Population growth, sprawl and its infrastructure threaten to degrade water quality as forests are cleared and replaced with parking lots, housing and roads," the report maintains.

Forested shoreline buffers got a grade of F; underwater aquatic plants, a C-. Protected lands are 37 percent of total land area basin-wide and got an A grade.

Tidal water quality earned a D+, perhaps because 2017 and 2018 had higher-than-average rainfall which reduced water clarity. The Potomac is tidal from its mouth at the Chesapeake Bay up to Little Falls. Non-tidal water quality

scored a grade of B.

Smallmouth bass are "showing signs of stress," but shad and white perch are doing well, Conservancy officials contend. Two non-native fish, blue catfish and snakeheads, could put native fish at risk.

The Potomac begins at a spring in West Virginia 3,140 feet above sea level and winds 383 miles through three states and Washington, D. C., to the Chesapeake Bay. The Washington Post in 1951 called the river an "open sewer" and President Lyndon B. Johnson labeled it "a national disgrace" in 1965. American Rivers listed the Potomac as America's "most endangered river" in 2012.

Potomac Conservancy President Hedrick Belin cautions, "We've reached a critical turning point for the river and we can't backslide now. We must strengthen — not weaken — water protections so fishermen can eat their catch, children can safely swim and we can drink water without worry." Visit www.potomac.org.



Stormwater runoff is the river's fastest growing pollutant. Photo by Glenda Booth

Join the Invasives Team

Give a cheer for dead ivy! To save some trees, FODM volunteers are removing English ivy (*Hedera helix*) from tree trunks. Vines left typically die. English ivy is an aggressive, non-native, evergreen plant, all too pervasive in Dyke Marsh. It carpets the ground and climbs, attaching aerial rootlets to whatever it climbs. When it matures, it flowers and sets fruit. Birds eat and disseminate the fruits. Ivy can eventually kill trees and as a ground-



A tree in Dyke Marsh covered with English ivy. Photo by Glenda Booth

cover, it smothers and kills vegetation. You can see a good contrast in habitats by comparing our native plant site where most of the ivy was removed to other areas along the Haul Road where it unfortunately abounds.

Sign up at info@fodm.org. It's great exercise and camaraderie and we can social distance.

Butterflies, Dragonflies and Damselflies Surveyed

A devoted cadre of volunteers has conducted surveys of Dyke Marsh's butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies every year since 2016. In 15 surveys in 2020, they documented 33 butterfly species and 19 dragonfly species. They added two butterfly species not previously recorded and three dragonfly species, bringing the five-year, species totals to 51 butterflies and 39 dragonflies (27 dragonflies and 12 damselflies). Thank you, survey team, for your dedication.



Help Record Dyke Marsh's Natural History

Please help record changes in Dyke Marsh by using our two Chronolog stations: one at the native plant site, <https://www.chronolog.io/site/DMW101>, and one across from Tulane Drive, also called the Big Gut, <https://www.chronolog.io/site/DMW102>. At the stations, just put your cellphone in the bracket and snap a photo. Then email it to upload@chronolog.io with the station location in the subject line. Be sure to visit chronolog.io and watch as the seasons come and go. You could get hooked!

Dredging Sends Alarms

In the early 1930s, Smoot, Sand and Gravel Corporation (SSGC) acquired 650 acres along the river from Bucknell University, including 260 acres of Dyke Marsh. From 1940 to 1972, the company dredged 270 acres, over half of the marsh.

In 1959, Irston R. Barnes, president of the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, wrote a Washington Post article, spotlighting the marsh's destruction and value. That year, Congress passed and President Dwight E. Eisenhower signed into law, P.L. 86-41, adding Dyke Marsh to the National Park Service system "... so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount." The law allowed SSGC to continue dredging.

In 1972, Nathaniel P. Reed, Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, wrote the National Capital Parks Superintendent that seeing the dredging when flying over Dyke Marsh, he "was horrified. If the work is legal – and I doubt that – it is amoral." He asked staff to identify steps to "reconstruct" the marsh and labeled ending the dredging "a priority." "I do not want the remaining marsh turned into an upland 'recreation' area. I want a Marsh," he stressed, capitalizing "marsh." "Just figure out a way to stop what you are doing now – promptly." SSGC relinquished their mining rights that year.

Today, restoration is underway and the only furtive goings-on, as far as we know, are the mating of birds, beavers, muskrats, dragonflies and other marsh denizens.

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

Welcome New FODM Members

FODM welcomes our **new members** Chris Ambrose, Carolyn Bednarek, Laura Dale, Kathleen Hill, Karen McGrath, Linda Moncure, Nancy Pitcher, Laura Powers, Nancy Rybicki, Robert and Susie Scherr, and Elizabeth Spotswood. We welcome our **new Lifetime Members** Nancy Barbour, Ashley Bradford, Carolyn Gamble, Edward Morrison and Mallory Stouffer and **conversions to Lifetime Membership** Carrie Capuco and Kurt Gaskill.

Presidential Leadership

As new leaders in the Biden-Harris administration take charge in Washington, D.C., this winter, we share the perspectives on national parks of two former U.S. presidents:

"Our working landscapes, cultural sites, parks, coasts, wild lands, rivers and streams are gifts that we have inherited from previous generations. They are the places that offer us refuge from daily demands, renew our spirits and enhance our fondest memories. . . Americans take pride in these places and share a responsibility to preserve them for our children and grandchildren." – President Barack Obama, in launching the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, 2010

"A vital goal for this country would be to prepare the parks, to guard the parks, to conserve the parks and to make the parks relevant to the American people in honor of the 100th anniversary." – President George W. Bush in launching the National Park Centennial Initiative, 2008

TUNDRA SWANS (continued from page 8)

baying hounds, rather gooselike; resting flock gives gentle musical murmuring. Immature calls, wheezier, becoming adult like by second year."

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*; 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.

☞

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).

Beetle Species New to Science Found at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve

The December 2020 issue of the journal *The Coleopterists Bulletin* published the description of a new species of tumbling flower beetle. The type locality named in the description is Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. A type locality is the place where the specimen used to describe the species was collected. The new beetle is named *Mordellina washingtonensis* Steury and Steiner



Mordellina washingtonensis Steury and Steiner

in honor of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a National Park Service unit that manages Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. The beetle is one of five species new to science described from George Washington Memorial Parkway in 2020 which represent the first new species of beetles described from the Washington, D.C., area in over 40 years. The discoveries further demonstrate the importance of protecting National Park lands near urban areas. Four of the five new species are known in the world only from the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Tundra Swans: “Musical Murmuring”

Our “sister” friends group, the Friends of Mason Neck State Park, encourage FODMers to visit the park to see the tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) that are wintering there. Observers estimated from 200 to 250 there in January. They usually arrive on Mason Neck in October and leave in early March.



Tundra swans at Mason Neck. Photo by Cathy Ledec

These beautiful white birds with black bills are between 47 and 58 inches in size, weigh around 14 pounds and have a 66-inch wingspan. They mate for life, start breeding at age three to four and nest on tundra ponds and lakes in Alaska and Canada. One Mason Neck official said that they are safe in Virginia in the winter because they have no predators. On their breeding grounds, they can be attacked by Arctic foxes.

In his guide, David Allen Sibley describes their voice like this: “A melancholy, clear, singing klooo or kwooo with hooting or barking quality. Distant flock sounds like

TUNDRA SWANS (continued on page 7)



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