



April 2024 Newsletter

Mason Neck State Park Eagle Festival, 10 AM – 4 PM, May 11, 2024



Mark your calendar for Mason Neck State Park's annual Eagle Festival – from 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday, May 11. The park will have a variety of live shows, including hawks and owls from Secret Garden Birds and Bees.



A wide variety of interactive exhibits will entertain and inform both children and adults.



Food trucks, live bands and other attractions will round out the day. We'll have more information about Eagle Festival 2024 in the May newsletter.

Gardeners Needed for the Park's Pollinator Gardens!



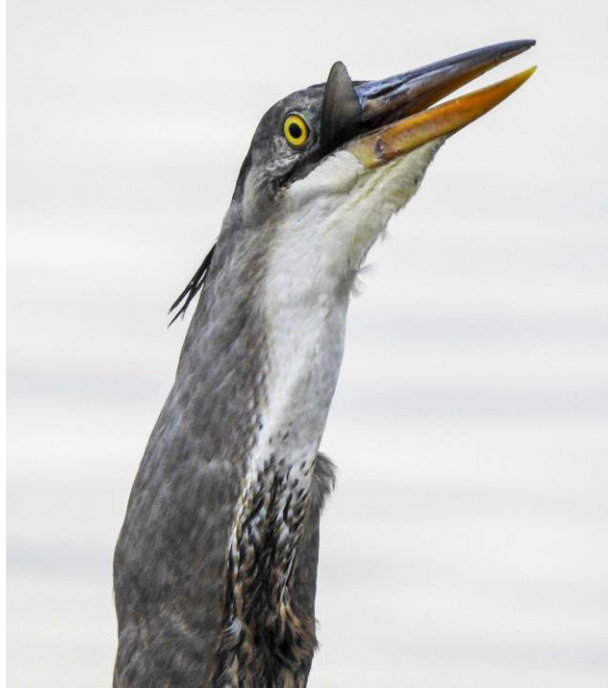
It's officially Spring, and volunteers are busily working on the pollinator gardens near the Visitor Center. Fairfax Master Naturalists and Friends of Mason Neck State Park have workdays on the third Tuesday and third Saturday of each month, now through November. Can you help beautify the area and improve the habitat for pollinators? Sign up on Better Impact if you are a Fairfax Master Naturalist. Other volunteers should email Sarah Mayhew, the project lead, at sarah.mayhew@yahoo.com. The parking fee is waived for volunteers working on the gardens.

Electronic Gate Will Ease Entry to Mason Neck State Park



Mason Neck State Park is in the process of completing installation of an electronic gate at the park's entrance. Currently, the gate is manually unlocked each morning at 8 am and closed at dusk. The electronic gate will automatically open at sunrise and close again at dusk. A pressure pad on the exit gate will allow cars to exit after the gates close. The electronic gate will be a real benefit to early-morning birdwatchers, paddlers, and others who like to get started before 8 AM. The gate will be operational in the next few weeks. Check the park's [website](#) to learn what time the park opens.

April Photo of the Month: Hungry Heron



Photos by Kris Gulden

The Friends' Accessibility Advisor Kris Gulden found a Great Blue Heron gulping down a huge fish at Blackwater Wildlife Refuge a couple of weeks ago. Herons will eat almost anything, including small mammals, snakes and other birds. They normally eat smaller prey than this, but they're known to eat very large fish from time to time.

Normally, we only use photos taken at Mason Neck State Park in our Photo of the Month feature. We made an exception this time because Great Blue Herons are so common in the park, and the photos were so unusual.

Do you have a photo taken at Mason Neck State Park that you would like to share? Send it to us at FriendsofMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com and we may use it in the next newsletter.

Volunteer Needed to Monitor Bluebird Boxes at the Park During Nesting Season



The Virginia Bluebird Society is looking for a volunteer to monitor the 12 blue bird boxes at Mason Neck State Park. Bluebird monitoring starts in April and goes through August. Volunteers will receive a short training session as they shadow another volunteer and then be able to monitor Bluebirds once or twice a month as they hatch, grow and leave the nest. If you are interested, please call Glenys Mulholland at 703-801-7372 or email her at glenysmulholland@msn.com.

The Friends Will Exhibit at the Fairfax County Environmental Expo



Join us at the 6th Annual Environmental Expo, from 11 am to 3 pm on April 27 at Fort Hunt Park. The Expo is a free family-friendly event featuring live music, food, reptile and raptor programs, electric vehicles and bikes, a history walk, solar cooking demos, and more. The park is located at 8999 Fort Hunt Boulevard, Alexandria.

All-Terrain Wheelchair Bill Passes the Virginia General Assembly



The Virginia General Assembly has passed HB1186, a bill providing for a two-year pilot program providing all-terrain power wheelchairs to be used by visitors at state parks. The bill was introduced by Delegate Kathy Tran, who represented the area that includes Mason Neck State park until last year's redistricting. Delegate Rozia Henson, who now represents the area that includes the park, and Senator David Marsden co-sponsored the bill. The bill is now awaiting action by Governor Youngkin. It is likely that Mason Neck State Park will receive one of the wheelchairs, which will be made available to visitors free of charge.

Upcoming Programs at Mason Neck State Park



The park has lots of events scheduled in April. You can learn about frogs and toads on April 6, the partial eclipse on April 8, celebrate Earth Day with special events at the park on April 27, take a bird walk with a leader from the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, and more. To learn about all the park's events, go to the park's [website](#), scroll down until you see the list of upcoming events, and click on "More events at this park."

Please Help Us Support Mason Neck State Park!



If you are already a member of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park, **Thank You!** Your membership dues and donations help us to support the Park, including funding initiatives that improve the accessibility of the park.

If you aren't a member, or your membership has lapsed, you can join the Friends [here](#). You can also donate to the Friends [here](#).