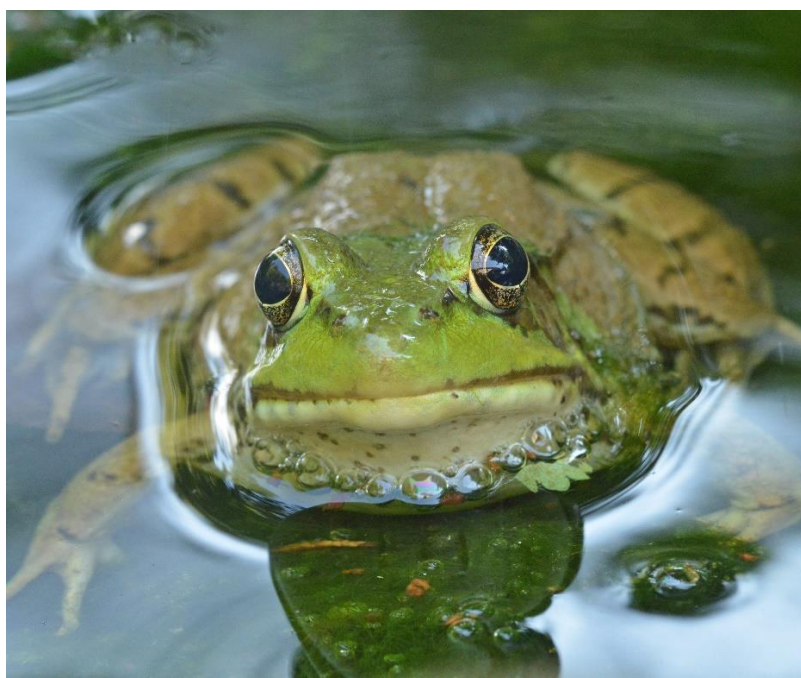




## Friends of Mason Neck State Park

### August 2022 Newsletter

## Enter the Friends' "Picture the Magic" Photo Contest



Photos by Randy Streufert

**Enter our photo contest!** Anyone who visits Mason Neck State Park knows that it is a wonderful place with serene woods, scenic shorelines, quiet canoeing and kayak opportunities, interesting wildlife, and a dedicated Park staff. You have an opportunity to capture your magic moments at the park and enter them into the Friends of Mason Neck State Park's "Picture the Magic" photo contest. The contest runs from August 1 until September 30, 2022, and photos taken any time in 2022 are eligible. We'll award one \$300 Grand Prize, one \$200 First Prize to a photographer 18 or older, and one \$200 First Prize to a photographer who is under 18. Anyone who enters might find their photo featured in our newsletter, on our website or on the Park's viewing screen at the Visitor Center. You can learn more about the contest, including how to enter, [here](#).



# Join Us at 7 PM on September 17 for Owl Moon Under the Stars (Rain Date October 1)



Bring a blanket or a chair and join us on the lawn by the Visitor Center. As the evening skies grow dim, you'll be treated to an unforgettable presentation. The wildlife rehabilitators and educators from Secret Garden Birds and Bees will present "Raptors in Fall and Winter," complete with at least five species of live hawks and owls.





Here's your chance to come face to face with these magnificent raptors. Who wouldn't want a selfie with a red-shouldered hawk, a kestrel or a barred owl? You're sure to enjoy this interesting and educational program.



Everyone's invited! Owl Moon is open to the public and is great for all ages.

**\$10 – INDIVIDUALS**

**\$20 – FAMILY**

**\$30 – SCOUT TROOPS**

**You can register [here](#).**

Entrance to the park is free (no parking fee) after 6:30 pm.



# Youth Conservation Corps Gets to Work



Members and leaders from the Statewide VA State Parks Youth Conservation Corps arrived at Mason Neck State Park on Sunday, July 17th. Office Manager Maribel Cervantes Magana and Assistant Park Manager Taylore Willis welcomed them, helped them complete some required paperwork, then quickly whisked them away to settle into their living quarters at the Jammes House for the next three weeks. Following lunch, Friends of Mason Neck State Park Treasurer Randy Streufert delivered a presentation about the park's geography, flora, and fauna. Later that evening, Friends of Mason Neck State Park Hillary and Kem Clawson hosted a welcome pizza dinner at the Jammes House funded by the Friends of Mason Neck State Park.





The crew will spend the next three weeks working on projects throughout the park with Chief Ranger Eric Percival and Park Ranger Sean Tracy, going on field trips led by crew leaders on the evenings and weekends, and participating in interpretive programs with Mason Neck State Park staff and volunteers. There is a long list of projects for the crew to work on, including replacing and repairing the guard rail at the 90-degree turn on High Point Road, building and installing stairs in place of an ill-placed ramp on Bay View Trail, painting the interior of the picnic area restrooms, general trail maintenance, and much more!

## **Calling all Gardeners!**

### **The Park's Pollinator Gardens Need Some TLC**



The Park has three pollinator gardens filled with native plants that attract and nourish pollinators. All three gardens need some help. The Park needs people to help weed and mulch the gardens and to keep the more aggressive native plants under control. Can you give the gardens some help on a continuing basis or just once on a workday? Send us an email at [FriendsofMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com) and we'll connect you with Friends and Park Staff who are working to keep the gardens beautiful.



## Meet Lance Elzie, Mason Neck State Park's New Manager



Join us in welcoming Lance Elzie as the new Park Manager at Mason Neck State Park. With a genuine concern for nature and conservation, Lance has dedicated more than 20 years to the outdoor industry. He was drawn to the Virginia State Parks' model of having conservation come first and then creating great recreational opportunities inside the conservation framework.

Most recently, Lance worked as manager of Leesylvania State Park. He continues to support that park on a part-time basis until his replacement there is hired. Past positions include working for NOVA Parks as manager for Bull Run Marina, Fountainhead Regional Park, Sandy Run Regional Park, and the Webb Sanctuary.

Lance was born in Kentucky and was raised in Tallahassee Florida. Growing up, he visited many state and national parks and forests - a big part of his childhood. Lance assumed that having so many protected lands close by was the norm, but he realized otherwise when he moved away. However, having access to those places was formative and led to his love for conservation and his work in the field. Helping people have a connection to natural spaces is his motivation.

Lance received a bachelor's degree in experiential education and wilderness leadership from Brevard College and a master's degree in parks, recreation, and tourism management from Clemson University. He studied outdoor education in New Zealand (a very "hands-on" course) and served in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is a wilderness medicine first responder and was a wilderness medicine instructor for the Outdoor Leadership School, teaching emergency care in austere and remote environments where evacuation may be delayed, and communication is unreliable.

Lance moved to Virginia from North Carolina where he was the outdoor recreation manager for Jackson County and helped create some of the state's first universally accessible parks and outdoor recreation programs. He believes that there is a need to conserve lands for everyone and wants to help people have a connection to natural spaces. Balancing those conservation efforts while creating programs that better connect visitors to





the park's natural spaces is key. In his words, "enjoying nature in a sustainable manner."



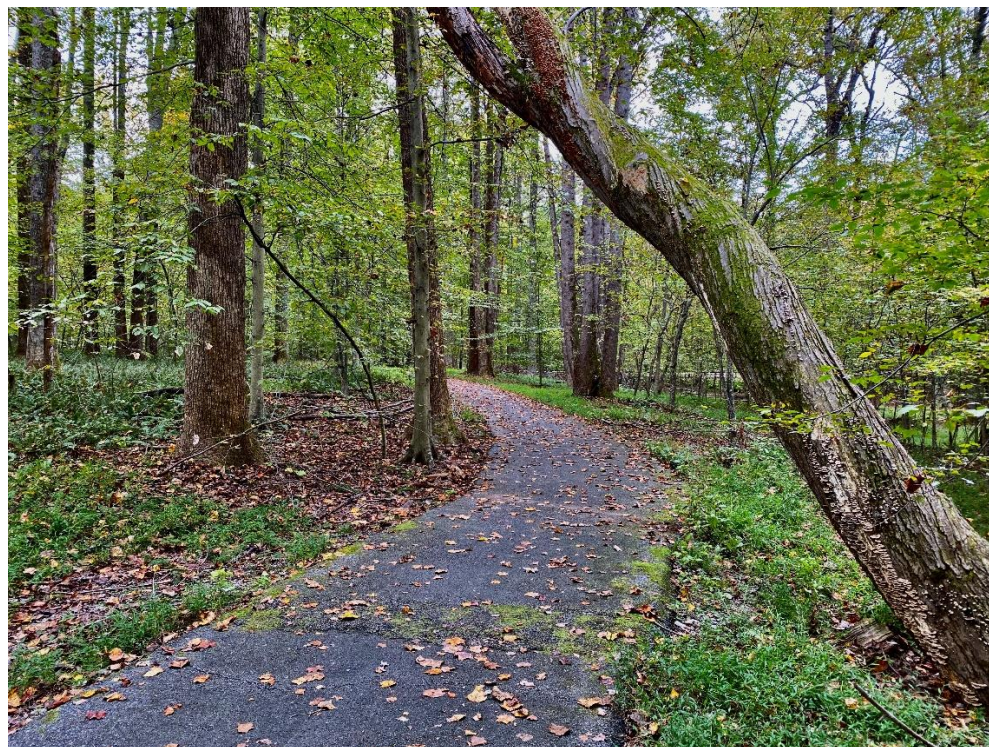
Asked why he chose Mason Neck State Park, he said "In NOVA, the idea of pristine wilderness is nonexistent, but Mason Neck State Park and the surrounding areas are about as close to it as you can get in this area. Having the time, space, and resources to connect people and nature. Balance conservation efforts with all the people who come to recreate here in a way that is even and fair to everyone." He truly looks forward to coming to work every day.

On the personal side, Lance likes to learn and likes to teach. For him, learning is a hobby, and he loves to learn all kinds of things. Although it's been a while, he enjoys running, adventure races, and triathlons. A favorite pastime is hiking, fishing, and kayaking with his son, Evander. Time at home is spent with his wife Tina, Evander, two cats and a leopard gecko.

Asked about the most daring thing he's done, he said when he went to study in New Zealand, he didn't have a clue what flight he was on or when it was scheduled to leave.

When asked to say something unusual about himself he said he likes to crochet. He also said he's a vegetarian but loves to fish – always catch and release.

## **Help Us Decide How to Improve Accessibility at the Park**



Mason Neck State Park's Manager has asked the Friends to support increased accessibility. The Friends' Board has approved expenditures to replace some of the grass at the picnic area with packed gravel to make it easier for people in wheelchairs to get to some of the picnic benches. What other ideas do you have? Have you, your family or friends found that people with mobility issues have difficulty accessing the park's facilities or trails? Are the park's entrance fees impacting anyone's ability to come to the park? Send us an email with your ideas to [FriendsOfMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com) and we'll discuss them with the park staff.



# August Programs at Mason Neck State Park



Mason Neck State Park will host more than 25 programs and events this month, led by the Park's excellent, trained interpreters and volunteer paddling trip guides. You can find the calendar of events on the Park's [website](#). Just 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's activities and enable us to fund special events such as the Eagle Festival each May, our Owl Moon evening each fall, and the annual Swanfall Holiday Program each December.

If you aren't a member, or your membership has lapsed, you can become a member at [Join the Friends of Mason Neck State Park](#). You can also donate to the Friends [here](#).