



Friends of Mason Neck State Park, Inc.

**7301 High Point Road
Mason Neck, Virginia 22079**

www.MasonNeckStateParkFriends.org

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



*Working to conserve, enhance, and interpret the Park's natural, educational,
recreational, cultural, and historic resources.*

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park, Inc.

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park is an all-volunteer, Section 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to conserve, enhance, and interpret the Park's natural, educational, recreational, cultural, and historic resources. We work closely with Park Staff, providing both volunteer and financial support for many park programs and improvements, shoreline cleanups, educational activities, and outreach events that are focused on bringing the underserved in our community to the park. We serve as advocates for the park with our State Legislature.

Throughout the year, the Friends hold educational events that are open to both our members and the public. We focus on topics that are related to the environment, wildlife, and history of the Mason Neck area, as well as globally important environmental issues. At times we partner with similar organizations to present programs that are relevant to a broader audience.

We are delighted to include in this report winning photographs from our first photo contest which were taken by park guests.



1st Place – Friends 2022 Photo Contest, Photographer Angela Camp - Juvenile Bald Eagle

Dear Friends,

As we continued our support of the Park's mission in 2022, the board added a new and important focus - accessibility. Last year, I noted that Mason Neck State Park had become a welcome refuge for the many thousands of folks who have discovered the benefits of time spent outdoors. This year, we have given much thought to those who do not have the ability to enjoy the park as fully as many of us do – both the financially disadvantaged who find the \$10 parking fee prohibitive and the physically disabled.

We are delighted that Kris Gulden, a wheelchair user and frequent park visitor has been advising our board on accessibility issues as we look forward to more park improvements in the coming year. We also received support from the Visitor Services Director for Virginia State Parks which will enable us to work with social service agencies to provide their clients with park passes. Everyone deserves a great day in the park!

My sincerest thanks go out to all of you for your support in helping us create great experiences in the park for everyone. As always, we welcome your ideas.

Hillary K. Clawson
President



1st Place - Young Photographer Madelyn Lessard - age 11 - Brothers

Officers and Directors

The following individuals served as officers and directors of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park during 2022.

Tom Blackburn
Bets Byrne
Hillary Clawson, President
Pam Cressey
Richard (Dick) Harless
Richard (Dick) Kennedy (retired)

Steve Levenson, Vice President
Gail Mlinarchik, Secretary
John Rand
John Romano
Randy Streufert, Treasurer

Kris Gulden, a wheelchair user, is assisting our board as an advisor on accessibility issues.

Dick Kennedy was a founding member of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park and served on the board since its inception. We were delighted to honor his service by having a park bench placed directly across from the Visitor Center.



Dick with wife, Sallie and dog, Ryder at the dedication.

THIS BENCH HAS BEEN PLACED IN RECOGNITION OF RICHARD (DICK) KENNEDY A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS OF MASON NECK STATE PARK AND A LONG TIME SUPPORTER OF THE PARK AND THE MASON NECK COMMUNITY.

2022 Educational Programs



RESTORATION OF AMERICAN SHAD IN THE POTOMAC - presentation by Jim Cummins, a biologist and river ecologist who has played a key role in the efforts to restore the Potomac River's shad population.



BALD EAGLES – A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY. – Jeff Cooper, a Virginia Department of Wildlife Biologist discussed eagle biology, recent research, the recovery of Bald Eagle populations, and the importance of the Chesapeake Bay region to bald eagles. Presented in conjunction with the Friends of Dyke Marsh.



OWL MOON – Held outside under the stars, visitors were treated to *Raptors in Fall and Winter* presented by rehabilitator and educator Secret Garden Birds and Bees, featuring a wide variety of hawks and owls. This is an annual event which gives guests the rare opportunity to view and photograph at extremely close range.



NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS – Presented by board member and award- winning photographer Randy Streufert, participants learned nature photography basics and enjoyed a guided visit to the best parts of the park for viewing wildlife.



SWANFALL: ALL ABOUT TUNDRA SWANS - Dr. Tom Wood, Ornithologist and Associate Professor of Integrative and Interdisciplinary Studies at George Mason University and Tom Blackburn, Past President of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, presented a program on Tundra Swans, covering their lives, their long migration from Alaska and northern Canada to the coastal mid-antic, as well as their close relationship to other swans.

Park Programs We Supported In 2022

- Continued our tradition of providing refreshments for visitors who came out for First Day Hikes as well as leading hikes and providing information on Tundra Swan viewing hikes.
- Supported shoreline cleanups throughout the year, serving as leaders, volunteers, and providing refreshments to participants.
- Raised the funds for the annual Eagle Festival, a park event that promotes conservation through a broad range of programs and activities, generally attracting several thousand guests.
- Participated as an exhibitor representing the park at the Fairfax County, Mount Vernon District Environment Expo, raising awareness for the park, its programs and conservation.
- Provided dinner and an introductory program on leadership and safety to the Youth Conservation Corps members who worked in the park during the summer. Funded a graduation party for them and their families.
- Donated an outdoor movie screen, projector, and sound system to the park, allowing staff to hold special events and programs in the evening.
- Purchased materials to create a path of access to the accessible picnic tables.
- Participated in the annual Park after Dark event, funded materials for activities, purchased refreshments, and served as volunteers. This program introduces young and old alike to the Park's wildlife and their habits through activities and night hikes.
- Purchased plants and provided funds to purchase mulch for the park's pollinator gardens.
- Purchased new sandwich boards so park can promote daily and upcoming events.
- Approved purchase of gravel for repairs to the Bayview trail.
- Began discussions with a contractor to assess building an accessible observation platform.

2022 *Picture the Magic* Photo Contest

In 2022, the Friends held our first photo contest, inviting adults and youth to submit their best photos that were taken in the park. It was an overwhelming success with many submissions and some outstanding pictures that captured the true magic of the park. Winners were awarded cash prizes and had their photos featured in the Visitor Center. Some of those photos are included in this report. We plan to repeat the contest in 2023.



Grand Prize winner: Donna Cline; photo title: Kayaking Kane's Creek

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park Newsletter

Our monthly newsletter is an important tool for supporting the park and educating our audience. In addition to notifying members and many hundreds of contacts about upcoming Friends and Park events, it features educational articles about the flora and fauna of the park and surrounding area. For those who were unable to attend an event, each newsletter contains a review. Articles frequently feature spectacular photos by board member and award-winning photographer, Randy Streufert. We are equally fortunate to have board member Tom Blackburn as editor.

Friends of Mason Neck State Park Income and Expenses

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park's 2022 Financial Results are summarized below:

