



## **Friends of Mason Neck State Park**

### **March 2023 Newsletter**

## **Join Us Online for a Special Program on Beavers and Why They Matter April 1, 2PM**



Photo: Randy Streufert

If you have walked Mason Neck State Park's Bayview Trail, you've probably noticed the vibrant wetlands about halfway along the trail. The wetlands have been improved by a colony of beavers, whose lodge you can see toward the far end of the wetland. Would you like to learn more about beavers and their impact on the environment? Join us at 2 PM on April 1 for a free online program, Beavers and Why They Matter.



Alison Zak, the Executive Director of the Human-Beaver Coexistence Fund, will present a brief history of human interactions with beavers over time, an overview of beaver ecology and

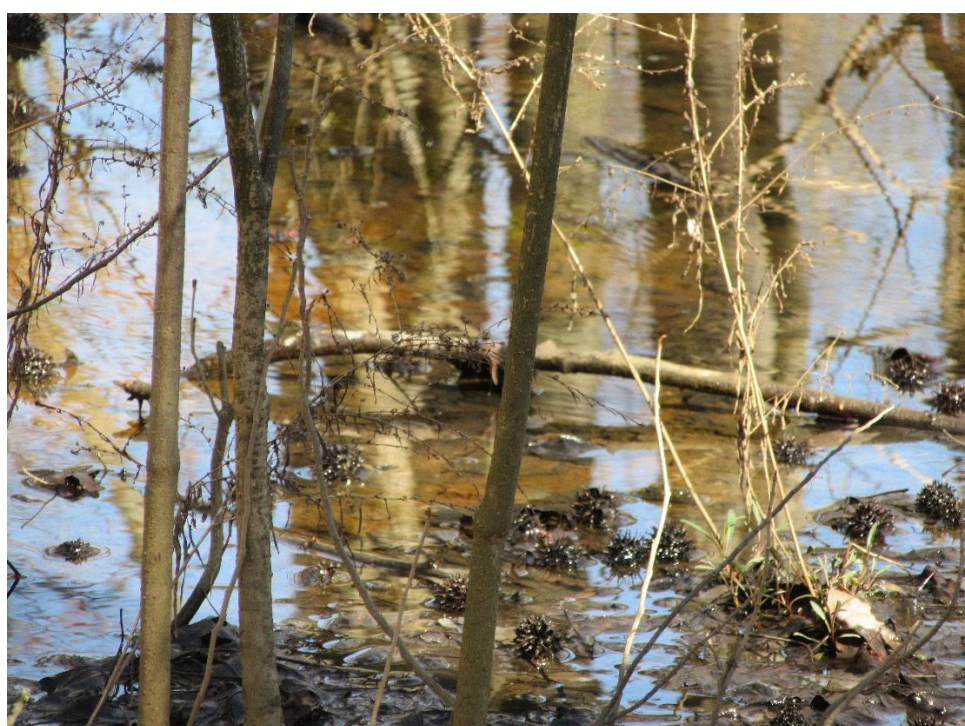


behavior, and an exploration of the benefits that beavers and the wetlands they create provide to the health of our watersheds, landscapes, and communities. Park Staff will present a short overview of how the beavers in the wetland along the Park's Bayview Trail have changed the ecology of the wetland.

Alison studied anthropology and human-wildlife conflict in graduate school, then worked for six years in environmental education and outreach before founding HBCF. She is particularly intrigued, inspired, and challenged by human-beaver coexistence work, because few other animals have such an impact on the world around them. Alison is also the author of *Wild Asana: Animals, Yoga, and Connecting Our Practice to the Natural World*, which comes out in June.

You can register for the program [here](#). We will send Zoom login information to registrants on March 31.

## **Don't Forget the On-Line Program on Wetland Dynamics through the Seasons Tonight at 7 PM**



Wetlands like those at Mason Neck State Park experience dramatic changes over the course of a year. The Friends of Mason Neck State Park are co-sponsoring the Friends of Dyke Marsh's on-line program "Wetland Dynamics through the Seasons" at 7 PM on March 1. The presentation will explore the secrets and wonders of freshwater and tidal wetlands and associated woodland over the course of a year: spring's avian migrations, quickening of vegetation, burgeoning of myriad invertebrates and the assaults of extreme weather conditions; summertime's proliferation of flora, fish, fowl and mammals; amazing feats of biological inventiveness during the autumnal preparation for winter; and how plants and animals adapt to winter's harsh conditions.

The program will be presented by Dr. Colin Rees, retired biodiversity specialist at the World Bank and professor of Zoology at the University of Maryland. He is one of the developers and founders of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary on the Patuxent River, part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Southern Maryland, which is the focus of his recent book, *Nature's Calendar: A Year in the Life of a Wildlife Sanctuary*.

You can register for the program [here](#).



# The Friends Authorize Funds to Support the Park



At their February meeting, the Friends Board of Directors approved expenditures for three projects that will enhance visitors' experiences. The Board approved funds to create a larger habitat for Myrtle the Turtle, a Red-eared Slider, who you can currently see in her too-small aquarium in the Visitor Center. There's a donation jar in the Visitor Center where you can donate directly.

The Friends are also providing yearly funding to cover expenses for items used in Staff interpretive programs, such as animal pelts, bait, storage and animal care.

The Friends also agreed to provide the funding for a new roof for the canoe and kayak shed, which currently has large holes. The Virginia Department of Conservation currently has a huge backlog of projects at state parks, and the Friends' funding ensures that the roof will be fixed before rain coming through the roof causes structural damage to the shed.

Thank you to everyone who donates to the Friends. Our expenditures to support the park are made possible by your donations. You can donate [here](#).

## Members and Friends Enjoyed a Program on Interesting Bird Behavior at the Annual Meeting



The Friends of Mason Neck State Park held their annual meeting on Saturday, February 11. Board Member Randy Streufert presented "Why Do They Do That? Randy Streufert Explains Interesting Bird Behavior," a fascinating set of photos and expert commentary on how birds interact. Members voted on a slate of Directors and re-elected all the sitting directors. You can review their brief biographies [here](#).

## **Photo of the Month: Tundra Swans on the Move**



Barbara Bladen and some companions walked the Woodmarsh Trail to see the Tundra Swans a couple of weeks ago. She says that as they reached the observation platform, a flock of Tundra Swans flew in, and she caught this photo of them landing in the marsh. It's always wonderful to see the swans as they fly in or out of the marsh. But you'll need to go soon if you want to see them before they start their migration back to the Arctic. You can check with Park Staff to see if they're still around.

Do you have a beautiful, interesting, funny, or informative photo taken at Mason Neck State Park that you'd like to share? Send it to [friendsofmasonneckstatepark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmasonneckstatepark@gmail.com) and we may publish it in the newsletter.

## **Delegate Kathy Tran's Proposal to Fund a Pilot Program for All-Terrain Powered Wheelchairs at State Parks Failed to Pass in the House Appropriations Committee.**





Delegate Kathy Tran introduced B2453, which would provide funding for a pilot program to purchase two all-terrain powered wheelchairs for installation in a state park, in the just-completed legislative session. The Friends urged legislators to approve the bill. The House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee reported the bill out by a 20-2 vote. However, the House Appropriations Committee tabled the bill by an 11-10 vote, meaning that the bill could not advance. Delegate Tran is to be commended for her efforts to improve accessibility at state parks. Perhaps the proposal will have more success in the next legislative session.

## 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 visitor experiences at the park.

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