



March 2024 Newsletter

Board of Directors Re-Elected at the Friends of Mason Neck State Park's Annual Meeting



The Friends of Mason Neck State Park held their annual meeting via Zoom on Saturday, February 24. The current board of Directors was re-elected unanimously by a combination of in-person virtual votes and proxy votes. You can review the Board members' brief biographies [here](#).

President Hillary Clawson discussed the Friends' key achievements in 2023 and plans for 2024, after which the Friends Accessibility Advisor Kris Gulden, summarized the Friends' work in 2023 to make the park more accessible. Jamie Leeuwrik, the park's Chief Ranger Visitor Experience, explained the park's relationship to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the park's mission.

Save the Date!
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 April newsletter.

March Photo of the Month: Curious Coyote

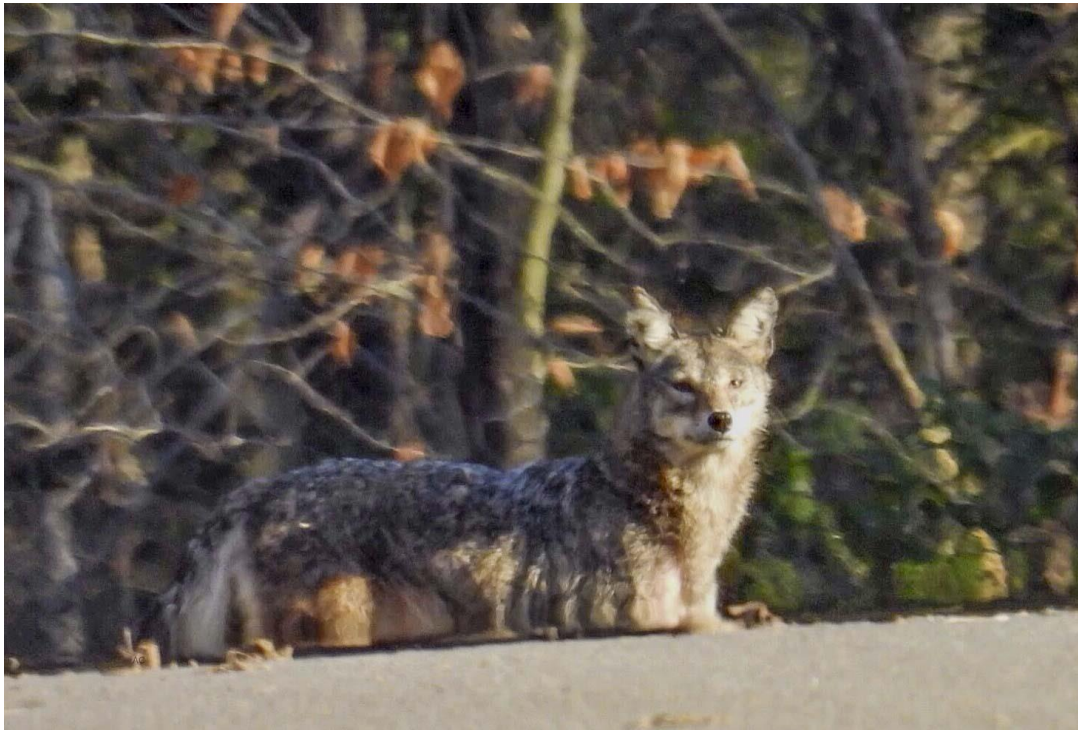


Photo by Angela Camp

Angela Camp came across this coyote while leaving the park in mid-February. Coyotes may look a little like German Shepherds, but they weigh only 30 to 40 pounds, less than half the size of most German Shepherds. And they are much larger than Red Foxes and Gray Foxes, which weigh less than 15 pounds, although their fur makes them look larger.

Coyotes are seen from time to time in the park, and occasionally guests on the park's twilight kayak trips are treated to hearing them howl. However, most of the time they stay well out of sight.

The Friends Added Audio Descriptions of the Park's Accessible Trails to their Website



The Accessibility portion of the Friends website has been enhanced by the addition of audio files that describe the park's four accessible trails. The audio descriptions make it easier for people with visual impairments to learn about the trails. You can listen to them here [Friends of Mason Neck State Park, Inc. - Trails with Accessibility](#).

Chick O'Dee Answers Your Mason Neck State Park Questions



Twelve-year old Randall wrote in to ask: "Although it's still winter, we've had some warm days and spring will be here soon. What can I expect to see at the park when it first arrives?"

Randall, the warmer weather brings so many changes I'll just list a few, starting with wildflowers. Spring Beauties and Quaker Ladies are usually the first to appear. Look for Spring Beauties along Bay View Trail and by the picnic area. Quaker Ladies are most often seen in the grass next to the road.



Spring Beauties



Quaker Ladies

Ospreys return here in March from their southern fishing grounds and can be quite vocal when establishing their nest sites. Look for them along Belmont Bay and near the Visitor Center.



We Carolina Chickadees are among the first songbirds to start our nests. You might see us cleaning out a tree cavity of debris or gathering moss which we especially like for a soft and warm place for our eggs.



The Eastern Painted Turtles will soon be out of the water and sunning themselves on logs in the pond next to the boat launch. In the early evening you may hear, but probably won't see, the Spring Peepers.



You may even see Red Fox kits out during the day. They are very cute and may come close to you, but don't feed them or try to touch them.



Have a question for Chick? To send in your inquiry, use the "Contact Us" tab on the homepage of the Friends website. We'll do our best to answer it in our next newsletter.

Photos and story by Randy Streufert.

The Friends Are Raising Funds for New Homes for the Park's Frogs



Photo by Randy Streufert

The Visitor Center's two Cope's Grey Tree Frogs, Ambassador Climbswell and Sir Leapsalot, will soon be getting new habitats. These small frogs, generally less than 2 inches long, live in trees, but they come down to vegetation near wetlands to breed in the spring and summer. Proceeds from the Friends' donation jar at the Visitor Center and donations from generous Friends will be used to purchase habitats for the two frogs.

The Friends' donation jar has already financed the purchase of construction materials for another resident of the Visitor Center, Myrtle the Turtle, a Red-eared Slider. Construction of Myrtle's new habitat should be completed this spring.



The Friends' Accessibility Advisor Kris Gulden Will Moderate a Panel at the Reeve Summit 2024 on March 7



The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation will hold the fourth annual Reeve Summit 2024: Where Care, Cure and Community Connect, March 6-8, in Washington, D.C. The Friends' Accessibility Advisor, Kris Gulden, will moderate a panel on March 7 titled "Outdoors for Everyone: Exploring Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Great Outdoors." Speakers at the summit include representatives of the National Park Service, the U.S. Census Bureau, and noted disability activists. You can learn more about the Foundation's "Outdoors for Everyone" initiative [here](#) and about the Reeve Summit 2024 [here](#).

Upcoming Programs at Mason Neck State Park



The park has lots of events scheduled in March. You can explore the park's marsh, learn about raptors, take a bird walk with a guide from the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, or participate in the park's monthly shoreline cleanup. To learn about all the park's events, go to the park's [website](#) and 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](#).