



## October 2023 Newsletter

### The Friends and Park Staff Improved Accessibility of the Osprey View Trail



"Before" view of rope guides on the trail



Installing wooden handrails

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park and the Park Staff collaborated on improvements to the Osprey View Trail (formerly known as the Beach Trail) that improved the trail's accessibility. The Friends paid for lumber to replace the rope guides, which were not very useful to people with mobility impairments, and the installation hardware. The Staff installed the vertical posts, and the Friends and Staff worked together to put the handrails in place.



The completed project Photos: Pam Cressey

The result is a beautiful and functional addition to the trail.

## **The Friends Completed Their Reviews of the Accessibility of the Osprey View Trail and Marsh View Trail**

The Friends are continuing their work on their Park Accessibility Project. We have completed detailed descriptions of the Osprey View and Marsh View trails, including location maps, information on accessibility, and photos of key points on the trails. They have been posted on the Friends' website. You can read about the Osprey View Trail [here](#) and the Marsh View Trail [here](#). General information about accessibility at the park is available [here](#).

We hope to finish our reviews of the Dogue Trail and the High Point Multi-use Trail soon.



Osprey View Trail

Photo: Pam Cressey



Marsh View Trail End

Photo: Pam Cressey

# Place Your Orders for a Friends of Mason Neck State Park 2024 Calendar



Photo: Randy Streufert

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park are offering a unique wall calendar for 2024 showcasing the flora and fauna of Mason Neck State Park. All the photos in the calendar were taken in or near Mason Neck State Park and feature flowers and animals that live in the park.



Photo: Randy Streufert

The calendar features the photographs of the Friends' own Randy Streufert. Randy has written and provided the photos for the "Ask Chick" and "Critters of the Month" articles in the Friends' newsletters of the last few years. He won the Grand Prize in the National Wildlife Federation's "Garden for Wildlife" photo contest, and his photos were placed on the cover of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine three separate times.

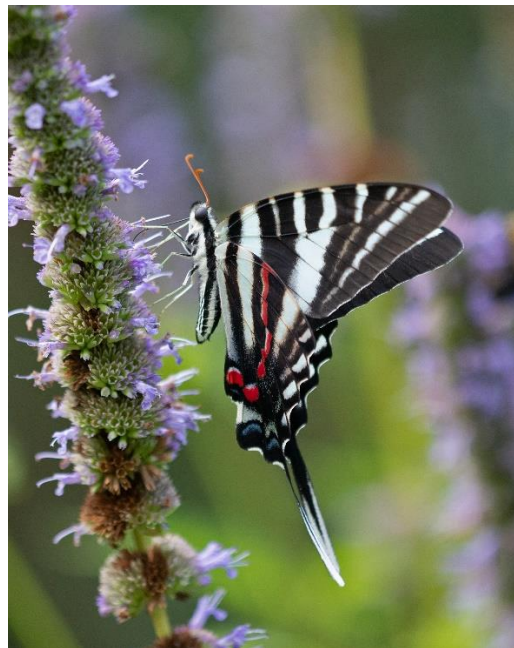


Photo: Randy Streufert

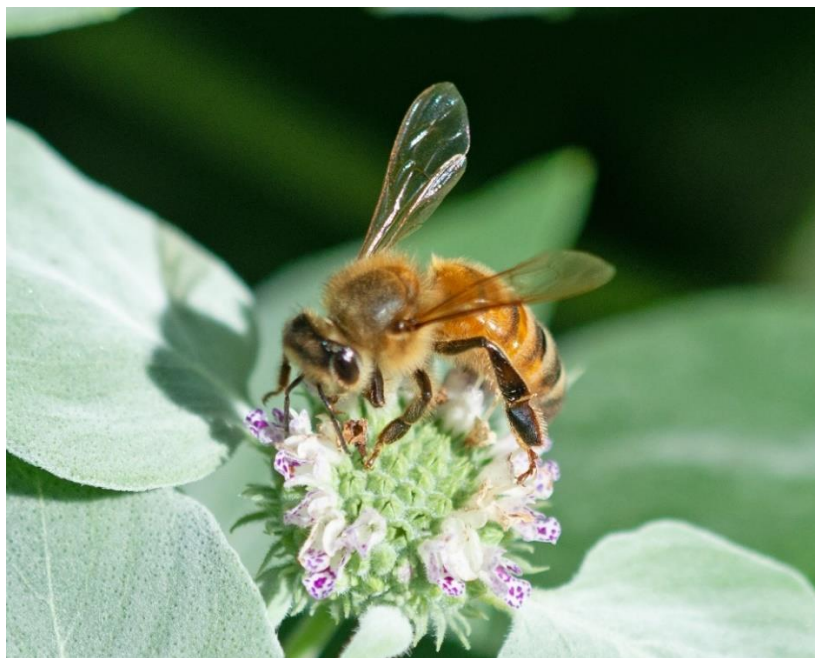
The calendars are \$27 each for non-members and \$25 each for members. You can order your calendars [here](#).

## Chick O'Dee answers your Mason Neck State Park questions.



**Eleven-year-old Sergio** recently asked: "My parents let me read the monthly Friends' newsletters. I've seen a few articles about volunteers working on pollinator gardens next to the park Visitor Center. I know from school that honeybees pollinate flowers, but why are they important and what other insects might I see on the flowers in park's gardens?"

**Chick O'Dee's reply:** Sergio, what great questions!  
To answer your first one, here's a brief description about pollinators from the National Park Service website:



Honeybee

## ***What is a pollinator?***

*A pollinator is anything that helps carry pollen from the male part of the flower (stamen) to the female part of the same or another flower (stigma). The movement of pollen must occur for the plant to become fertilized and produce fruits, seeds, and young plants. Some plants are self-pollinating, while others may be fertilized by pollen carried by wind or water. Still, other flowers are pollinated by insects and animals - such as bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, birds, flies and small mammals, including bats.*

*Insects and other animals such as bats, beetles, and flies visit flowers in search of food, shelter, nest-building materials, and sometimes even mates. Some pollinators, including many bee species, intentionally collect pollen. Others, such as many butterflies, birds and bats move pollen accidentally. Pollen sticks on their bodies while they are drinking or feeding on nectar in the flower blooms and is transported unknowingly from flower to flower resulting in pollination.*

## ***Why are pollinators important?***

### ***Do you like to eat?***

*One out of every three bites of food you eat exists because of the efforts of pollinators, including many fruits, vegetables, and seeds. Pollinators not only are necessary for our own food, but support the food and habitat of animals.*

### ***Do you like clean air?***

*Healthy ecosystems depend on pollinators. At least 75 percent of all the flowering plants on earth are pollinated by insects and animals! This amounts to more than 1,200 food crops and 180,000*

*different types of plants—plants which help stabilize our soils, clean our air, supply oxygen, and support wildlife.*

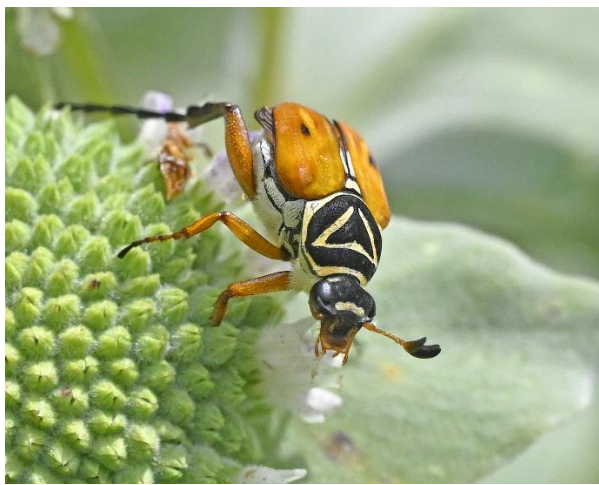
***Do you want a healthy economy?***

*In the United States alone, pollination by honeybees contributed to over \$19 billion of crop production in 2010, while pollination by other insect pollinators contributed to nearly \$10 billion of crop production.*

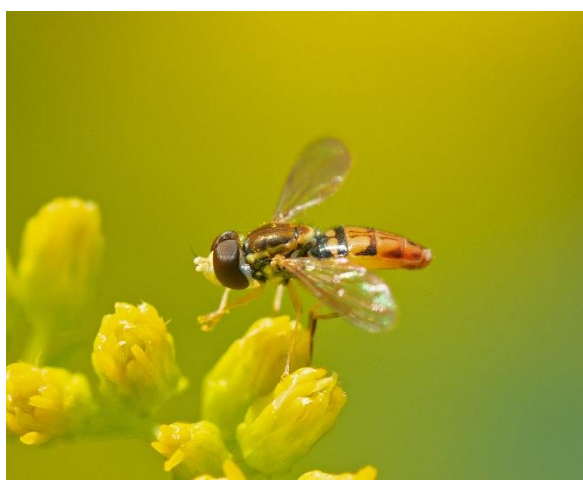
In answer to your second question, the Visitor Center Garden flowers attract many types of pollinators. Some are easily recognized, others not so much.

Butterflies tend to be everyone’s favorite since they have beautiful color patterns on their wings. Others, like beetles, flower flies and especially wasps, aren’t so well liked even though they are just as important. Moths are also pollinators, but most are only active at night.

Here are just a few of the pollinators you might see taking advantage of the park’s garden flowers.



**Beetle**  
(*Trigonopeltastes delta* Forester)



**Flower Fly**  
(*Margined Calligrapher*)

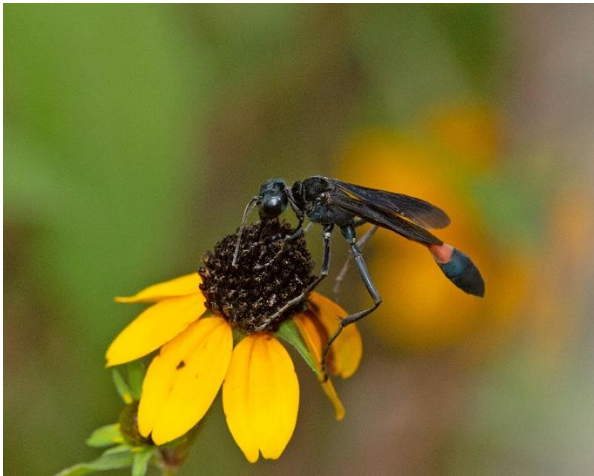




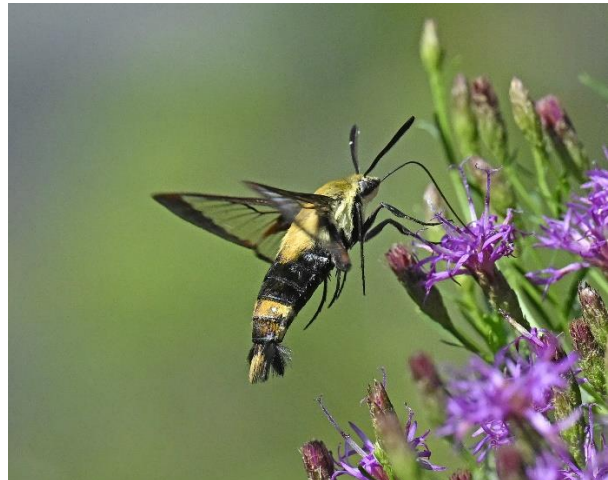
**Flower Fly**  
(Thick-headed)



**Skipper**  
(Common Checkered)



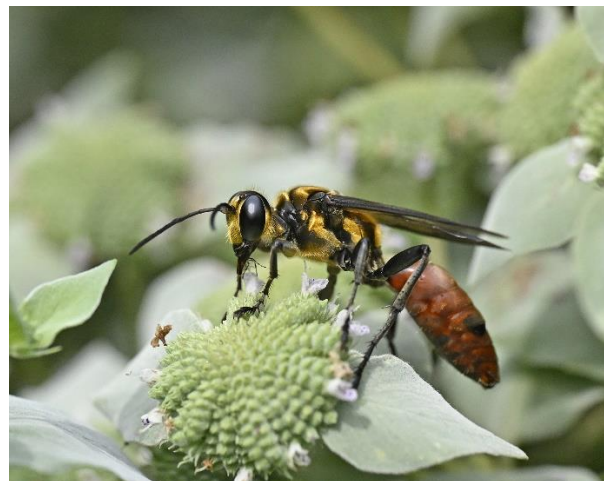
**Wasp**  
(Black Thread-waisted)



**Moth**  
(Snowberry Clearwing)



**Flower Fly**  
(Undivided lucent *Didea fuscipes*)



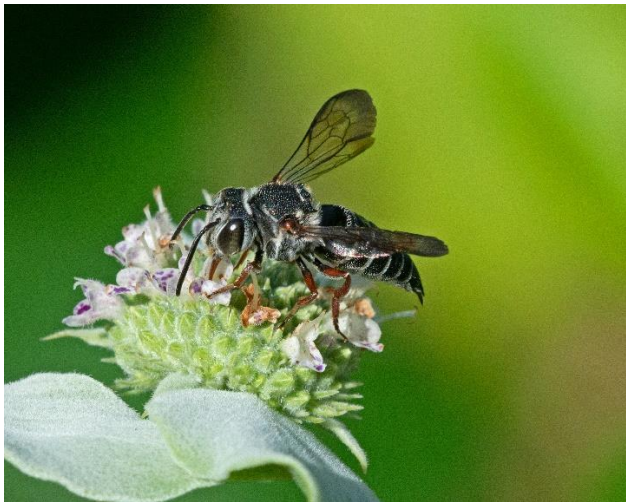
**Wasp**  
(Golden-reined Digger – male)  
(the males do not have stingers)



Fly  
(Tachina)



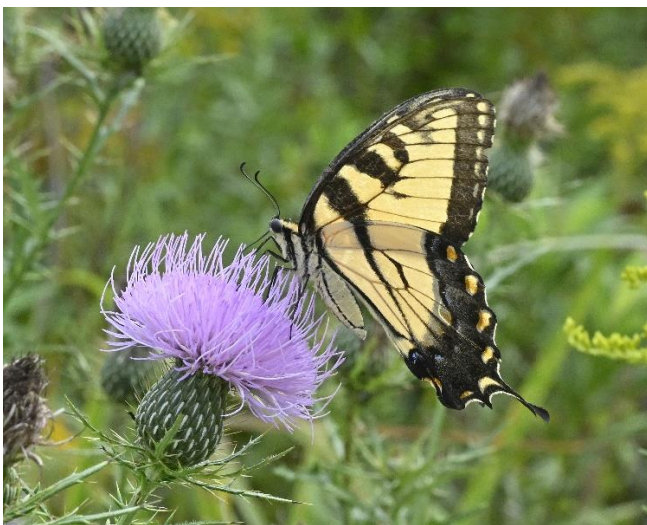
Bumble Bee  
(Black and Gold)



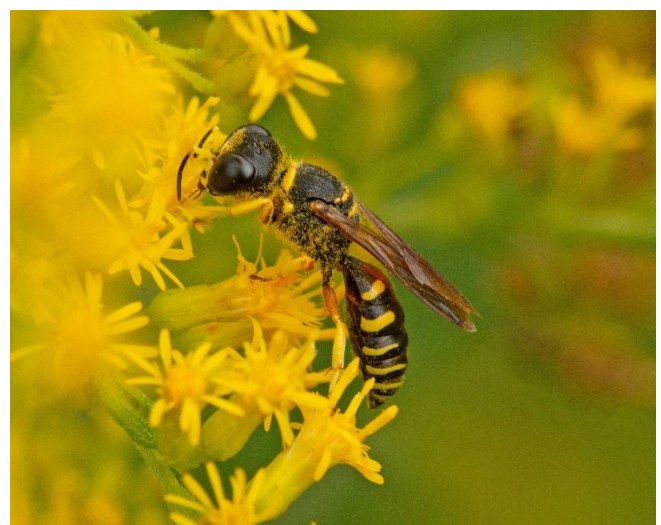
Bee  
(Leaf-cutter Megachilidae megachile)



Bee  
(Apidae Eucerini)



Butterfly  
(Tiger Swallowtail – Virginia State insect)



Wasp  
(Square-headed)

**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.

The National Park Service website article is in italics.  
Photos and reply by Randy Streufert.

## **Park Ranger’s Corner: Red Foxes in the Park**



Text and photos by Jamie Leeuwrik, Chief Renger – Visitor Experience

If you’ve been at Mason Neck State Park during the early hours after the gates open, or in the time between sunset and dusk, you’ve likely seen one of our resident red foxes out and about. Not only is the red fox the mascot of Virginia State Parks, but it is also one of the most widely distributed mammal species in the world.

The easily recognizable North American Red Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes fulva*) are mostly nocturnal and crepuscular, meaning that they are active at dawn and dusk. They hunt and forage on a variety of foods for their omnivorous diet. Whether the American red fox is a native or introduced species is a highly debated topic, but some recent DNA testing has shown that the foxes we see today are indeed native.

While Mason Neck State Park is known for being a special site for the Bald Eagle, many species of wildlife are attracted to the abundance of the marshes, meadows, and forest covering the peninsula. Keep your eyes peeled for them when you visit!



# Save the Date: Park After Dark November 11



Keep your calendar open for Park after Dark, a unique opportunity to visit the park after hours. Visitors of all ages can join a guided night hike exploring the wonders of the forest, relax around a warm campfire, and learn about the nocturnal animals of our park.



## Event schedule:

4:30 - 6:15 pm - Campfire, S'mores, and Storytelling: Bring a cozy blanket or chair and listen to stories around a campfire. The Friends will provide S'mores for you to make.

4:30 - 6:30 pm - Nocturnal Animal Stations: Meet some of our nocturnal animal characters, walk around several stations, and try a craft or activity to learn the special adaptations of our nocturnal animals.

4:45 - 6:30 pm - Night Hikes: Join a guide to experience the park's trails after sunset. Hikes will depart from the Visitor Center every 15 minutes and include a Family Friendly walk along Osprey View Trail, or a longer Night Hike on Kane's Creek Trail for adults and teens.

## **The Friends are Co-Sponsoring a Program on Reptiles and Amphibians**



Green Frog Photo: Ed Eder

You can learn all about Northern Virginia's reptiles and amphibians

in a Zoom program at 7 PM on October 25. The Friends of Dyke Marsh will present the program. The Friends are a co-sponsor of the event. The speaker is Alonso Abugattas, the Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County and the founder of the Capital Naturalist. He will explore the reptiles and amphibians of Northern Virginia. -- frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, lizards, snakes and more. You'll learn about their behavior and threats and how to support them. You can register for the program [here](#).

## **October Programs at Mason Neck State Park**



The park has scheduled lots of events in October. You can learn about owls and beavers, have an introduction to birdwatching, take a walk to enjoy the fall colors, or register for one of the last guided kayak trips of the year. You can learn about the 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, 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](#).