



Friends of Mason Neck State Park

September 2022 Newsletter

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

\$10 – INDIVIDUALS

\$20 – FAMILY

\$30 – SCOUT TROOPS

You can register [here](#) or pay when you arrive at the event

Only 30 Days Left to Enter the Friends' "Picture the Magic" Photo Contest



Have you had a memorable visit to Mason Neck State Park recently? Show the world how beautiful the park is by entering the Friends' 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. Capture your magic moments at the park with your camera or smart phone and enter them into the Friends of Mason Neck State Park's "Picture the Magic" photo contest. The contest ends on September 30, 2022, and photos taken any time in 2022 are eligible.



Photos by Randy Streufert

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](#).

“Give Back” on National Public Lands Day September 24



We are tremendously fortunate to have a substantial number of public lands to enjoy in our region. County and city parks, regional parks, and Federal lands all provide great opportunities to for recreation and relaxation. On Mason Neck, you can get outdoors and enjoy nature at Pohick Bay Regional Park, Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area, Mason Neck State Park, Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge and Mason Neck West Park; or learn about history at George Mason’s Gunston Hall. Together, these facilities comprise almost 5,000 acres of public lands.

You have a once-a-year opportunity to support your favorite public lands on [National Public Lands Day](#), September 24. At Mason Neck State Park you can participate in a shoreline cleanup starting at the Visitor Center at 9 AM. Volunteers will clean the shoreline on foot and using canoes. The park will provide bags, gloves, grabbers, and a few canoes, and the Friends will provide light snacks. Please wear boots or shoes that can get wet and bring water and bug spray. **Please contact the park at 703-339-285 to let them know you are coming.**



You can volunteer at other local parks too. Contact your park or park authority to find out what you can do.

Save the Date!

Come to Park After Dark on October 22



Mark your calendars so you don't miss Park After Dark on October 22. The Park will have special programs and activities that help you experience the park after the sun goes down. And the Friends of Mason Neck State Park will provide costumed characters that will help you learn about their lives in the park. Stay tuned -- we'll have more details in the October newsletter.



Youth Conservation Corps Worked on Improvements to the Park



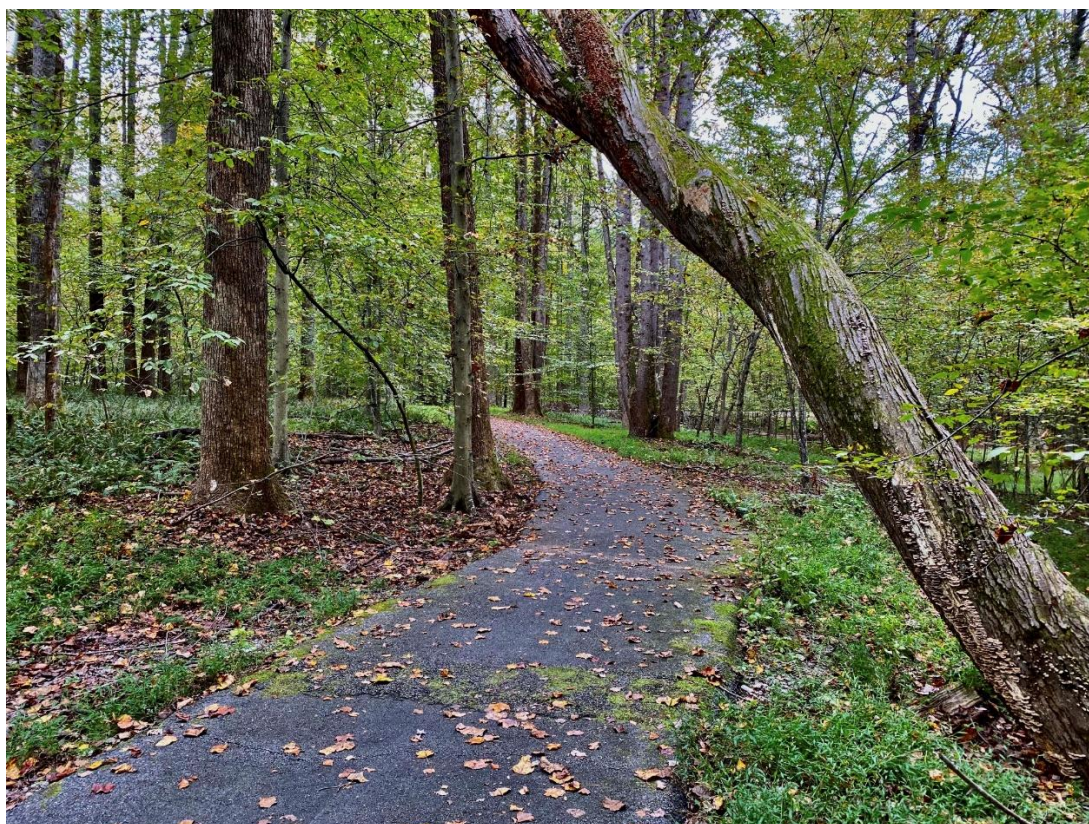
Members and leaders from the Statewide VA State Parks Youth Conservation Corps spent three weeks at Mason Neck State Park, where they worked on projects in the park and enjoyed field trips and interpretive programs. The team constructed ADA-compliant gravel paths to wheelchair accessible tables in the picnic area. The Friends of Mason Neck State Park paid for the gravel. The YCC team also built a portion of a boardwalk on a hiking trail.



The Friends provided dinner for the team when they arrived and a light lunch for a farewell gathering, including a specially decorated cake.



Help Us Decide How to Improve Accessibility at the Park



Mason Neck State Park's Manager has asked the Friends to support increased accessibility at the park. The Friends' Board has provided funds to replace some of the grass at the picnic area with packed gravel to make it easier for people in wheelchairs to access the picnic tables.

We received some promising ideas in response to our request in the August newsletter, but we'd like to get more. What ideas do you have to make the park more accessible? Have you, your family, or friends found that people with mobility issues have difficulty accessing the park's facilities or trails? What changes could be made to assist the hearing-impaired? 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 and we'll discuss them with the park staff.

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 and we'll connect you with Friends and Park Staff who are working to keep the gardens beautiful.

September Programs at Mason Neck State Park



Mason Neck State Park will host nearly 20 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 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](#).