



September 2023 Newsletter

Only 30 More Days to Submit Your Photos for the Friends' "Picture the Magic" Photography Contest



Green Frog by Randy Streufert

Time's running out on your opportunity to submit photos for the Friends' photo contest. We are looking for images that capture the magic of the park. There will be a 1st prize winner (\$200) for youth (ages under 18), a 1st prize winner (\$200) for adults (ages 18 and up), and a grand prize winner (\$300).

Images must be in one of these three categories:

- 1) Park Staff in Action – images showing uniformed Mason Neck State Park staff interacting with the public, performing park maintenance, or other official duties.
- 2) Flora and Fauna – images taken in the park of native plants and animals.
- 3) Aquatic activities – images showing people enjoying Belmont Bay or Kane’s Creek in kayaks, canoes, or other non-powered water vessels.

Each photographer may submit up to three images. However, for any image to be considered, the photographer must submit at least one image in the “Park Staff in Action” category.



Jamie Leeuwrik by Pam Cressey

All images must have been taken inside the boundaries of the park or within 100 yards of the shore and, at any time in 2022 or 2023. The contest will be open for submissions until September 30, 2023. The submission form and contest rules are on the Friends’ website, [here](#).

**You Can Place Your Order for a
Friends of Mason Neck State Park
2024 Calendar
Starting on September 15.**



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 will feature 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

We'll start taking orders on September 15, so check our website then to order your calendar.

Give Back to the Park on National Public Lands Day September 23, 10 AM – 2PM



What better way to celebrate National Public Lands Day than doing something for our public lands! Volunteers can help remove invasive species such as stiltgrass and lespedeza from along our trails. Removing these plants gives native species a better chance of survival.

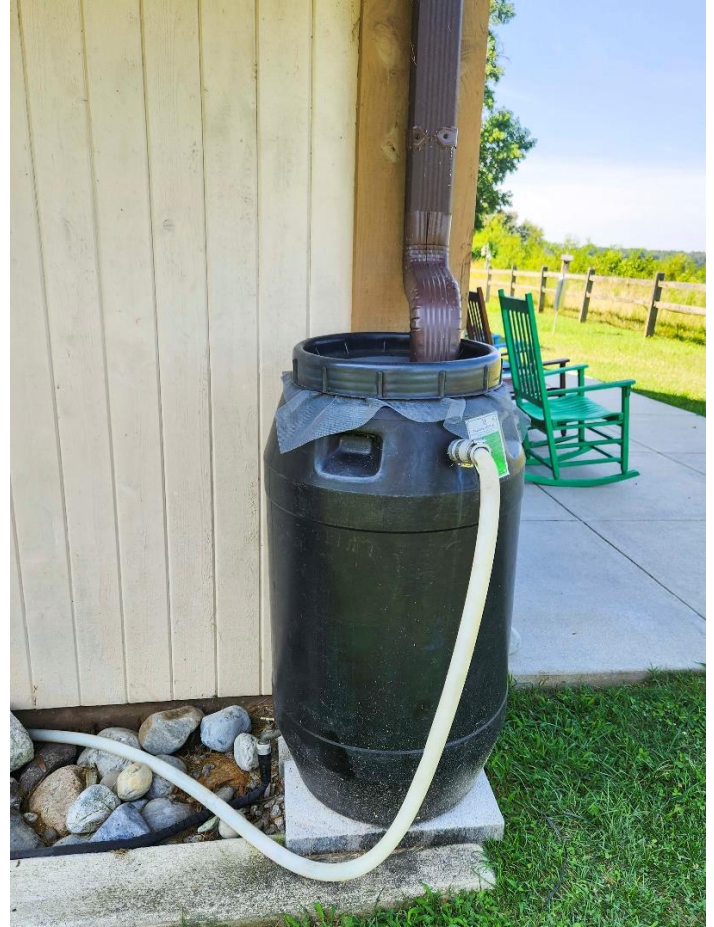
The park will have bags, gloves, and some tools, though it is recommended to bring your own. This is a great opportunity to come as a family, or group, to do something good. Please plan to wear sturdy shoes and don't forget to bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and bug repellent. When you arrive, come to the Visitor Center to sign in and choose a trail to get started on.

More Progress from The Friends and Fairfax Master Naturalists on the Park's Pollinator Gardens



Photos by Pam Cressey

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park and the Fairfax Master Naturalists are continuing their work to rehabilitate the park's pollinator gardens. In the past month they finished weeding the gardens in front of the Visitor Center, installed one new soaker hose and repaired another, and corrected problems with the rain barrel outlet to the garden.



Photos by Pam Cressey

Would you like to help make the pollinator gardens even better? Workdays are scheduled every two weeks from now through November. The next workday is September 16. You can sign up to help [here](#).

The Friends Supported the Field Trip for Lorton Community Action Center Youth



Photo by Randy Streufert

The Park hosted 8 youth from the Lorton Community Action Center for a field trip on August 16. The children enjoyed hiking and archery, practiced fishing, went kayaking, and had a pizza lunch. The Friends provided support for the activities, bought the lunch, sent them home with a snack for later in the day, and made a donation to LCAC to help with transportation costs.





Photos by Randy Streufert

The Friends Continue Their Evaluation of Accessibility at the Park



Board member Pam Cressy and Board advisor Kris Gulden have completed their evaluation of the accessibility of the Osprey Trail (formerly the Beach Trail). As soon as the Park Staff reviews their work, we'll post a detailed review of the trail on our website. Until then, you can review general information about accessibility at the park [here](#).

Photo of the Month: Here's Looking at YOU!



Kris Gulden took this photo of an Osprey taking off from a branch while she was at the overlook on the Osprey Trail. It's a dramatic picture that also shows why Osprey are so adept at catching fish. Most raptors' talons have three front toes and one back toe. Ospreys can bend one of their front toes so they have two talons facing forward and two facing back, which gives them a better grip on a slippery fish.

If you've got an interesting photo taken at Mason Neck State Park, you can either enter it in our photo contest by September 30 (see the article at the top of this newsletter) or send it to us at FriendsofMasonNeckStatePark@gmail.com and we may publish it in the newsletter.

September Programs at Mason Neck State Park



The Park has scheduled lots of programs in September, including kayak trips, national Public Lands Day and a Girls Scout Eco Weekend to help scouts earn their Eco badges. 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](#).