

Dragon's Tale

Friends of Dragon Run
PO Box 882
Gloucester, VA 23061

Friends of Dragon Run, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the preservation, protection, and encouragement of wise use of the Dragon Run and its watershed.

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FODR April General Meeting

Mark Chittenden

The next General Meeting of the Friends of Dragon Run will be held on Wednesday, April 18 2012 in the Community Room of the Gloucester County Library, located in the Main Street Shopping Center on Business Rt. 17 (Main Street) at the southern edge of Gloucester Courthouse. A "Social" will begin at 7 PM, followed by a short business meeting and the program.

Our guest speaker will be Mr. Larry Brindza, a volunteer coordinator of the Monarch Butterfly Program of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) on the southern Eastern Shore. He will speak on "Migration Miracle: the Monarch Butterfly". The presentation will describe the life cycle and migrations of the Monarch from Virginia to Mexico.

Larry received a BS in Biology in 1969 from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Administration in 1987 from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

Larry was a Scientific Reviewer in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for 30 years. Since retiring in 1996, he has worked fifteen years as a volunteer on Monarch butterflies, beginning with tagging studies for the University of Kansas Monarch Watch. He has been presenting Monarch butterfly talks and programs for many years to schools and conservation groups in Virginia, serves as an advisor to CVWO, and published in 2008 a scientific paper on Monarch migrations in the Journal of the Lepidopterists Society.



Larry Brindza



Female Monarch butterfly (Wikipedia)

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REMINDER: Roadside Trash Pick Up is Saturday, April 28

Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot at Rappahannock Community College in Glens. For more information, leader Hugh Markham can be reached at hmarkham@crosslink.net

2012 SPRING PADDLE SEASON - There's still room!

The 2012 Friends of Dragon Run paddle season is scheduled for Saturday, 7 April through Sunday, 6 May. Trips will be conducted every day during that period. Both individual and group signups are accepted. All participants must be at least 18 years of age.

The maximum number of participants is 12 per trip. Personal paddles or life vests are permitted, but paddlers are strongly urged to use the group's kayaks, which are ideally suited for the trips and best accommodate the shuttling system. Trips begin in Saluda and usually last from 9 a.m. to 1:30 or 2 p.m., depending on water/weather conditions. Because trips are run every day, no rain dates can be scheduled.



To make a reservation or receive more information, contact Martha Graham by e-mail (preferred) mgr8040@verizon.net or phone (757-898-8040). Upon registration, participants will receive an information sheet telling what to expect and how to prepare for the trip. Also provided is a release form to be signed by each participant.

Even though the trips are free of charge, they are a major source of fund-raising for the non-profit Friends of Dragon Run, and donations are appreciated. A suggested amount is \$25/person. Funds are used for acquisition and conservation of land along Dragon Run.

SUMMER NATURE WALKS

Don't forget those summer walks on the FODR trails. Teta Kain is willing to lead your trip any day that she's available between late May and mid September. All you have to do is e-mail her at tkdragonrun7@gmail.com to set up your outing. She'll take reservations anytime and work with you to customize your trip to specifically suit your needs. She'll take from one to 15 people. Groups larger than that are a bit unwieldy on a nature walk.



Spring Wildflower Walk

A Spring Wildflower Walk will be held on **Saturday, 21 April** along the FODR trails and roads on the Revere Tract, and, maybe, Mascot. Meet at 9:30 AM at the Food Lion parking lot on Rt.17 about one mile north of the Hardee's at Saluda. Please email me at markechittenden@gmail.com or call at 804-642-6060 to let me know you plan to attend.



Congratulations to FODR Member Julie Kacmarcik

Dave Rhodes

Dragon's Tale congratulates FODR supporting member, Julie Kacmarcik, for her winning photograph of a *Northern Saw-whet* in the Virginia Wildlife Annual Photography Contest. Julie won Honorable mention in the Bird category for the photograph of the smallest of Virginia's owls, taken at the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area in November. We are pleased to print the photo with permission.



ABOUT THE NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL - Julie Kacmarcik

This is the smallest owl on the east coast and one that passes through Virginia on migration during late October-November. Project OwlNet, which is the program I participate in as the main bander with Powhatan Wildlife Management volunteers, has been banding these owls for over 7 years and has determined there is a population of over wintering Saw-whets. Many of them migrate as far south as Georgia and Alabama. They return to Northern New England and Canada in late March-April for the breeding season. They are cavity nesters and take well to boxes. The owls are very docile in the hand (as a rule). They weight between 78-120 grams. Their diet is primarily deer mice. There is a lot of good information on the Cornell website and the Project OwlNet site.

Property Maintenance Outings: 2-11-12 and 3-10-12

In spite of the prediction for cold and rainy weather, Saturday, February 11 was a good day to work on the trails at Big Island Preserve. A crew of eight FODR members spent several hours walking the mainland trails, clipping brush, removing downed limbs, and enjoying the day in the woods. Our trails are now clear and ready for spring outings, bird walks, tree identification walks, and wildflower hunts. Check the calendar on the website for events and dates. Thank you to all that helped. *Tom Gregory*



2-11-12 Outing: Left to right: *Davis Rhodes, Arthur Ritter, Cynthia Honablue, Jed Dolan, Ann Lankey, Joe Nolte, Jim Pettijohn.* Also participating were *Stanley Thornton and Tom Gregory.*

Thanks to all who participated!



3-10-12 Outing: A second maintenance outing took place on 3-10-12. Participants were: *Jack Musick, Tom Gregory, Lynn Kinnard, Jim Pettyjohn, John Langloh, Cynthia Honablue, Jed Dolan, Teta Kain, Sam Forrest,* some of them pictured above.

Canebrake Rattlesnakes—Adrienne Frank

At FODR's General Meeting on February 23rd, JD Kleopfer, a Wildlife Bureau Biologist and Herpetologist spoke about "Venomous Snakes of Virginia." His presentation was primarily about the research conducted over the last 20 years related to the "Canebrake" rattlesnake. Researchers have logged in hundreds of hours of tracking this coastal variation of a timber rattlesnake. JD presented some very detailed information about the characteristics and habits of this once very widely spread but now endangered reptile. Test your knowledge by taking the short quiz below.

Questions Canebrake rattlesnakes	Possible Answers
How many acres of territory does this snake need?	2 acres, 20 acres, or 80 acres
Where do they prefer to live?	upland deciduous forest, lowland forest, or wetland
What is the primary prey of the Canebrake rattlesnake?	other snakes, squirrels, or frogs/toads
How often does a Canebrake rattle snake eat during a year?	1-5 times, 5-25 times, or 50-100 times
Besides humans, what other animals frequently prey on this snake?	opossums, skunks, and/or kingsnakes
Canebrakes use a strategy for ambushing prey that snakes in the mountains don't use. What is it called?	vertical, silent, or bottom ambush
What is pre-ecdysis?	basking, shedding, or ambushing
What is one interesting behavior that male Canebrakes do to protect females?	speak, dig holes, or sit on them

The Canebrake rattlesnake used to live all over the coastal plain of Virginia. It is now an endangered species primarily due to man's encroachment, by killing them off and building where the snake likes to live. The snakes have only been found two places on the Peninsula: Sandy Point Park in Newport News and Yorktown along the Colonial Parkway.

Researchers tracked multiple snakes using transmitters and found that they need about 80 acres to hunt. They travel a few miles during the year; they migrate to and from the place where they hibernate during the winter. The snakes are very slow and spend most of their time basking, especially after pre-ecdysis (shedding), digesting, or waiting for prey.

The Canebrake prefers to live in upland deciduous forest and in the leaf litter. It is very well camouflaged and rarely moves. Do you ever wonder why we have so many squirrels in our yards? The grey squirrel is the preferred food of this snake, so our squirrels have at least one less predator to fear. Canebrakes use a vertical ambush strategy; they sit at the bottom of a tree with their head facing up the tree and they wait, sometimes for days, for the squirrel to run down. If the snake catches the squirrel, that may be its only meal during the year.

Canebrakes typically mate in July or August, and females have 4-12 babies but not every year. The male snake is very protective of the female and follows her to keep other males away. He is sometimes so possessive that he sits on top of her, completely covering her body.

Humans are by far the most frequent predator. Their natural predators are kingsnakes, raptors, opossums, skunks, coyotes, bobcats, and other animals. Because the rattlesnake is so endangered, land along the VA and NC border (e.g., the Dismal Swamp, North Landing River, Northwest River, the Chesapeake Canal, and the Naval Supply Base in Norfolk) has been set aside in the Virginia 2012 Conservation Plan to protect the Canebrake.

Farewell to Pat Tyrrell...

Teta Kain

I report, with deep sadness, that former FODR board member Pat Tyrrell passed away on Monday, 26 March. Pat was one of our most active board members from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s. When she joined Friends of Dragon Run, she immediately pitched in, helping with picnics, festivals, meetings, and a dozen other niggling little jobs that no one else wanted to tackle. Pat, along with Adrienne Frank, slogged untiringly through the process of formulating a Strategic Plan for



Friends of Dragon Run. It was huge undertaking to outline a plan of progress over the next five years. Difficult as they were to construct, those guidelines have played an important role in taking FODR where it is today. In 2003 Pat was presented the Jimmy Morgan service award for her many special contributions to the organization.

Almost as soon as Pat was introduced to the Dragon, she became an avid kayaker and participated in almost every trip we launched. She simply reveled in discovering the world of the Dragon. Pat was a spiritual person and few other places inspired her more than the Dragon.

In 2004, Pat found job commitments and family responsibilities took so much of her time that she could no longer remain on the board. Her non-stop schedule inexorably drew her away from active involvement in FODR, although she continued to support us as best as she could. Her very last service to the organization was advisor to the awards committee in June 2011.

After many years as the community liaison for the US Agricultural Service branch based in Tappahannock, Pat retired in June 2011 with high hopes of returning to the Friends and again take an active role in its activities. Sadly, that was not to be. Even before she retired, Pat developed health issues that seriously curtailed her outdoor activities. In the early summer mesothelioma carcinoma reared its ugly head and plunged Pat in a series of extensive medical tests, and finally, chemotherapy, to hold the disease in check. Alas, the treatments had no effect in stopping the deadly advance, and by January 2012 she was completely consumed by it.

Pat was one of my closest friends. One of the activities she loved most was night paddles on the river with me. The last one we launched was early June last summer. It was one of those magical moonlit, nights when the mist gently rose above the water, the tree frogs were out in force, the Barred Owls were calling from the woods, and the glowing spikes of sweet pepper bush hung over the river in all their ethereal beauty. It seemed like the river was at its very best just for Pat. It is unbearable to think that I shall never be able to share the river with her again.

HELP WANTED

NEWSLETTER EDITOR SEARCH

FODR is seeking volunteers, or nominations, to serve as our Newsletter Editor; this is an unpaid position, like all our other positions.

The primary responsibility of our Newsletter Editor is to assemble/edit/publish our Newsletter in February, April, September, and November each year. The Editor generally does that from articles already written and submitted to her/him for publication in the Newsletter; layouts of that input would generally follow the format of our Newsletters over the past four years or so.

Also included in the editors responsibilities are notifying those contributing articles of the submission deadline, coordinating with the printer and preparing the printed copies for mailing. Additionally a PDF must be generated and sent to the Webmaster for posting online and distributing to those members requesting the newsletter via email.

The Newsletter Editor should be familiar with basic word processing and have access to a computer. Our Editors have normally used "Publisher" to edit and arrange articles input for the Newsletter.

Interested persons please contact me at markechittenden@gmail.com or (804) 642-6060. Please include your phone number. *Mark Chittenden*

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Nominations Committee of FODR has become vacant as of 30 December 2011. This notice is to solicit interested candidates or nominations of such for that committee.

The Nominations Committee is one of our most important committees, because its charge is to submit a proposed slate of officers and members of the Board of Directors at elections in our November Annual Meeting. As per our Bylaws, the Nominations Committee shall consist of no fewer than three members, at least two of whom shall not be serving as an elected officer or member of the Board of Directors.

Those interested in serving on the Nominations Committee, or in making nominations for such, please email me by 30 March 2012 at markechittenden@gmail.com. Please include your phone number. *Mark Chittenden*

*Ever Save a
Dragon?*

PASSING OF RUSSELL WILLIAMS

Russell Williams of Mascot, VA died on 20 December 2011. Russell, a long-time member of FODR with his wife Rachel, was an avid, long-time friend and lover of the Dragon Run. In 2008, FODR acquired from Russell and Rachel the 74-acre Williams Tract to expand on our core holdings near Big Island.

In his memory, donations may be made to Friends of the Dragon Run, Box 882, Gloucester, VA 23061

President's Message -- Some Odds and Ends

Mark Chittenden

As I write this, on 8 March, it is a bright, sunny day in the mid 40's. 2012 is well-started now, but it has been generally a warm, pleasant, even welcome, winter. We have much water in our woodlands now, and water levels in the Dragon bode well for paddling this soon-to-come Spring. Tree frogs have been calling on and off for some time now, and forsythias, and other early-spring plants are in bloom. We should be well-positioned for Spring now, but its hard to tell with the weather.

We are still seeking volunteers, or nominations, to serve as our Newsletter Editor, as our WebMaster, and on our Nominations Committee (see re-run Announcements in this Newsletter). Unfortunately, nobody has yet stepped forward as a volunteer, or to make nominations, for these positions. Within a month or two, in the absence of volunteers/nominees, we are going to have to make some difficult decisions; that is especially so for the Newsletter, because we simply cannot continue on to the September issue without a new Editor. Please contact me at markechittenden@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering or making a nomination.

Although our Spring schedule of FODR outdoors activities will soon begin to wind down, many activities still remain on the calendar. For examples, Hugh Markham (hmarkham@crosslink.com) still has a Highway Trash pick-up on 28 April, and I have a Spring Wildflower Walk on 21 April that will be co-lead by Mary Berg of FODR and NPS (Native Plant Society). Probably our most exciting, looked-forward-to, activities, our Spring Paddle-Trips down the Dragon lead so well by Teta Kain, have only just begun as of 7 April; they will continue through 6 May, water levels permitting. For information, contact Martha Graham by email (preferred) mgr8040@verizon.net or phone -- 757-898-8040; do not contact Teta.

And, finally, we still have our General Meeting on 18 April at which you can hear about FODR activities, and listen to our featured speaker give an interesting Presentation on Monarch Butterflies (see article in this Newsletter).

Whatever your choice, bring a friend or two to learn about us, come out, and participate in our remaining Spring activities.

Friends of Dragon Run

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Have a Change of Address? Just send to FODR, PO Box 882, Gloucester, VA 23061

FODR Activities for 2012

April:

- 2 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC
- 7 Paddle Season Starts
- 18 General Meeting*
- 21 Spring Wildflower Walk
- 28 Highway Trash Pickup

May:

- 6 Paddle Season Ends
- 7 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC

June: -

July: -

August:

- 16 Sept. Newsletter Deadline

September:

- 10 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC
- 15 Woody Plant Identification Walk
- 19 General Meeting*
- 22 Highway Trash Pickup

October:

- 1 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC
- 13 Annual Picnic
- 18 Nov. Newsletter Deadline

November:

- 5 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC
- 15 Annual Meeting* Tentative Date
- 24 Highway Trash Pickup

December:

- 3 Annual Planning Meeting

* General/Annual Meetings begin at 7PM for refreshments/conversation; short business meeting at 7:30PM followed by program.