



Dragon's **TALE**

PO Box 882
Gloucester, VA
23061

Volume XXXII
Number I
February 2016

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.

FEB 23, 2016 GENERAL MEETING TURTLE TALK

Happy New Year!

We will kick off this year's general meeting with a talk on turtles. Do you know, Virginia is home to over 25 species of turtles, and 21 of those are found here in the coastal plain. From the far ranging sea turtles to the common Eastern Box Turtle, turtles play important roles in our local ecology. This talk will introduce the turtles found within Virginia's coastal plain and highlight those that inhabit the Dragon Run watershed. A deeper look into the life history, ecological role, and current conservation status of some of our more interesting species will help to bring these otherwise elusive creatures into the limelight.

Live turtles might be available for viewing, given that it's February, Robert could not guarantee. But there might be a few who got confused by the uncommonly warm weather a few weeks ago. Wish Robert good luck in finding them!

Speaker Bio:

Robert Isdell is a Ph.D. student at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science where he studies intertidal ecology. For his Master's degree at William and Mary, he studied the distribution of diamondback terrapins in the Chesapeake Bay and how they responded to different human stressors. Robert grew up on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where his love of the Chesapeake Bay led him to his interest in the interactions between humans and animals and their impact on the environment. He earned his B.S. in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where he studied invertebrate ecology in Alaska, and sea turtle biology in North Carolina and Costa Rica. He currently lives in Williamsburg with his wife, Mary, and his beagle, Bella.



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**Paddle Crew
Needed!**
See page 5

**Roadside Trash
Pickup is
Saturday, Feb 20
at 9 AM**

Meet in the parking lot of Rappahannock Community College in Glens. For more information, contact Hugh Markham at markham@crosslink.net

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Janice Moore



It's such an honor to be selected to lead the Friends of Dragon Run as its next President. My love for the Dragon began more than 10 years ago when I paddled down the Dragon with Teta Kain and became a lifelong fan of the Dragon and of Teta -- known to many of us as "the Empress of Dragon Run." This year promises to be an exciting one for Friends of Dragon Run, but we also face some challenges, which we will view as opportunities.

Susan Bober, an FODR member who generously wrote the Dragon's Tale for four years, decided at the end of 2015 to turn her position over to someone else. Thank you to Susan for the great job she did generating an informative and professional looking newsletter for the organization. Luckily we are grateful now to have Jingwei Song, a graduate student at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, who has bravely volunteered to take the job on for the next year. Welcome to our new Newsletter Editor!

A challenge with the newsletter is the cost of printing and mailing it, which is one of the biggest expenses in our budget. We can save thousands of dollars if more of our members would permit us to send it to them electronically (email). Please consider receiving it in your email inbox. Besides feeling proud that you're so "green," you will receive it immediately and it will be in color! Please help our budget and the environment by contacting debcrollins@gmail.com and changing your newsletter subscription to email today.

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WORK DAY ON POWCAN TRACT

John Jensen

On January 9th we met at Miller's Tavern to conduct a work day on our Powcan tract located at the headwaters of the Dragon Run. Teta Kain, Davis Rhodes, Adrienne Frank, Jim Pettyjohn, Jed Dolan, Gordon Page, John Jensen, Gary Cox and Janice Moore attended. We were extremely fortunate to have Gordon Page join us, as he established a trail there years ago. With his guidance, we located the old trail and followed it to the back of the property where we found an old beaver dam and a pond. There were no signs of any current beaver activity, but the beavers will return when the saplings grow back. Davis Rhodes and Gordon installed a few wood duck boxes years ago, and they were glad to see that they were in good condition. I imagine that this should be a very good birding area given the pond and surrounding wetlands. We opened up the trail as we walked back to the parking area where we enjoyed our lunch and talked about our day.

Please consider joining us on our next work day at the Bulman Tract on Saturday, February 20. Contact John Jensen (hopesdadjohn@aol.com) for more information. It is a great way to see our properties and contribute to our organization.



Davis Rhodes in his waders leaning on a wood duck box at the headwaters of the Dragon.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ELECTED OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Janice Moore

Vice President

Anne Ducey-Ortiz

Secretary

Cynthia Honablue

Treasurer

Adrienne Frank

Directors

Robert Gibson

Curtis T. Hill

John Jensen

Teta Kain

Jon A. Lucy

David Milby

Christine Tombleson

Molly Broderson

James E. Dolan

Terry DuRose

Jack Musick

Jim Pettyjohn

S. Davis Rhodes

Bambi Thompson

Three new faces elected at last year's Annual Meeting include Molly Broderson, Bambi Thompson and Terry DuRose.

Bambi is the current principal of Botetourt School on Main Street in Gloucester Courthouse. She has paddled the Dragon several times and takes a great interest in preservation of the river.

Molly recently retired from the Gloucester County Public Schools after serving more than 25 years as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. She has always loved water sports. She has been a Master Swimmer for over 25 years and she is looking forward to competing

in the YMCA Nationals in Sarasota, Florida in April. Molly fell in love with kayaking and helped to organize the LIPPS (Ladies International Paddle and Picnic Society). She resides in Mathews County with her husband Ted and their dog, Shep (a Labrador Retriever, of course!). She loves to paddle the Dragon and is looking forward to serving on the FODR Board.

Terry is the long-time general manager of Thousand Trails Chesapeake Bay RV Resort in Northern Gloucester County, which has been a member and supporter of FODR for over a decade. For several years, she hosted an annual river clean up with STOP (Save the Ole

Piankatank), a local adopt-a-stream organization. She has also served on the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission's Dragon Run Steering Committee, which sought to create a unified governmental approach to land conservation among the counties in the Dragon Run watershed. For 8 years, she organized an eco fair at the campground focusing on water quality issues (Dragon Run Day), partnering with FODR, Gloucester County and the MPPDC to engage the community as well as her campers. Terry is pleased to join the Board and looks forward to finding new ways to make an impact.

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For the first time in many years, another challenge we have is a net loss in the number of dues-paying members this year. We view this as an opportunity to find new ways to reach out to all the folks in our communities, including students of all ages, and spread the word about the Dragon and our mission to preserve and protect it. We hope to engage groups of students and others who wish to serve their communities and encourage them to participate in our organization in mutually beneficial ways.

Of course, to realize these opportunities we need help from all of our members! YOU are essential to our future success, and I look forward to meeting all of you and hearing your stories about what sparked your passion for the Dragon. I hope you'll let us know how we can help you be more active in our organization as well as your ideas about ways in which we can better accomplish our mission. Please consider this a personal invitation to attend our meetings this year and to send me an email (jrmoore27@gmail.com), call me (703-217-0610), or write me a letter (P.O. Box 247, Deltaville, VA 23043) and let me know what you are thinking. I hope to see or hear from you very soon!

THE 2016 PADDLE SEASON

Teta Kain

The **2016 paddle season will start on the Saturday - 9 April**. Trips will be conducted every day for 30 days, the last will be on Sunday, 8 May.

Reservations for the trips will open on Tuesday, 1 March. To register, contact our booking agent Martha Graham by emailing her at mgr8040@verizon.net or by phone (757) 898-8040. **E-mail registration is much preferred**. It is wise to book early to get the day and number of spaces you prefer. At the time you register, Martha will send you information which tells you when and where to meet and other helpful details. Names and contact information (e-mail or phone) of all members in your party are required before their reservations can be confirmed. An extensive write-up about the paddles, how to prepare for them and what to expect can be found on our website www.dragonrun.org.

We do not charge for the paddle trips, the use of our kayaks and equipment, or services provided by our crew members. You do not have to make a donation to make the trip, but we hope you will, since the trips are our major fund raiser for conservation of the Dragon. A suggested amount is \$40.00 per person. Checks should be made out to "Friends of Dragon Run" or "FODR." Donations will be accepted on the day of your trip. Someone will be at the meeting point to accept your cash or check donation. Please **DO NOT** send us your donation in advance.

Again this year, we plan to have a sales table set up at Mascot, the point where we end the trips. We plan to have T-shirts, hats, and other items for sale. Too, we are always in need of people to help with setting up and manning the tables, so if you are interested in helping out with that project, please contact Teta at tkdragonrun7@gmail.com for more information.

If you are interested in being part of the paddle crew, **contact Teta no later than Sunday, 15 February** so that you can be included in the schedule. Crew members are asked to indicate how many days they wish to work and specify dates they will not be available. We will work out a plan that is suitable to your special needs. The schedule will be made available as early as possible so that you will know your work days well in advance.



JOIN US AS A PADDLE CREW MEMBER!



If you are a reasonably good kayaker and in good health, would you be interested in serving as a crew member on the April-May paddle trips? We need volunteers to help with the trips between 5 April and 6 May. You can choose the number of days you want to work, which days are best for you, and we'll work you into the schedule. We will have an orientation day to acquaint you with how the trips are run and what we expect of crew members.

So far, all our crew members have loved their jobs. They get to meet a lot of people, they

can usually paddle as often as they want, and they have the satisfaction of showing paddlers the river, but most of all, they just enjoy the experience of being on the river and observing the incredible changes that take place on the water everyday. There's no better place to be than the Dragon in the spring.

If you would like to sign up or get more information, **contact Teta Kain no later than 19 February** by emailing her at tkdrag-onrun7@gmail.com or call 804-693-5246.

WELCOME TO THE NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Hi Everyone,



My name is Jingwei Song, a first-year master's student at Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Department of Fisheries. I grew up in Shanghai, China and came to the U.S. in 2011 to study at Wabash College, Indiana. In 2015, I graduated with double majors in Biology and German. I am no stranger to Gloucester Point; in summer 2014, I spent 10 weeks working on the genetics of tautog at VIMS under the guidance of my current advisor, Dr. Jan R McDowell. During my downtime, I enjoy cooking, fishing, sports, and listening to "Wait, Wait don't Tell Me" on NPR. Christine Tombleson introduced me to FODR and I am grateful and excited to be part of its great cause. Hope I will get to know many of you at the future meetings!

A NIGHT ON THE DRAGON

Teta Kain

Try to imagine yourself paddling down Dragon Run in the middle of the night with only a flashlight and the stars to light your way! Being a Yankee, venturing onto a swampy river south of the Mason-Dixon line after dark was not an adventure I ever thought I would do. But not long after I joined Friends of Dragon Run, I received my introduction to this magical experience when I accompanied scientists from the Virginia Natural Heritage Program as they did a flora and fauna inventory of the river basin in the early 2000s. They kindly allowed me to tag along several nights as they conducted their surveys of nocturnal insects, mammals, and birds. After that first trip, I was hooked and have paddled the nighttime river many times since.

It's best to arrive at the landing well before dark to have plenty of daylight to prepare for the trip. Preparations must be thorough to ensure a safe trip. As dusk turns into night, the river comes alive with animal and insect sounds and movement. It is a very different atmosphere from what I am used to in the daytime. Owl and frog activity picks up noticeably. The Barred Owls watch me warily from their tree perches low over the river, then swoop up to higher branches and launch all the strange sounds a Barred Owl can emit – hisses, bill clacking, screaming, moaning, hooting, and a host of other eerie sounds. On a low branch at water's edge, a tiny Eastern Screech Owl glares at me as I slowly glide by.



The frog and toad chorus dominate the scene most of the evening and with the many species that inhabit the waterway, the songs and sounds are varied, indeed. The gray tree frogs, though few in number, begin their buzzing medley right at dusk (they are often heard during the daylight hours too). I hunt in vain for a glimpse of one, but most seemed to be back a ways from the water, in bushes and shrubs on higher ground.

Next the Fowler's toads chime in. There certainly is no shortage of them. As I shine my light along the banks, I can see their eyes gleaming at me. I am anxious to get some photographs, so I carefully edge my kayak closer and closer to an individual sitting on a half-submerged log. During the day, most of these creatures are extremely wary and almost impossible to approach closely. So it is, with some surprise, that I find I am able to creep up very close. In fact, because I am in a kayak and very close to the surface of the water, I find myself almost eyeball to eyeball with one individual. I snap away with great glee, getting shots of its throat pouch extended fully as it grinds out its raspy mating call. Even accidentally bumping it with my kayak does not deter the little fellow from his amorous melody.

Further down the river, I hear the oddly distinctive call of the green tree frog and finally spot two individuals giving forth with their love songs from bushes above the stream. Drifting in along the vegetation, I find a young painted turtle and countless stinkpot turtles, some no bigger than a quarter, nestled in the floating vegetation at the water's edge. There's even a big northern water snake skulking about the reeds looking for an unwary frog or toad to serve as supper. I try edging closer in for a photograph of it with its head up and looking alert, but I'm not quite quick enough and it darts away out of sight.

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For me, the most surprising and interesting critters are the spiders that dotted the river banks and grasses. Their eyes shine like brilliant multi-colored diamonds in the light of my headlamp. Careful inspection of the banks and vegetation reveal literally thousands of spiders weaving webs or lying in wait for some unwary prey to come by. The most impressive are the huge fishing spiders. The females are almost three inches in diameter. One was seen with hundreds of spider hatchlings around her. They are almost weightless and skitter across the water into the darkness.

Deer and muskrat move above in the brush along the shore and quite frequently a beaver stealthily glides near the kayak and slaps its flat tail on the water's surface, thoroughly soaking me before it dives out of sight.

These are just a few of the incredible moments one can experience during a night on the river. The Dragon is truly a different world after dark, full of sights and sounds that excite and astonish the beholder. It is a world of wonder that few people ever see, but it holds a mystery and beauty that is unparalleled.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Bev and Gail Butler

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Janice Moore	President	(703) 217-0610	jrmoore27@gmail.com
Anne Ducey-Ortiz	Vice President	(804) 725-1259	aduceyortiz@earthlink.net
Adrienne Frank	Treasurer	(757) 566-4009	adrienne-gary@cox.net
Bruce Pully	Imm. Past Pres.	(804) 642-5243	bjpully@verizon.net
John Jensen	Property Manager	(804) 769-1565	hopesdadjohn@aol.com
Teta Kain	Paddlemaster	(804) 693-5246	tkdragonrun7@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Amazing Raise	Janice Moore	jrmoore27@gmail.com
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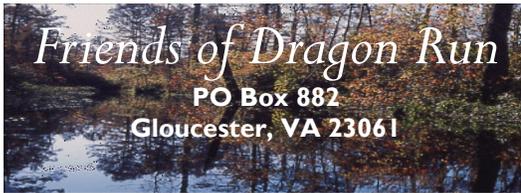


www.dragonrun.org



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Contact Deb at
 debcrollins@gmail.com to receive
 your copy via email today!



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

FODR Activities for 2016

February

- 20 Hwy Trash Pickup & Wkday
- 22 Business Meeting
- 23 General Meeting

March

- 1 Paddle Trip Registration Opens
- 12 Workday - Bulman Tract
- 23 Newsletter Deadline
- 26 Workday - Milby Tract Trail
- 28 Business Meeting

April

- 2-3 Glou. Daffodil Festival
- 5-6 Paddle Season Preps.
- 9 Paddle Season Starts
- 23 Deltaville Farmers Mkt.
- 25 Business Meeting
- 27 General Meeting

May

- 8 Paddle Season Ends
- 14 Deltaville Seafood Festival
- 21 Kayak Cleanup Day
- 23 Business Meeting
- 28 Deltaville Farmers Mkt

June

- 25 Deltaville Farmers Mkt

July

- 23 Deltaville Farmers Mkt

August

- 22 Business Meeting
- 24 Newsletter Deadline
- 27 Deltaville Farmers Mkt

September

- 9-10 Mathews Market Days
- 15-16 Amazing Raise

17 Fall Picnic

- TBA General Meeting
- 24 Highway Trash Pickup
- 24 Fall Picnic Raindate
- 24 Deltaville Farmers Mkt.
- 26 Business Meeting

October

- 7-8 WP Crab Carnival
- 19 Newsletter Deadline
- 24 Business Meeting

November

- 4-5 Urbanna Oyster Festival
- TBA Annual Meeting
- 19 Highway Trash Pickup
- 28 Business Meeting

December

- 5 Planning Meeting