



The Dragon's Tale

Friends of Dragon Run
PO Box 882
Gloucester, VA 23061

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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.

Toad Tracking... Who You Gonna Call? Wrangling Toads for Science

Amphibian populations are declining worldwide. One-third of amphibian species are threatened with extinction. Why should we care? Amphibians are one of the main links in many ecosystem food webs. They play an important role in nature, both as predators and as prey, and benefit humans too.

Frogs and toads eat pest insects which benefits agriculture around the world and helps minimize the spread of certain diseases. They also eat mosquitos! Amphibian skin contains a variety of different types of chemicals used in pain killers, high blood pressure medication, and to treat antibiotic resistant bacterial strains. They offer potential future medical advances in cures for a variety of human diseases and organ regeneration. Plus can you imagine what the forests and marshes would be like without their chorus? Chief Seattle in 1854 stated, "What is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of a whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night?"



W&M students Courtney Check (left) and Olivia Windorf work with a toad, faculty mentor Matthias Leu records data.

Great conservation efforts of frogs and toads have been focused on the spawning ponds. But where do the toads go after spawning? Where do they hang out? How far do they go? Conservation biologist and Associate Professor of Biology at William & Mary, Matthias Leu, and his team of

undergraduate students are monitoring specimens of two pond-breeding toad species – The American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*) and Fowler's Toad (*Anaxyrus fowleri*) - to gain insight into the post-breeding habitat and habits of toads. They have fitted a few dozen local toads with high-tech backpacks to track these movements. The technology to track the toads is based on devices invented to quickly locate skiers trapped under the snow. Undergraduate students Courtney Check and Olivia Windorf are the project's head toad trackers. Courtney usually goes out toading in the daylight, while Windorf takes the hoot-owl shift.

Join Friends of Dragon Run Wed. February 20, 2019 to find out what Matthias and his toad tracking team have discovered about the travels and habits of these toads! The presentation will be held at 7 pm in the Gloucester County Library Community Room located at 6920 Main Street, Gloucester, VA 23061. There is no charge for the program and the public is invited. For more information about the program, or Friends of Dragon Run, please contact Christine Tombleson at 804-815-0172.

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Roadside Trash Pickup February 23rd @ 9AM

Meet in the parking lot of Rappahannock Community College in Glenss. For more information, contact Hugh Markham at hughr.markham@gmail.com



\$35.00

Red Tee- just in time for Valentine's Day!

Order yours today at www.dragonrun.org

PRESIDENT'S NOTE—2019 Will be Another Exciting Year for FODR



I'm happy to report that your board has planned another wonderful year for FODR and our members and many visitor guests – actual and potential. Our 2018 paddle seasons were so successful, that we will again offer a spring and fall paddle season that will last as long as weather permits. Many thanks to the trustees of Robert Gibson's estate for allowing us to use his farm as a takeout point during the fall paddle season and to all the volunteers who served as crew members on these trips during both seasons.

One of our biggest achievements of 2018 was the acquisition of a new property in Gloucester County, which we are naming the "Morgan Tract," in honor of our founder, Jimmy Morgan. It is a beautiful 14 acre wooded parcel on the Dragon Run with wonderful views. You can find a few photos in this newsletter. We are planning a dedication ceremony in 2019 and hope to showcase this beautiful property to our members and Jimmy's family at that time. In the meantime, we'll be working on creating trails on land and water, so stay tuned for opportunities to volunteer with us on those workdays.

Check out our 2019 Activities Calendar below to find out our plans for the spring paddle season. As always, reservations to paddle with us will open on March 1st, so mark your calendars! We'd love to hear from you if you want to be a paddle crew member, monitor one of the FODR parcels, write an article for the newsletter, or let us know about an event that would welcome FODR's participation.

Please join us at our next member meeting on February 20 at 7 pm in the Gloucester Library. Thanks to conservation biologist and Associate Professor of Biology at William & Mary, Matthias Leu, who will present a program about monitoring specimens of two pond-breeding toad species and their tiny backpacks.

Be sure to keep track of what's going on with the spring paddle season and other activities by checking our website <http://www.dragonrun.org/> frequently. Remember that you can now pay your membership dues and also order and pay for our new Dragon Run tee shirts, long-sleeved performance shirts, new quarter-zip long-sleeved performance shirts, and caps and bucket hats using our website and PayPal. And follow us on Facebook, especially if you want to paddle with us during the spring paddle season!

Don't forget to send me an email at President@dragonrun.org, call me (703-217-0610), write me a letter (P.O. Box 247, Delta-ville, VA 23043), or post a comment on our Facebook page and let me know what you are thinking. I hope to see or hear from you very soon!

2019 ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

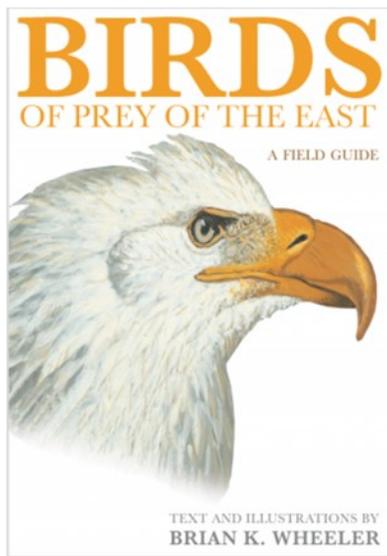
Month	Day	Event	Place	Time
February	11	Board Meeting	Saluda	7:00
	20	General Meeting	Gloucester Library	7:00
	23	Trash pickup day	RCC Glenss	9:00
March	1	Spring Paddle Season reservations open		12:01
	18	Board Meeting	Saluda	7:00
	20	Newsletter deadline		
April	1-12	Paddle Season workdays and training	Big Island Mascot Gibson Farm	
	8	Possible Board Meeting	Saluda	7:00
	9	General Meeting	Gloucester Library	7:00
	12	Spring Paddle Season Begins (weather permitting)		
	13	Trash Pickup Day	RCC Glenss	9:00

**Books of Interest
By Jeff Wright**

Birds of Prey of the East

Text and Illustrations by Brian K. Wheeler

Princeton University Press, 2018. Available in print and as an e-book.



One of the joys of the Dragon Run Watershed is the amazing collection of birds that can be seen. As we paddle downstream, one “guild” of birds never fails to focus our attention – the Birds of Prey - the hawks, eagles, vultures, kites, falcons, harrier, kestrel, merlin, and osprey. One of the better and more rewarding ways to learn more about these birds is a field guide. In particular, a guide that provides considerable detail on the Eagles and the Hawks that “keep an eye on us” as we paddle. Notice I did not include vultures in that thought.

Brian Wheeler’s book is a recently published field guide that is comprehensive and authoritative. It is classically organized for field use with extensive information on plumages, morphs, behavior, habitat, age classification, molt stage, flight, and full-page range maps. It supports field IDs and also is a reference to ID of birds in photos.

It is both a field guide and an in-depth reference for the hawks, eagles, vultures, kites, falcons, harrier, kestrel, merlin, osprey, and a bird of prey of the East that has yet to appear in our area - the Crested Caracara. Also included is a section on Western Species and Subspecies that are casual or accidental in the East.

There is a companion guide by the same author – *Birds of Prey of the West*.

With the rise of quality Birding APPS is there still a need for printed field guides? My answer is yes. A good field guide is a useful tool for expanding knowledge and to make a correct bird ID. This field guide is a “keeper” and fits into a pack or a pocket. It is a reference source on the great variety of birds of prey that frequent Coastal Virginia, the Middle Peninsula, and the Drago Run.

The plates contain exceptionally clear and detailed lifelike paintings of each species depicting age, sex, in-flight and perched views as well as depictions of the head and tail feathers. All of the plates use a standard set of poses to aid comparisons. What is useful are the number of plates and supporting text that cover each subspecies and help with key field marks. For example, the segment of the guide covering the Red-Tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is extensive as there are plates and accompanying text as well as detailed range maps for each of the many sub-species.

A guide of this quality is really a detailed exploration of a small set of birds that have prominence in our hearts and souls. Through this guide, I hope to be able to better identify the juveniles, 1-year olds, and adults when they are perched and when they are in flight. The book even supports the adventures of the ID process – color morphs, molts, albino, leucistic types, and accidentals. Clearly many of these birds of prey nest along the Dragon and depend on the “food web” of the Dragon to survive and to raise their young.

A tip of one’s binoculars and kayak paddle to Brian Wheeler for this exceptional guide. Clearly a life’s work as an illustrator for 72 plates and as an authority on Birds of Prey. He is one of the many folks you would certainly want to invite for a paddle on Dragon Run.

FODR'S NEW PROPERTY ACQUISITION

On November 28, 2018, we were able to purchase additional land along Dragon Run – our first in Gloucester County. It's very close to the James V. Morgan bridge across Route 17 and accessible if heading south on Route 17. The Board voted to name it the Morgan Tract, after our founder, Jimmy Morgan. We'll host FODR members and Jimmy Morgan's family at a dedication ceremony later this year, so watch for your invitation!! In the meantime, here are some photos of Dragon Run taken from the Morgan Tract.



Left—View from the cabin.
Above—View from the takeout.

Committee Chairs

Webmaster	Debbie Rollins	debcrollins@gmail.com
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Paddle Master	Janice Moore	president@dragonrun.org
Membership	Anne Atkins	annecatkins@yahoo.com
Hunting Issues	Dave Milby	huntingdragonrun@gmail.com
Paddle Crew Training	Jeff Wright Kevin Howe	pec11908@me.com juniper@erols.com

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR FODR MEMBERSHIP!

All FODR members should have received an email in December reminding them to renew their FODR membership. Many thanks to the members who have already responded by using our website and using PayPal or by sending checks for their dues. Special thanks to several members who donated at the \$1,000 level to become Lifetime Members.

This past fall, FODR implemented an annual membership renewal plan based on the calendar year. Membership starts on January 1 and expires December 31.

Individuals who join FODR in the middle of the year will pay a prorated membership fee of 50% of the annual dues amount chosen (for example, \$12.50 at the \$25 annual dues level). Individuals who join during the last quarter of the year will pay annual membership dues for the coming year and will be members in FODR for the remaining months of the current year for no added dues.

If you haven't renewed your membership yet, go to <https://www.dragonrun.org/join>. Or complete the form below and mail it with your check to: Friends of Dragon Run, P.O. Box 882, Gloucester, VA 23061

Name	
Address	
State, City, Zip	
Phone #	
Email Address	

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Janice Moore	President	PO Box 247, Deltaville, VA 23043	703-217-0610	jrmoore27@gmail.com
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