



The Dragon's Tale

Friends of Dragon Run
PO Box 882
Gloucester, VA 23061

Volume XXXV
Number III
November 2018

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.

Don't Drain the Swamp, The Importance of Non-Tidal Wetlands

The Dragon Run wilderness is a unique ecosystem which has been ranked second in ecological significance in the Chesapeake Bay region by the Smithsonian Institution. The unique character of the Dragon is made up of non-tidal blackwater stream, vast areas of flooded woodlands, cypress swamps, and freshwater marshes. The Dragon flows forty miles along and through non-tidal and tidal cypress swamp situated in portions of Essex, King and Queen, Middlesex, and Gloucester counties.

Join Friends of Dragon Run on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 and discover the types and values of non-tidal wetlands that make up the Dragon and the numerous and diverse species of plants and animals that call it home. Kory Angstadt, Marine Scientist with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), will give the presentation.

Kory holds a Bachelor's Degree in Marine Science and has been with VIMS for 15 years studying wetlands and marine debris using field components such as, drones, side scan sonar, and GPS. Before VIMS, Kory



worked on two NOAA vessels in the South Pacific studying several species of Goose Neck barnacles and collecting deep sea water samples. He was past manager of the Wallops Island Marine Science Consortium where he taught both kids and adults to kayak, as well as wetlands ecology. Kory is an avid paddle boarder and enjoys identifying new plants, insects, and fish that he encounters on his outdoor adventures.



Join us on Wednesday November 14th and bring a friend! The program is free and open to the public. The meeting starts at 7 pm and is held in the Community Room of the Gloucester County Library located at 6920 Main Street, Gloucester, VA 23061. For questions, regarding the meeting or

about Friends of Dragon Run, please contact Christine Tombleson at 804-815-0172.

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Roadside Trash Pickup December 1 @ 9AM

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



PRESIDENT'S NOTE—*Getting Ready to end Another Great Year for FODR*



Our organization lost another valuable member with the passing of Lorna Wass in October. Lorna and her husband, Marvin, were founding members of FODR, and you can read the *In Memoriam* on our website

Please be sure to join us at our Annual Meeting on November 14, at 7 pm in the Gloucester Library. You will be treated to a presentation by Kory Angstadt, Marine Scientist with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), who specializes in non-tidal wetlands like the Dragon Run swamp.

We also need you to come to the Annual Meeting to meet the people whom the Board is proposing to lead your organization as officers and members of your Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee Report is included in this Newsletter, and I hope you will agree that we will be quite fortunate to have such stellar folks as additions to the FODR board.

For your education and enjoyment, this issue begins a series of articles by Kevin Howe and other members, featuring the flora and fauna of the Dragon Run – this time, the beloved Baldcypress tree.

Our Fall 2018 Paddle Season is in progress and will continue each day until November 3. More detailed information and registration are available on our website.

Be sure to keep track of what's going on with the fall paddle season and other FODR activities by checking our website <http://www.dragonrun.org/> frequently and following us on Facebook. Remember that you can now pay your membership dues and also order and pay for our new Dragon Run clothing items using our website and PayPal. And follow us on Facebook, especially if you want to paddle with us during the Fall 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, Deltaville, 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!

2018 Fall Paddle Season Preparations

Janice Moore

Our fall paddle season began October 19 and is going well so far. We will paddle every day, weather permitting, through November 3. Preparations to maintain the water trail through the old logging canal took two workdays – one day before Hurricane Michael and another day the week after Hurricane Michael turned the Dragon into a raging river. Many thanks to our “magic chainsaw” crew of John Jensen, Roger Weakley, and Davis Rhodes, who worked hard for two days to clear the debris from the river so that our trail is navigable. Anne Atkins, Marsha Carlton, Teta Kain, and I worked with them to trim the branches and prepare the many beaver dams for our new gates that were made by Davis Rhodes. And many thanks to Robert Gibson's estate who once again are allowing us to use his beautiful farm as a take-out point. We still have some spaces available, and we hope that you will encourage everyone you know to take advantage of the opportunity to see the Dragon wearing her fall colors.

MEMBER MEETING 9/26/18

By Adrienne Frank

At the General Meeting on September 26, 2018, President Janice Moore opened the meeting shortly after 7 pm and updated the members about the timbering and proposed hunting leases on FODR properties.

Janice presented an award of gratitude and recognition to Bob Hancock, after she described his many years of service to FODR as a long-time member, former Board of Directors member, and always a dedicated volunteer. The award is a photo taken by Teta Kain, printed on canvas, enlarged to 18 x 24 inches, and bearing a bronze plaque "From Friends of Dragon Run to Bob Hancock for decades of service and ingenuity." Janice also presented the "Angry Beaver" award to Davis Rhodes in recognition of the many hours of clearing debris and beaver dams across the Dragon's main channel in the spring and fall. The award is a black tee shirt with a drawing of a large beaver, snarling and brandishing his very large front teeth on the front of the shirt. She mentioned that there are other FODR members who have earned a similar award and who will receive it in the future.

Teta Kain gave a one-hour presentation about the Dragon Run swamp and a history of the Friends of Dragon Run. Some of her photographs were pictures of species native to Dragon Run – nocturnal, aquatic, and arboreal. She also showed aerial photos that she took from a light-weight plane, tree covered scenes of the meandering river in different seasons.

Teta learned about the Dragon in 1989 when she first moved to Gloucester. Over the first 5 years of her involvement, she visited the Dragon at least once a month doing surveys of birds. She identified 124 species of birds.

Over the years additional inventories were completed by Teta and others to identify plants, insects, fish, and water quality, performed by the following individuals:

Donna Ware, Curator of the Herbarium at the College of William & Mary—Conducted several walks identifying plants species.

Allen Belden, Field Botanist for Virginia Natural Heritage—walked miles across to identify plants.

Steve Roble & Chris Hobson, Staff Zoologist at Virginia Natural Heritage and VCU Faculty—did an inventory of insects (e.g., dragonflies).

Because Teta has been a long-standing member of the Board of Directors, she knows the important people involved in the organization. Teta spoke about Jimmy Morgan and his efforts to establish the FODR and purchase the Big Island property. She described his commitment, diligence, hard work, and influence on the community. She described the dedication ceremony for the bench at Big Island after Jimmy Morgan's death from cancer.

Teta named past presidents and some of their accomplishments, including Davis Rhodes who was President for several terms, property acquisition chair, treasurer, and more. Davis was a primary force in acquiring ten or so pieces of property. Teta talked about our relationship with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the help and support that FODR received from Andy Lacatell. Andy's work between 2000-2008 helped to protect over 20,000 acres of land in the Dragon Run watershed. He helped FODR to submit grant applications and purchase several of our properties. Those pieces of property front on Dragon Run and are smaller than the parcels that TNC would usually purchase.

Teta also talked about how paddle trips started and evolved into significant fundraising events for FODR. FODR sponsored canoe trips on the Dragon Run starting in the 1980s, but none of those trips brought in funds for the organization. In 1999, Teta bought her trusted Swifty kayak – "Old Blue" – and over the next 7-8 years she acquired multiple kayaks (given to her or purchased). When she took groups down the river, people began to donate money to FODR. In 2008, Teta and the board decided to ask for donations, and it has expanded each year since. Today, FODR has a fleet of kayaks, a trailer, and a Conex box to keep equipment over the winter. In the past two years, paddle trips have been the major focus of fundraising for FODR.

BALDCYPRESS – THE TREE OF DRAGON RUN BY KEVIN HOWE

Most of you have been down the Dragon and seen the Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) trees in the Dragon Run Baldcypress Forest. Impressive, indeed! Lest you think that this article is full of typos, to be consistent with expert botanists, we have used this majestic tree's common English name as a single word.

Although the Baldcypress can be grown in most sunny gardens, its natural habitat is swamps from New Jersey south through Florida and around the Gulf to Texas. It also is found up the Mississippi River just touching Illinois and Indiana. This tree is the icon of the swamps of the deep South along with its draping of Spanish Moss. It also defines the Dragon Swamp but without the Spanish Moss. Cypress has the remarkable ability to grow in the water as in the Dragon and is the dominant (sometimes only) overstory tree in its swamp along with Water Tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*). Together this tree community is known as a Baldcypress-Tupelo Swamp.

The Baldcypress is a relative of the Redwood and Sequoia trees of California but unlike those, the Baldcypress sheds its leaves for the winter. But the Baldcypress is big like its cousins – in fact, huge – the tallest is over 144 feet in height and is found close by on Colonial Williamsburg property in the Carter's Grove while the largest diameter living Baldcypress is found in Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge (Louisiana) and reaching a diameter of 17 feet. We believe that the oldest Baldcypress in the Dragon is about 1,000 years old, and it measured approximately 7.5 feet in diameter several years ago – not a professional measure, but a fun method nonetheless. The oldest verified Baldcypress was found to be over 1,620 years old but some in Mississippi are estimated to be over 2,000 years old, which makes the Baldcypress in the top 20 oldest trees in the US.

The Baldcypress dates back into the fossil record to the Cretaceous (66 to 145 million years ago) – far longer than most trees. During this period, large ferns and cycads dominated the forests although by the end of the Cretaceous, these plants were pushed out by the rise of the flowering plants we know today (the Baldcypress is not a flowering plant). But the Baldcypress held on, occupying a habitat (wet, swampy, temperate zone), that few other trees could or would occupy.

Baldcypress timber was highly sought for human use as it is large, strong and resistant to shrinkage, fungus, and most insects. These trees in the Dragon have been cut for timber multiple times, though not in 50+ years. But the impact has not been as great as one might think; in the 1970's, studies of lands in the Chesapeake Bay drainage by Smithsonian Institution ecologists found the Dragon Run Swamp was the most pristine ecologically significant area in Virginia and second in all of the Chesapeake Bay area.

By the way, I mentioned Spanish Moss above, but it is not a moss nor does it grow in Dragon Run. It is a flowering plant (angiosperm) and while ranging North into Virginia at First Landing State Park and on the Eastern Shore in Northampton County, it does not occur in the Dragon. We have some lichens that resemble Spanish Moss – these lichens are called Beard Lichens (*Usnea* sp.).

There is much more to the Baldcypress story, such as the purpose of its mysterious "knees," but it must wait for a future newsletter, so stay tuned.



2018 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Members of the 2018 Nominating Committee are:

Teta Kain, Chair
Martha Graham
Jon Lucy

Election of officers and members of the board of directors will be conducted at the FODR 2018 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, 14 November. The following slate will be presented to the membership for election to the following positions. Terms will begin January 1, 2019.

Officers: (the term of each officer is one year)

President: Janice Moore
Vice President: Jeff Wright
Secretary: Adrienne Frank
Treasurer: Roger Weakley

Board of Directors: (the term of each board member is two years)

Current Directors whose terms expire 12/31/18 and who are willing to serve another two years:

John Jensen, Teta Kain, David Milby, and Marsha Carlton. Marsha was appointed mid-year to serve the remaining term of Robert Gibson, deceased, and you can read about Marsha below.

Current Director whose term expires 12/31/18 and who is not willing to serve another two years:

Christine Tombleson

We are grateful to Christine for her many years on the FODR board and our long-standing Program Committee Chair. She has found speakers from VIMS and other parts of our community to make educational and entertaining presentations at our general meetings, and we hope that she will continue to do that for our membership and thus bring FODR to the community and the community to FODR.

Nominees to serve two-year terms:

Katie Hawks, Kevin Howe, Marsha Carlton. You can read about each of them below:

MARSHA CARLTON

Houston, Texas and Mathews County

Marsha has a background in residential and corporate space-planning design, sales and marketing. She has worked in New York City, Connecticut, Chicago, Fairfax, VA, and Houston. She sometimes described her life as a corporate gypsy, following her husband, Mark, a corporate attorney working in the energy sector. In Fairfax and Houston, Marsha had an antiques business, doing monthly shows on the east coast and in Houston and became a certified kitchen and bath designer. In short, Marsha always enjoys a new project and an exciting challenge.

In 2011, Marsha and her husband purchased a 19th century farmhouse on a point on the North River in Mathews County to put down roots in advance of their eventual retirement. The house has been a popular summer vacation rental, and the Carltons look forward to calling Mathews home in the near future.

Since 2011, Marsha has gradually increased her involvement in learning about the preservation of the rivers and bays of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Almost immediately, she was invited by former FODR Board member, Darbie MacCubbin, to paddle with the local LIPPS group in the rivers and creeks of the Middle Peninsula. A portion of the Mathews farmhouse summer rental income is directed to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The shoreline of the property now has a "living shoreline" project with oyster reef pyramids created by Chris Davis of Ready Reef.

Marsha has been a supporter of Friends of Dragon Run since she learned about the organization and its mission and, as manager for Roger Weakley's Highland County log cabin rental property, she directs a portion of that rental income to FODR. For FODR's 2018 spring paddle season, Marsha trained as a crew member and, in addition to helping on her scheduled days, she often filled in at the last minute for a crew member who could not come. (cont'd.)

2018 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT CONTINUED

KATIE HAWKS

Essex County

Katie Hawks has volunteered as a crew member for the last two years. The ambience of the Dragon Run—the water, wildlife, and history—is what captures her on the Dragon. Katie describes it as “like going to another world.”

The best way to describe Katie is learning agile – able to master something new quickly and then apply what she has learned to the next situation. She has pursued dozens of hobbies and interests ranging from raising chickens to fossil hunting to creating macramé plant holders, although her personal favorite is operating heavy equipment. She also enjoys serving as mate for a charter boat.

No single approach is the right one for every individual, so she has been trained in a range of modalities. She is a legal assistant, certified title examiner, and licensed private investigator and enjoys each thoroughly. Katie put herself through college and graduated with honors, receiving a B.S. in Criminal Justice and a concentration in psychology, all while raising two children and working full time.

Katie goes the extra mile and doesn't hesitate to volunteer, and she would like to see Dragon Run provided with more resources as it continues to thrive. She hopes that her young perspective and her technological skills will advance FODR's position and goals.

KEVIN HOWE

Northumberland County

Retiring to the Northern Neck from Northern Virginia about four years ago, I had been visiting both the Middle Neck and Northern Neck for many years and loved it. Family property on the upper end of Dragon Run allowed me to explore the Dragon Run area for a number of years.

I grew up in northern California spending all the time I could hiking, backpacking, skiing, climbing, hugging redwoods – anything outdoors. After pursuing biology in college in California, teaching high school biology for two years and graduate school in California for a Master's in biology then Oregon (OSU) for a Ph.D., I taught and did research in ichthyology/aquatic ecology in the Northwest and then in the South before holding a research position at the Smithsonian Institution. After a few years, I left the Smithsonian to start a construction company from which I retired a few years ago.

A main focus and source of joy has been exploring the natural world and sharing my environmental knowledge. I love teaching and sharing at all levels – if it includes the outdoors. And I am a long-time whitewater and sea kayaker, having taught for LL Bean for many years.

I love giving back as a volunteer in all things environmental. I am the current President of the Northern Neck Chapter of the VA Native Plant Society, incoming Vice President of Northern Neck Audubon Society, active in Northern Neck Master Naturalists and a Board Member of Northern Neck Land Conservancy. I look forward to working with the Friends of Dragon Run to protect the Dragon and educate the public about this most beautiful ecosystem.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ROADSIDE TRASH PICKUP



John Elkin, Davis Rhodes, and Janice Moore joined Hugh Markham (pictured far right) and Robin Markham (pictured far left) on September 29th at 9am at RCC's Glens campus for the roadside trash pickup. They were quite successful in finding trash, as you can see in the photo below. To join us for our next roadside trash pickup, please meet in the parking lot of Rappahannock Community College in Glens at 9 am on Saturday, December 1. For more information, contact Hugh Markham at hughr.markham@gmail.com.

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