

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 February General Meeting

Mark Chittenden

The next General Meeting of FODR will be held on Thursday, 23 February 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. John (JD) Kleopfer, a Wildlife Bureau Biologist and Herpetologist for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). He will speak on "Venomous Snakes of Virginia, with Emphasis on the State-Endangered Canebrake Rattlesnake".

Born and raised in Newport News, JD received a BS degree in Biology in 1994 and an MS in Environmental Science in 2004, both from Christopher Newport University.

JD has 20+ years of experience, primarily in Herpetology, with the Virginia Living Museum, the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Colorado, and VDGIF. JD has regularly published scientific articles in herpetological journals and made presentations at conferences such as the Wildlife Society and the Virginia Herpetological Society.

JD's current research includes studies on the Biology of the state/federal-threatened Wood Turtle, Canebrake Rattlesnake, and Shenandoah Salamander, as well Eastern Hellbenders and Mt Rogers area salamanders.



J. D. Kleopfer and nephew preparing to release state-endangered canebrake (timber) rattlesnake with transmitter.

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REMINDER: Roadside Trash Pick Up is Saturday, February 25

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 - It's time to sign-up!



Paddle trips are so much fun, some of us can't wait to get in the water.

It's time to anticipate spring by signing up for a paddle trip down Dragon Run. Trips are scheduled every day from Saturday, 7 April through Sunday, 7 May. You will be accompanied by a leader familiar with the ecology of the area and may see eagles, nesting waterfowl, prothonotary warblers...who knows?

Kayaks and gear are provided. If you are not an experienced kayaker, trip leaders will help you learn. Trips begin near Saluda at 9:00 AM and usually last till 1:30 or 2:00. You will bring a picnic to eat on the river. You may sign up either as an individual or a group. All participants must be at least 18 years of age.

Even though the trips are free of charge, they are our major source of fund-raising for our organization and we appreciate donations. A suggested amount is \$25/person.

To make a reservation or receive more information, contact Martha Graham by e-mail (preferred) mgr8040@verizon.net or phone (757-898-8040). When you register, we will send you an information sheet, which tells you what to expect and how to prepare for the trip. You will also receive a release form, which must be signed by each participant. Trips are limited to 12 participants, so this is the time to get your name on the calendar. They have also proven to be an excellent way to expand our membership. Invite a non-member friend to join you and sign up today.

THINK SUMMER



During these cold winter months, perhaps thoughts of warm days and walks through the woods do not readily come to mind, but it's a good time to think special summer outings to explore forests and wetlands of Dragon Run .

Teta Kain will be offering walking tours anytime this coming summer between June 1st and September 15, to explore trails on the various properties of Friends of Dragon Run. We'll be looking for plants, mammals, birds, fungi, dragonflies, butterflies and whatever else we come across to study and photograph. Each trip will be designed to the specific wishes of the individual or group participating.

Anyone - member or non-member of Friends of Dragon Run - may book an outing. Participants must be 18 years or older. The party can consist of one to 15 people. Teta is not available every single day of that period, but call or e-mail her and work out which date would be the best for you and/or your group.

There is no charge for these trips, but donations to Friends of Dragon Run are much appreciated, if you are so inclined. Contact Teta at tkdragonrun7@gmail.com or phone 804-693-5246 for more information and to make your reservations for your outing.

Prothonotary Warbler Box Project on the Dragon Run

When walking or paddling along the Dragon Run between Big Island and Mascot, you may have noticed the increasing numbers of bird boxes on poles along the water's edge. In Spring 2011, Gary Driscole added 7 new prothonotary warbler boxes, bringing the total to 19. The boxes offer a dry and safe place for raising young, for the small golden bird that in years gone by was called the *golden swamp warbler*.

The boxes were constructed by volunteer Master Naturalists in Williamsburg, using specific dimensions for warbler size birds. Gary attached the poles and with a little help from friends, erected them in the water near Big Island and Mascot Bridge. These locations make it easy to regularly check the boxes while paddling down river.

Gary monitored the boxes throughout spring and summer, recording evidence of nesting material, eggs, babies, and empty nests. He reported his findings on an Excel spreadsheet and sent it to Bob Reilly at Virginia Commonwealth University, who is compiling all of the prothonotary warbler nest box data from Southeast Virginia. It was a successful season with 33 fledglings.



Gary Driscole tending to one of the Warbler boxes along the Dragon Run..

Not all of the boxes had prothonotaries! The warblers prefer old and worn boxes, several boxes had chickadees, and sometimes it is hard to stop the wasps from building their nests.

There are a few other challenges for the project such as Hurricane Irene. We paddled the Dragon Run this past October after the hurricane and could not find a few boxes. Hopefully, Gary can find them when the water is down and repair and straighten the poles back up. In March, he'll prepare again for the coming season. *Adrienne Frank*



*"From the moment the **Monarch butterfly caterpillar** emerges from the egg to when it transforms into a chrysalis, it gains about 2800 times its original size."*

Want to attract Monarch Butterflies? Plant Milkweed. It is the host plant for Monarch butterflies. They lay their eggs in Milkweed and the caterpillars eat the leaves.

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 LOUISE McKENNA

Louise Boyer Brown McKenna of Richmond, VA died Thursday, January 12, 2012. Mrs. McKenna was instrumental in the start and growth of FODR. Between 1986 and 1987, Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF), acting for FODR, acquired four tracts of land from Mrs. McKenna including the Big Island tract. Mrs. McKenna was an avid supporter of conservation of land for animals and plants.

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

President's Message -- Some worries, some activities

Mark Chittenden

As I write this, on 1 January, it is a bright, sunny day in the low 60's. Winter has not yet made its appearance, though we have had a few near-freezing nights. The forecast, however, is for things to change starting tomorrow, but not to worry, we will be OK.

We have had a good year in 2011, but a few cautionary flags may be flying. Our exciting/interesting outdoor activities, like Paddle-Trips, Work Parties, Trash Pick-Ups, and Plant/Nature walks have good participation. I'd think that we could add bird walks to the latter group if we somehow can get a volunteer to lead them. Our Annual Picnic, however, may be showing worrisome signs of declining interest/participation – only 15-20 folks came last October, just enough to loosely-fill about 2.5 of the 4-5 tables where Joanne Nolte et al provided a great lunch. And our membership rolls, on the surface, seem to be down to about 390 folks as opposed to 450+ in the mid-2000's; that is difficult to objectively interpret, however, because our definition of membership has apparently changed over the years.

I worry, something that Presidents are prone to, that we are in, or entering, a period of declining interest/participation in FODR. These things come in cycles, however, as other competing interests/events arise, and as our membership ages and we do not seem to be recruiting younger, fresher blood to renew FODR. I suspect we are somehow going to have to pay more attention to recruitment in the future. In the meantime, we have some pressing, immediate concerns.

Quite a few of our positions and/or committees are now, or becoming, vacant, another worry. We need to find replacements, most pressingly, for examples, for our Newsletter Editor (see Announcement herein), just-recently our Webmaster, and our **BYLAWS-MANDATED** Nominations Committee (see Announcement herein). We still have a dormant, moribund Festival Events/Recruitment Committee that, with some fresh ideas, might be used to recruit new members needed to renew FODR. And, most of our "full" committees, in general, seem to be committees of one, often a long-serving, becoming-tired occupant. So, we are, apparently long-have-been, walking a thin line in terms of organization. That is not healthy for FODR, and it not fair to the very few individuals who have borne our load by far.

FODR badly needs our Officers, Board, and/or General Membership to step up and fill open slots like these. Please contact me at markechittenden@gmail.com if you are interested.

Don't forget the many FODR activities coming up in the next few months. For examples, Tom Gregory (dragonswamp@kaballero.com) has scheduled several Work Parties, or Preserve Outings -- on 11 February and 12 March. Hugh Markham (hmarkham@crosslink.com) has scheduled Highway Trash pick-ups on 25 February and 28 April. Teta Kain (tkdragonrun7@gmail.com) has scheduled a month or so of Paddle-Trips down the Dragon beginning 7 April and is offering Summer walks. I have a Spring Wildflower Walk scheduled for 21 April. There would still be plenty of room for a last-minute bird walk(s) if a leader steps up. Exercise/outdoors-loving folks should seriously consider joining in these activities.

Consider attending our General Meetings on 23 February and 18 April to hear about FODR activities, and listen to featured speakers on Venomous Snakes/Canebrake Rattlesnakes of Virginia (see article in this Newsletter) and, hopefully, Monarch Butterflies, respectively.

Whatever your choice, please come out and participate in our various 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

January:

19 Feb. Newsletter Deadline

February:

6 Business Meeting – Saluda, MPPDC
11 Property Outing
23 General Meeting*
25 Highway Trash Pickup

March:

10 Property Outing
14 Apr. Newsletter Deadline

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
20 General Meeting* Tentative Date
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.