



The Dragon's Tale

Friends of Dragon Run P. O. Box 882 Gloucester, VA 23061

Volume XLII Issue 3 September 2024



From the President, *By Jeff Wright*

Despite drought, tropical rains, three-digit temps and humidity we had a successful summer paddle season and held our second DREAM program. We reached a milestone when our membership hit 500. Click to read more about summer in the Dragon. [MORE](#)



Emergency Trash Pickup, *By Jeff Wright*

When we think of collecting trash in the Dragon, the first things that come to mind are paper items, drink bottles, and cigarette butts. But more sinister wastes and toxins can enter the Dragon from other sources, such as illegal dumping and toxins from air pollution, run-off, and polluted water. [MORE](#)



Citsci Update, *By Maeve Coker, Citsci Chair*

An array of technology—smart phones and apps—make observing, identifying, and recording species a cinch. Citizen scientists and researchers have created a trove of data that they can also access. Two of the most frequently used ones in Dragon Run are iNaturalist and eBird. [MORE](#)



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How to Identify an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Other Lessons from Summer on Dragon Run, *By Lindsay Fisher, FODR Intern*

On the first day of my internship, I was so nervous that I forgot the name of the state insect. As an eastern tiger swallowtail flew by, all I could muster was that it was, in fact, some species of swallowtail. [MORE](#)



Friends of Dragon Run Welcomes Conservation Leaders from Around the Globe, *By Carol Kauffman*

Friends of Dragon Run recently hosted a group of international conservation leaders. These early- and mid-career professionals, were part of a three-week leadership academy organized by William & Mary, [MORE](#)



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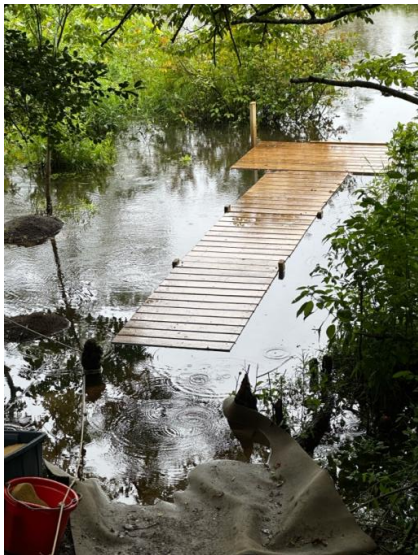
General Meeting and Founders' Day, By Jeff Wright

We were fortunate to get some amazing and passionate folks together to pursue preserving, protecting, and encouraging the wise use of the Dragon! [MORE](#)



My Most Amazing Finds, By Mike Grose, Property Monitor TKNP

While birding at Teta Kain Nature Preserve, I spotted a Wood Duck swimming upstream. Then there were two ducks, four ducks and then a total of seven Wood Ducks! [MORE](#)



Paddle News!

By Jim Ewan and Carol Kauffman, Paddle Masters

Registration for Fall Paddle Season Opens September 14 [MORE](#)

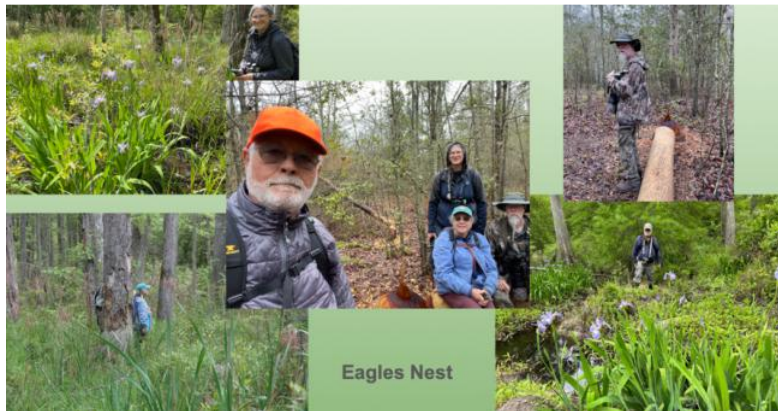


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By the Numbers. [MORE](#)

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**Preserving, Protecting,
and Knowing Our
Properties:
FODR Property Monitoring
Teams,** *By Jeff Wright*

It goes without saying that caring for FODR properties is an honor, a privilege, and mostly fun. [MORE](#)



Outreach *By Anne Ducey-Ortiz, Outreach Chair*

The Outreach Committee identified two events where FODR could participate and talk to participants about joining us in protecting and preserving Dragon Run. [MORE](#)



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First Day of Fall Frolic

By Robin and Steve Mathews, Hike Masters

Join us and other Friends of Dragon Run members and their guests for a First Day of Fall Walk in the woods on September 22.

[.MORE](#)



Another Successful Year for the DREAM Team, *By Lindsay Fisher, FODR Intern*

DREAM, a three-day program, takes educators out into the field and onto the waters of Dragon Run to teach them about the local watershed and help them develop lessons to take back to students. [MORE](#)



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Jerry Stokes, *Jerry Stokes Interview with Jeff Wright*

In November 1985, Louise McKenna reached out to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), expressing her interest in selling a 27-acre island in Dragon Run to a conservation organization.

[MORE](#)



What's Going on at Night While You Sleep: Bird Migration, *By Kevin Howe*

If you are not a birder, be aware that most of our migrating songbirds fly at night. It's less windy, there are fewer predators, and the cooler night air keeps the birds cooler during their hours and hours of flying. Now, there are two amazing resources that tell you who's flying when, where, and how far. [MORE](#)

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From the President, *Jeff Wright*

It has been a hot summer with numerous ups and downs. Some days our paddlers experienced the joys of the heat index approaching three digits (NOT!). But because we conducted our paddle trips in the morning, our youth and adult paddle trips were successful and almost all earned the accolade “no sweat.” For the paddle crews, logisticians, and property monitors it was a different story. It is amazing what they accomplished considering the temperature and humidity, drought, and storms this summer.



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Other Successes

We held our first in-person General Meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. We used this meeting to gather and thank the FODR founders, their spouses, and other champions who helped bring FODR to life.

You've probably noticed that FODR always seems to be counting something—birds, butterflies, native plants, and members. This summer we reached one of the goals in our five-year strategic plan when we enrolled our 500th FODR member.

Our species counts are ongoing, and we have now identified more than 1,400 species. For the second year, we held a successful DREAM program which brought seven local teachers from three school districts to Dragon Run to teach them about the local watershed and help them develop lessons to take back to students.

Property monitoring and stewardship are critical to accomplishing our mission to preserve, protect, and encourage the wise use of Dragon Run. Activities include boundary markings, species mapping, invasive species management, trash removal, and a lot of teamwork by the volunteer participants. Of note this summer were the stewardship efforts at Big Island, Powcan, Morgan, Eagle's Nest, and at the Teta Kain Nature Preserve. The latter is also now the top site for birding in Middlesex County.

Dragon Run may be in a remote location, but we interact with other organizations at the local, state, federal, tribal, and international levels.

- Public and private schools
- Home schoolers
- Virginia counties
- Virginia Institute of Marine Science, (VIMS)
- Chesapeake Bay National Estuarian Research Reserve (CBNERR)



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- William and Mary Institute for Integrative Conservation
- The Pamunkey Indian Tribe
- The Rappahannock Indian Tribe
- St. Mary's College
- The Nature Conservancy
- Chesapeake Conservancy,
- Menokin Foundation
- Essex County Conservation Alliance
- The Virginia Native Plant Society
- Jacob's Ladder
- Scouting America
- York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable
- Virginia Master Naturalists

On to the fall – hikes, paddles, environmental literacy, citizen science, species counts, and a wide range of work on our properties to preserve and protect them: a lot of items to report in our December newsletter and annual report.

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First Day of Fall Frolic

By Robin and Steve Mathews, Hike Masters

There is no doubt that the summer has been long and hot. Soon we will feel the refreshing approach of cooler temps, falling leaves, and migrating birds. The time is ripe to walk the forest as it prepares to shed its summer raiment and rest for next year's re-awakening.

Please join us and other Friends of Dragon Run members and their guests for a First Day of Fall Walk in the woods. We will meet at Big Island on Sunday, September 22 at 10:00 for a late morning stroll.

Details and signup instructions will be posted on the DragonRun.Org website in early September. Hope to see you there!



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Emergency Trash Pickup

By Jeff Wright, President

Carol Kauffman, Vice President, Lindsay Fisher our Intern from William and Mary, and I were at the Teta Kain Nature Preserve (TKNP) one morning. It was Lindsay's first visit to TKNP and the first day of her internship.

We were greeted by a sickening sight. A large quantity of plastic, glass, metal, and waxed cardboard containers were floating in the Dragon and the wetlands at the TKNP.

Looking down stream we saw a yellow kayak with the TKNP property monitor team leader, plucking trash out of the water. Maryanna Fisher spotted the trash the previous day and came back the next day with a kayak to gather what was floating on the surface. Unknown is how much trash sank to the bottom.

Lindsay, Carol, and I helped unload four loads of discarded containers that Maryanna hauled to shore. We recorded the trash using the *Clean Swell* app, bagged it, and I hauled it to the Northumberland County Dump for disposal and/or recycling.

Here are some photos of a champion of the Dragon arriving on shore and tossing the trash to us to catalog and bag. In the one picture you can see that she can throw a glass wine bottle easily 50 feet while steering a kayak!





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Some of the containers recovered were of concern: anti-freeze, paint, refrigerants, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals/supplements. When we think of collecting trash in the Dragon, the first things that come to mind are paper items, drink bottles, and cigarette butts. But more sinister wastes and toxins can enter the Dragon from other sources, such as illegal dumping and toxins from air pollution, run-off, and polluted water. Already this year, we have encountered illegal dumping and polluted water mixing into Dragon Run.

When you see Maryanna, please thank her and the other members of the TKNP property monitoring team - Mike, Tiffany, Ginette, and Sherry - for their exceptional work.



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CitSci Update

By Maeve Coker, Citizen Science Committee Chair

Our efforts to document the biodiversity of the Dragon Run watershed are steadily making gains. The global citizen science platform, iNaturalist, has been invaluable to FODR as a way for us to record data. iNaturalist is a non-profit organization that stores observations from people around the globe to document biodiversity for the use of researchers and the public. The artificial intelligence image-recognition software at the heart of the platform helps users make identification suggestions based on their geographic location. The more people who contribute observations, the better the technology becomes.

The benefit of iNaturalist compared to similar identification tools is that there is a public network of iNaturalist users who can view all the observations and either confirm or deny the suggested IDs. This helps keep the AI technology (and novice users!) honest.

In the case of FODR's iNaturalist projects, we have a set of best practices. These best practices highlight the most important ones set by iNaturalist and ensure we are entering the best quality data into the system. If we don't follow the best practices, it can become impossible, in some cases, to make identifications to the species level.

Our top contributors happen to be members of our Citizen Science Committee (numbers in parentheses refer to the number of observations/species): Maeve Coker (2793/890), Anne Parker (1363/533), Robin Mathews (844/383), Betsy Washington (407/238), and Sherry Rollins (303/188).



*Waterpod. Hydrolea quadrivalvis.
Photographed by Maryanna Fisher*



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Although these five individuals have made the most contributions to the FODR iNaturalist project, it doesn't mean others' contributions are diminished in importance! There are many sightings in our iNaturalist projects that have been made only by those who have entered just a handful or even just a single sighting! Thank you to all who have contributed so far because every observation counts!

As of the first week of August, we have entered more than 7,400 observations into the Dragon Run Watershed Project with more than 1,400 species. Some of these are still pending identification. Eighty-six people have made contributions, many of them FODR members and Virginia Master Naturalists. By far our best represented group of organisms is plants, with roughly 730 species identified in both upland and wetland habitats. We still have a long way to go, which sometimes may be hard to imagine with all we have accomplished so far.

Through our efforts we have encountered some unfortunate discoveries in the form of non-native, invasive plant species across the Dragon watershed. There are roughly 70 species not native to our region, with 27 of them considered problematic invasive species, ranging in severity from medium to high.

We have almost all the expected, long-time established species in Virginia, like Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), and tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). We also, unfortunately, have some of the more recent (as in 50 years vs 200+ years) invaders, like wintercreeper (*Euonymus*



*Duckweed firetail,
Telebasis byersi.
Photographed by
Maeve Coker*





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fortunei), Chinese lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*), and shrubby lespedeza (*Lespedeza bicolor*).

The most startling discovery of all, though, is wavyleaf basketgrass (*Oplismenus undulatifolius*). It has only been in the state for roughly 20 years and has spread rampantly in the last two or three years. It hitchhikes on birds, humans, and mammals via its incredibly sticky seeds.

FODR members are advised to keep an eye out for this species in the watershed as well as in their everyday travels. If found, make sure to report your sighting to EDDMapS at eddmeps.org.

Currently FODR does not have a strategic invasive species management plan, but we are treating species like autumn olive and tree of heaven as we encounter them. Finding and documenting what we can is the first step in developing a strategic response.



Wavy leaf. Photographed by Maeve Coker

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How to Identify an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Other Lessons from a Summer on Dragon Run

by Lindsay Fisher, FODR Intern

On the first day of my internship, I was so nervous that I forgot the name of the state insect.

As an eastern tiger swallowtail flew by, all I could muster was that it was, in fact, some species of swallowtail. My nerves were partly due to my growing admiration of the Friends of Dragon Run.

From my first paddle on Dragon Run in May, I was amazed by the commitment and extensive knowledge of FODR volunteers. The immense value the organization brings to the local community and watershed was immediately clear, leaving me with excitement for the summer ahead and an anxiousness to contribute all I could.

That first day in early June, I was anxious to make an impact (and hoped that you all made the right choice in choosing me as intern). At the end of my internship, I hope that you still believe you made the right choice to select me as the summer intern. I want to share some of my efforts and lessons learned.

Over the past few months, I have been lucky to help with various Friends of Dragon Run initiatives. As a writer for "Swamp Sightings," I made it a goal to write about



*Lindsay holding a red-bellied snake, *Storeria occipitomaculata*.*



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species from as many classes as possible. So far, I have written articles on an amphibian, insect, fungus, plant, mammal, and bird. Through these articles, I developed as a writer and learned about the life around me.



As a general volunteer, I have learned to identify countless new species thanks to the knowledge of FODR members. I picked up trash from the watershed while considering its causes. While participating in these events, I always saw the dedication of FODR volunteers, which encouraged me to show up with the same level of enthusiasm, curiosity, and motivation.

As a paddle crew member, I shared Dragon Run with people from all over the state during a unique and, at times, challenging summer paddling season. The move to Dragon Flats further taught me that you can never count on things going according to plan, but you can adapt and be flexible. Most importantly, don't lean in your kayak!

Lindsay presenting at the August 11 General Meeting

As an observer of DREAM, I helped share Dragon Run with local teachers and increased access to and knowledge of the outdoors. Through my own experiences as a student, I created games about local species to give back to students and familiarize them with their environment--a lesson that was incredibly impactful for me in high school.

As I wrap up my internship, I am also finishing mapping the trails on a few FODR properties. This opportunity has allowed me to practice and expand on the knowledge I gained through my coursework at William & Mary.

All of this is to say, I have gained valuable experience and knowledge that would not have been possible without all of you.



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I want to thank every FODR member I had the pleasure of volunteering with this summer. I learned from every one of you. I especially want to thank Jeff and Carol for mentoring me throughout the internship and supporting my efforts. With your mentorship, I have built confidence in sharing my ideas, developing new skills, and I will never forget the eastern tiger swallowtail again.

You all do amazing work, and your commitment to the organization is inspiring. In the words of my Dad: "That's the kind of retiree I want to be!"

Thanks for a great summer,

Lindsay

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Friends of Dragon Run Welcomes Conservation Leaders from Around the Globe

By Carol Kauffman

Friends of Dragon Run recently hosted a group of international conservation leaders. These early- and mid-career professionals, known as Conservation Catalyst Fellows, were part of a three-week leadership academy organized by The Institute for Integrative Conservation at William & Mary, directed by Dr. Robert Rose. The academy aims to foster leadership skills, facilitate knowledge sharing, and cultivate a global network of inclusive and innovative conservation advocates.

As a capstone to their program, the Fellows embarked on an exploratory paddling trip down Dragon Run on June 28th. Dragon Run is one of the northern-most bald cypress swamps in eastern North America. The Dragon, whose headwaters begin in Essex County, meanders through King & Queen, Middlesex, and Gloucester counties before emptying into the Piankatank River. It is the most well-preserved waterway within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The Fellows' adventure served not only as a regional activity but also as an opportunity for these emerging leaders to engage firsthand with conservation efforts in a natural setting.

After experiencing the beauty and diversity of Dragon Run firsthand, I'm deeply inspired by the dedication of Friends of Dragon Run. Their commitment to preserving this remarkable watershed through education, stewardship, and citizen science is truly commendable. It's heartening to see their efforts in action, ensuring future generations can also marvel at this pristine ecosystem.

Teresa Muthoni, Kenya, One Tree Planted



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Paddlers and their organizations: Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (Kenya), Kitirua Conservancy (Kenya), One Tree Planted (Kenya), Third Pole Conservancy (Nepal), Centre for Sustainability (Philippines), and Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund (Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo)

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General Meeting and Founders' Day

By Jeff Wright, President



General Membership and Founders Celebration Meeting

- Successful and inspiring
- Founder **and Spouses** Panel was quite good
- Great stories from the early days and **even some eye rolling among the spouses**
- Walter Hoagman from the Dragon Foundation an organization that predates the founding of the Friends of Dragon Run was present.
- We were fortunate to get some amazing and passionate folks together to pursue preserving, protecting, and encouraging wise use of the Dragon!



Harvey Morgan, Julie Stone, Davis Rhodes, and Sharon Rhodes



Jerry Stokes, Becky Heath, and Brent Heath



The Panel



Ellen and Jerry Stokes



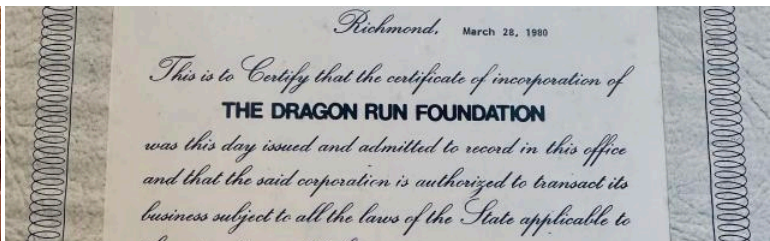
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The Dragon Foundation

Dr. Walter J. Hoagman



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My Most Amazing Finds

Mike Grose, Property Monitor Teta Kain
Nature Preserve



I was slowly walking the wooded trail at Teta Kain Nature Preserve when I noticed a small white critter suspended at eye level above the path. Closer observation determined that this was a banded tussock moth caterpillar, *Halysidota tessellaris*, and was entangled in a spider web (food web). Possibly this native creature had fallen from the forest canopy.



While birding at Teta Kain Nature Preserve, I spotted a Wood Duck swimming upstream. Then there were two ducks, four ducks and then a total of seven Wood Ducks. Several of them joined a northern red cooter on a fallen log



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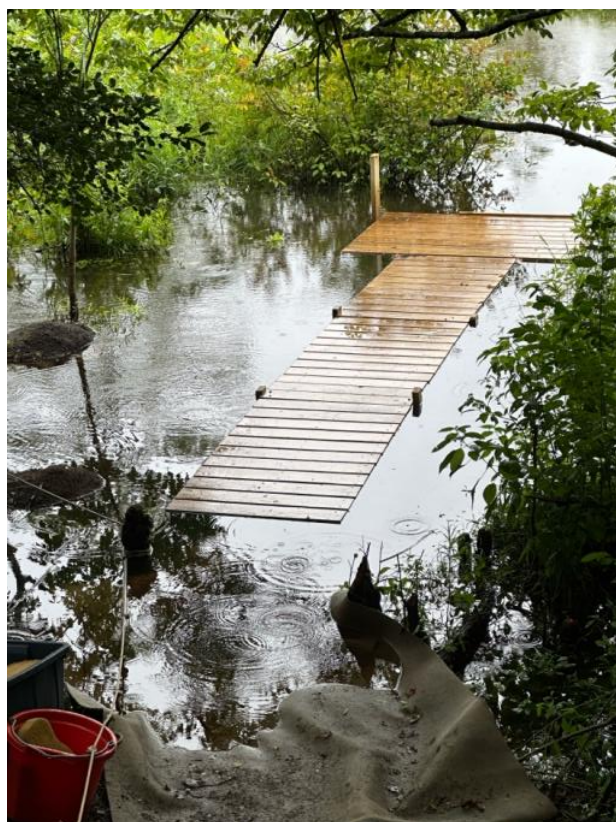
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Paddle News!

Registration for Fall Paddle Season Opens September 14

By Jim Ewan and Carol Kauffman, Paddle Masters



Our ups and downs this summer were due to the Dragon's fluctuating water levels. As we were planning the summer paddle route, we faced historic low water—so low, in fact, that there wasn't enough water on the Big Island route to paddle. But, our Paddle Masters, Carol Kauffman and Jim Ewan, responded quickly with a new launch site and paddle route using the Nature Conservancy's Dragon Flats property as our summer

launch site. We shifted operations from Big Island to Dragon Flats and with the help of volunteers Jim and Carol relocated all our paddle equipment along with the kayaks to the new launch site.

Gary Grabb designed, built, and with help, installed a temporary dock that more than met our launch site needs. As soon





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as the dock was installed, however, the remnants of Hurricane Beryl swept through with heavy rain raising the water levels in the Dragon and partially submerged the new dock. Water levels rose enough from that storm enabling the DREAM program paddle trips to originate from Big Island, but all other paddle trips launched from Dragon Flats.

Registration for the fall paddle season will open at 9 a.m. September 14. Paddle days will be October 18—November 3.



Training for the spring paddle season

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By the Numbers

501	Total active FODR members
125	Life members
154	Auto-renewal memberships
376	Annual memberships
148	Paddlers during summer paddle season
2	Youth paddles during summer paddle season
14	New members who joined during summer paddle season
1,437	Number of species in the Dragon and documented in iNaturalist
138	Bird species in the Dragon and documented in eBird
	During June, July, and August:
8	Tires collected
174	Weight in lbs. of tires collected
8	Number of trash pickups
4,075	Items collected
571	Weight in lbs. of trash collected

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End of the TireFest and More Trash Talk

By Mark Alling, Trash Wrangler

End of the TireFest!

On June 27th after the FODR Adopt-A-Highway trash pickup, Mark Alling, FODR's Trash Wrangler, removed 54 tire inner tubes weighing 246 pounds from the Eagles Nest TireFest site. This brought the TireFest to an end.

Trash Pickup Sites Increased

Friends of Dragon Run has been removing trash and recyclable items from roadsides at the Rt. 17 bridges, the Teta Kain Nature Preserve, and Ware's bridge sites four times per year for many years. These sites are all on the lower main stem of Dragon Run. However, we had not collected trash and recyclables from anywhere in the upper Dragon Run watershed or from the main Dragon Run tributaries, Exol Swamp and Timber Branch Swamp.

Starting in January 2024 we added four more bridges on upper Dragon Run, five bridges on Exol Swamp, and one bridge on Timber Branch Swamp to the FODR Adopt-A-Highway program. We currently collect trash and recyclables from these bridge approaches twice a year. Pickup frequency may increase at a few bridges if we find a higher volume of trash and recyclables.

On upper Dragon Run:

Bestland Bridge, Rt. 612
Cheaney's Bridge, Rt. 607
Jones' Bridge, Rt. 607
Rt. 612 bridge, South of Bestland

On Exol Swamp:

Rt. 617 bridge, near Daisy
Rt. 612 bridge, North of Cumnor
Rt. 617 bridge, near Contra
Rt. 615 bridge, South of Ino
Rt. 614 bridge, about 1 mi. from Dragon Run.

On Timber Branch Swamp:

Rt. 610 bridge, South of Dragonville

Here are some interesting results after the first six months collecting recyclables and trash:



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- *Bestland and Cheaney's bridges* each had more than 1,000 pounds of combined trash and recyclables collected in six months. Bestland had 670 pounds of recyclables and Cheaney's Bridge had 914 pounds of recyclables. These two bridges also yielded slightly less than 500 pounds of trash.
- *The other two new Dragon Run bridges* yielded between 220 and 300 pounds of recyclables each, with 73 pounds of trash.
- The *Timber Branch Swamp bridge* held 315 pounds recyclables and 37 pounds trash.
- The *five Exol Swamp bridges* were much cleaner than the Dragon Run and Timber Branch Swamp bridges. These five bridges yielded a total of 47 pounds of recyclables and 18 pounds of trash.
- We collected a total of 61 tires from these ten bridge approaches. Nineteen of the tires came from the *Cheaney's bridge* approaches.

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Trash Pickup Schedule

Date	Location	Date	Location
September 25	<p>Dragon Run, Rt 17 Bridge.</p> <p>Dragon Run, Teta Kain Nature Preserve, Rt 603 Br.</p> <p>Dragon Run, Ware's Br., Rt 602 Br.</p>	November 14	<p>Dragon Run, Rt 17 Bridges.</p> <p>Dragon Run, Teta Kain Nature Preserve, Rt 603 Br.</p> <p>Dragon Run, Ware's Br., Rt 602 Br.</p> <p>Dragon Run, Byrd's Br., Rt 604 Br.</p>
October 9	<p>Exol Swamp, Rt 607 Br.</p> <p>Exol Swamp, Rt 612 Br.</p> <p>Exol Swamp, Rt 617 Br.</p>	December 12	<p>Exol Sw., Rt 615 Br., 0.5 mi N of Rt 610.</p> <p>Exol Sw., Rt 614 Br., 1 mi above mouth.</p> <p>Timber Branch Sw., Rt 610 Br @ Rt 614</p>

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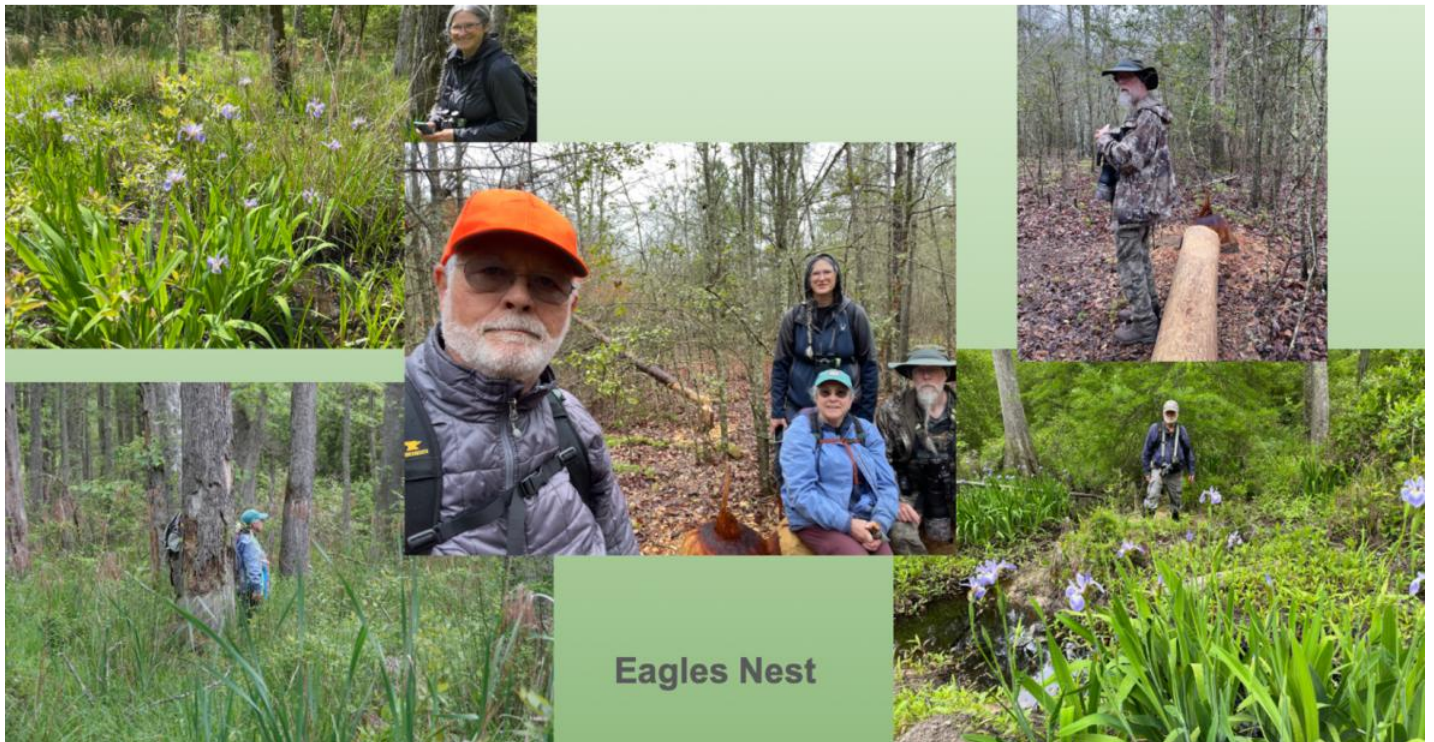
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Preserving, Protecting, and Knowing Our Properties: FODR Property Monitoring Teams

By Jeff Wright

The work of our property monitoring teams is key to accomplishing two of the functions of our mission: *preserving* and *protecting*. The heart of each team's work is knowing the property they monitor.

Property team members are familiar with a property's characteristics, such as boundaries, road and trails, land disturbances including trash, evidence of trespassing and vandalism, overall health of the property, potential safety hazards, and the flora and fauna on the property. The teams monitor both the land and water of FODR properties which is challenging because some properties, such as Eagle's Nest and Big Island, have extensive areas of water and wetlands. It goes without saying that caring for FODR properties is an honor, a privilege, and mostly fun.





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Property monitoring teams increase our knowledge of the Dragon's biodiversity. They occasionally add data to citizen science databases such as iNaturalist and eBird. The teams also work in conjunction with other FODR committees such as Citizen Science to document species, Hike Masters, and the Youth Outreach Committees to ensure our properties are ready for events.

We have 11 monitoring teams and more than 40 volunteers. These teams monitor their assigned properties at least once each quarter. Plus, we anticipate that the number of property monitoring volunteers will continue to grow. If you want to join one of the teams and witness the amazing biodiversity in Dragon Run as you protect the property, contact Jeff Wright, PresidentDragonRun@gmail.org.

Property Monitoring Teams

Essex County

POWCAN

Andrea Mitman – Team Lead

Anne Atkins

Tom Cowdrey

Wendy Wadsworth

King & Queen

Wares Bridge Complex

Tom Cramer – Team Lead

Christina Cramer

Adrienne Frank

Gary Driscole

Revere

Gary Grabb Co-Team Lead

Sue Grabb Co-Team Lead

Williams

Kevin Howe Co-Team Lead

Betsy Washington Co-Team Lead

Bulman

Terry Skinner Co-Team Lead

Steve Skinner Co-Team Lead

Eagles Nest

Robin Mathews* Co-Team Lead

Steve Mathews Co-Team Lead

David Yeager

Anne Parker

Middlesex

Big Island

Andy Brown – Team Lead

Molly Broderson

Mason Washington

Alison Smith

Brian Hawthorne

Teta Kain Nature Preserve

Maryanna Fisher – Team Lead

Mike Gross

Sherry Rollins

Ginette Colat

Tiffany Gould

Dragon Flats

Jeff Wright – Team Lead

Maeve Coker

Joey Coker

Jim Ewan

Gloucester

Morgan

Davis Rhodes – Team Lead

Dan Schlangen

Terry Thorpe

Jeremiah Roberts

Mathews

Kostval

Molly Broderson Co-Team Lead

Anne Ducey-Ortiz Co-Team lead

Bambi Thompson

Andy Brown

Note: **Names Bolded in Blue are Paddle Crew Qualified**

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Outreach

By Anne Ducey-Ortiz, Outreach Chair

One of FODR's strategic goals is to increase membership and community outreach. This summer the Outreach Committee identified two events where FODR could participate and talk to participants about joining us in protecting and preserving Dragon Run. At each event, volunteers from FODR described the work we do to protect the Dragon, our educational programs, and the FODR paddle trips and hikes. If you have ideas for other outreach efforts or would like to volunteer to help with the committee, contact Anne Ducey-Ortiz at OutreachDragonRun@gmail.com

(On the right) We celebrated Juneteenth at the Gloucester Institute located on the York River in Capahosic.



(On the left) We were one of the several conservation groups that participated in the "Power of Place: Conservation, Kayaking and Culture" held on July 13th at Menokin.

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Jerry Stokes

Jerry Stokes Interview with Jeff Wright

How I Became Involved with FODR

In October 1985, I took on the role of Virginia Land Conservation Coordinator, on loan from the U.S. Forest Service to the Commonwealth of Virginia. My primary task was to assist the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) as part of the Chesapeake Bay Program.



Jerry Stokes and his wife Ellen

The Big Island Project

In November 1985, Louise McKenna reached out to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), expressing her interest in selling a 27-acre island in Dragon Run to a conservation organization. Her connection to CBF was facilitated by Jim Walton, a member of a hunt club that used her property. He also served on the King and Queen County Board of Supervisors in the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission. Jim Walton was an unsung hero in the early efforts to protect Dragon Run. Recognizing McKenna's desire to sell the property while preserving it, CBF referred her inquiry to me.

I visited the property with Jim Walton and reported to CBF that the land had significant natural value, making its protection worthwhile. I suggested that safeguarding the island could serve as a catalyst for a broader Dragon Run conservation initiative. CBF authorized me to proceed with the project, and I was informed that Jimmy Morgan, a strong advocate for Dragon Run protection, would be a key contact.



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December 17, 1985

I met with Jimmy Morgan at his drugstore to discuss the property, the purchase price, and the possibility of raising funds from local individuals to buy it. Jimmy's response was an unequivocal "yes."

Jimmy immediately began forming the purchase group. Over the next several weeks, I coordinated the project and negotiated the purchase specifics between McKenna and Morgan on behalf of the potential purchase group. This involved:

- Meeting with the purchase group that Jimmy had formed to discuss raising the money and channeling the purchase through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) until a local land trust could take title to the property.
- Meeting with Ms. McKenna to discuss the details and terms of the purchase.
- Initiating the required survey for the purchase.
- Meeting with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Board of Trustees and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation Trustees to explain the project and secure their support and approval.
- Meeting with the purchase group committee to explore organizational options, including forming a land trust and obtaining 501(c)(3) IRS status as a tax-exempt conservation organization.

By this time the project had grown to include Big Island, the surrounding wetlands owned by Ms. McKenna, Little Island owned by her brother, a group of 30 buyers, a volunteer survey of the project area, and a right-of-way from Chesapeake Corporation and Russell Williams. The right-of-way was necessary for gaining access to the property. Involvement also included the lawyer representing the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Attorney General's office, and the staff and boards of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.



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April 29, 1986

The purchase group met and formed the Friends of Dragon Run (FODR).

May 1987

The survey was finally complete. It began on January 8, 1986, with a meeting between me and Ed Haile, in which I requested Ed's assistance with the survey. Reconnoitering the project boundaries began on January 9 and involved breaking ice in a canoe. The last shot of the project boundary was taken in November 1987, and the right-of-way survey was completed in December 1987.



The entire survey took 17 months—from January 1986 to May 1987—to complete and finalize the plat. Most of the survey work was done on weekends and took approximately 50 man-days of my and Ed's time. The estimated value of the services donated by Wind Survey through Ed and me was approximately \$7,500 in 1987 dollars, or more than \$17,000 today. The project involved 24,080 feet of survey line, or 4.5 miles.

June 12, 1987

I notified Jimmy Morgan that the survey project was complete and forwarded a copy of the survey to the Friends of Dragon Run.

August 7, 1987

I notified the VOF attorney that negotiations for the right-of-way (which Ed and I had surveyed) across Chesapeake Corporation and property owned by Russell Williams were complete, and both had agreed to grant the right-of-way at no cost.

My role in the Big Island project ended in August 1987.



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Biggest Challenge

Surveying Big Island, Little Island, and the buffer zone along the adjacent Chesapeake Corporation lands, including the right-of-way from the highway to Big Island Landing, across Chesapeake land and Russell Williams' property, and the associated title transfer to FODR/VOF.

Favorite Memory

Mine: Completing the survey.

Ellen's: Being home alone with a 5-year-old daughter and 3-year-old rambunctious twin boys for many weekends over a 17-month period while Ed Haile and I were in Dragon Run.

Funny Stories

Someone once asked one of our boys where their dad worked, and he answered, "Dragon Run."

The survey was conducted under the supervision of Mike Wind, a licensed surveyor, who had to be present for the final shot to close the Big Island survey traverse. The last shot was taken from a wooded knoll across a 15-foot-wide body of water. It was December, and the water was cold! Ed, Mike, and I drew straws to decide who would wade across to the knoll to hold the rod for the shot. Mike lost! I will never forget seeing Mike, standing shivering in just his undershorts on that wooded knoll, holding the rod while Ed hurried to get the last shot!

Ideas for Future Protection

We need active engagement of adjacent landowners to participate as members of FODR and to encourage the donation of conservation easements on their Dragon Run frontage. Additionally, we should actively seek younger members, as most of us are an older bunch.

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Another Successful Year for the DREAM Team

By Lindsay Fisher, FODR Intern

For a few immersive days on Dragon Run, teachers stepped into the shoes of students. The last week of July marked the second year Friends of Dragon Run hosted Middle Peninsula educators as part of the Dragon Run Environmental Academy Mentorship (DREAM) program. Dream, a three-day program, takes educators out into the field and onto the waters of Dragon Run to teach them about the local watershed and help them develop lessons to take back to students.

All of this is thanks to the planning and coordination of the DREAM Team, composed of retired teachers and master naturalists: Molly Broderson, Carol Kauffman, Dave Norman, Terry Skinner, Bambi Thompson, and Susan Walton.



Educators pose in front of a bald cypress while on an interpretive paddle of Dragon Run.

This year, participants came from three school districts: Gloucester, King and Queen, and Middlesex. From Gloucester County, sixth-grade science teacher Brandi



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Brown of Page Middle School and fifth-grade science teacher Michael Duffey of Achilles Elementary School participated. Representing King and Queen County were school counselor Sheri Gross and science teacher Cynthia Lester of Central High School. From Middlesex County, environmental science teacher Mike Carey of Middlesex High School participated, along with seventh-grade math teacher Haley Marchetti and seventh-grade science teacher David Moore of St. Clare Walker Middle School.

The first two days involved familiarizing educators with Dragon Run through kayak paddle trips, hikes, and lessons on watersheds, local species, water quality, citizen science, and biodiversity. On the last day, with their new knowledge and experiences, each educator chose an aspect of Dragon Run to speak about in a mini documentary to share with students, parents, and colleagues (available on DragonRun.org). Kayaks and cameras at the ready, the DREAM Team and participants headed onto the water to film the teachers as they described topics including the importance of beavers, bald cypress, and duckweed.

During filming, Dr. Anthony Vladu, Superintendent of Gloucester County Public Schools, joined to observe the DREAM program in action and later spoke about its impact.

The most effective professional development for educators is one that is relevant, connected to the community, and meaningful to the lives of both students and teachers. The time I spent on the water with Middle Peninsula teachers and Friends of Dragon Run was the best professional development I have attended in a while because it made learning science come alive through watershed education and environmental stewardship right here in our community.

Dr, Anthony Vladu,
Superintendent of Gloucester County Public Schools



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As DREAM ended, an unfamiliar sound filled tranquil Dragon Run. After a few seconds of buffering (service isn't great along the Dragon), the sound of "Pomp and Circumstance" filled the air. One by one, the DREAM Team awarded a certificate to each participant. As a new graduate of DREAM, Brandi Brown of Page Middle School reflected, "I really enjoyed learning about all the native plants and animals that are in Dragon Run." She also noted the impact of learning to use citizen science apps, such as iNaturalist.

Over the next school year, these educators will give what they learned to their students by integrating it into state curriculum requirements and developing a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE), a learner-centered framework developed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. As the 2024 class begins to brainstorm MWEEs, school counselor Sheri Gross said she hopes to incorporate nature into after-school programs for anxiety, depression, and grief.



The DREAM Team, educators, and Dr. Vladu celebrate a successful wrap-up to the 2024 program before a session of MWEE and action project brainstorming.



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Each educator will have the support of a mentor from the DREAM Team as they develop a MWEE. A select number of students will also have an opportunity to participate in a field day as their teachers did. Students will hike trails, perform water investigations, and paddle Dragon Run. All of this will culminate in an action project co-developed and co-conducted by students. Other schools in Virginia have completed action projects ranging from native plant gardens to art made from recycled materials.

It is sure to be an exciting year of reconnection with nature and environmental action while we await DREAM 2025 to arrive!

More information and photos from DREAM 2024 are available on the Friends of the Dragon Run website at dragonrun.org/dream.

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Streamside Attractions

What's Going on at Night While You Sleep: Bird Migration *By Kevin Howe*

As summer transitions into fall, I look forward to the fall bird migration. I love the spring migration of birds as well, but the migrating birds tend to land and leave much more quickly with the urge to push north to breed. Fall migration is more drawn out than spring and provides substantially more opportunities to see and enjoy the variety of migrators. I put fall in quotes because the "fall" migration begins as early as mid-June and can stretch into January depending on the bird and, of course, where you live.

The peak of fall migration in our area is truly fall – September and October. Until recently, dedicated watchers of migrating birds would follow weather patterns (especially wind and rain) to help them predict when *might* be a good morning for bird watching.

If you are not a birder, be aware that most of our migrating songbirds fly at night. It's less windy, there are fewer predators, and the cooler night air keeps the birds cooler during their hours and hours of flying

Dragon Run Migrants



Prothonotary Warbler.
Photo by Kevin Howe



Yellow Bellied Sapsucker. *Photo by Kevin Howe*



Wood Ducks. *Photo by Kevin Howe*



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activity. But as day breaks, the birds land to rest and feed on lipid-rich berries. They often stay longer than in spring to rest and feed especially if the weather is bad or they need to fatten up to continue their migration. Overall, we birders could never predict very well if it would be a great fall birding day or not.

Thanks to technology, we can now predict daily bird migration with great success. There are two computer programs (not smart phone apps) that are fantastic for learning about bird migration. These programs can make your spring and fall birding much more fruitful. The programs are **Audubon Migration Explorer (AME)** and **BirdCast**.

The two websites complement each other. AME presents a series of interactive maps showing the full yearly pattern of 458 species of North American migratory birds. On the other hand, BirdCast gives the user real-time predictions of bird migrations including when they migrate, where they migrate, and how far they will be flying. So let me introduce both so you can be prepared and more knowledgeable about this fall's bird migration.

Audubon Migration Explorer (<https://explorer.audubon.org/>) went live in 2022 and was a creation of the National Audubon Society and nine founding partners. Many years in the making, it was a massive undertaking with 318 institutions sharing years of research data and 648 bird migration research tracking studies making up the basis for this digital platform.

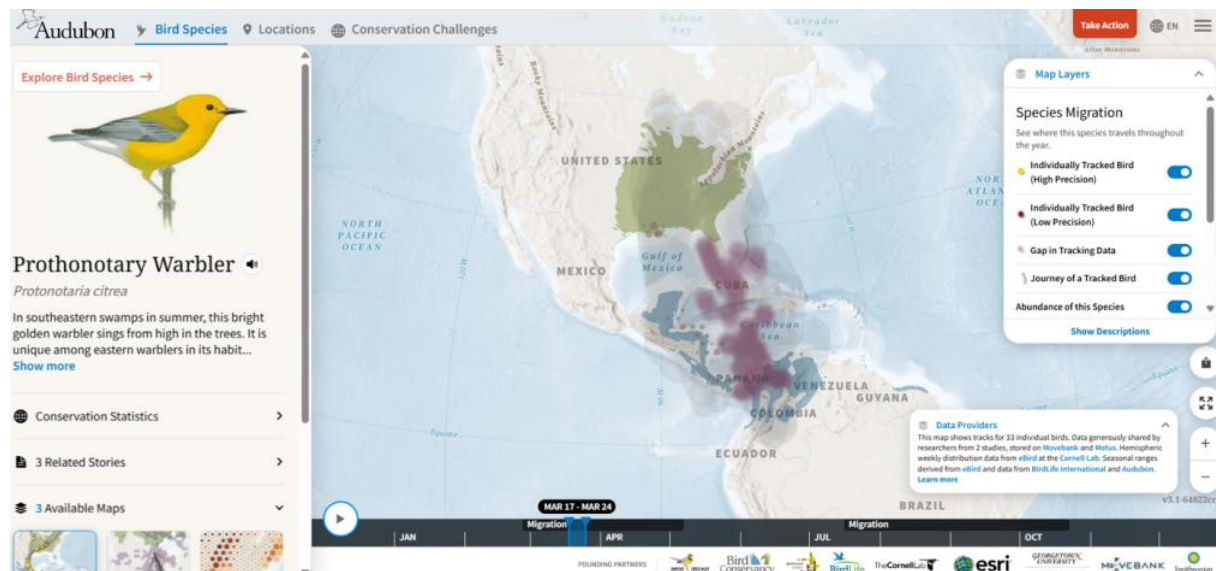
All this research was compiled to bring this migration phenomenon to your computer screen enabling you to pore over the migration patterns of individual species, discover the birds at a specific location at a specific time in their migration, and learn about routes and challenges these birds face twice a year. See the accompanying screenshots for what it has in store for you.



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Easy to use – you first choose a bird, like Prothonotary Warbler, and the website will generate an interactive version of the map that tracks the bird throughout its annual cycle. It will lead you through the entire year allowing you to see the species' migration pathways. The left side provides links to a brief natural history, related stories, available maps, and conservation challenges. These topics will lead you deeper into the species' life history and conservation status. It is a really a fantastic learning tool for seeing migration in action.



BirdCast (<https://birdcast.info>) went live in 2018 with the goal of providing users with *real-time predictions* of the nocturnal bird migrations. These predictions include when they migrate, where they migrate, and how far they will fly. BirdCast is seasonally live from March 1 to June 15 and August 1 to November 15. This massive undertaking took 20 years of work before it went live. Initial funding came from the EPA in 1999 to provide timely bird migration information to communities thereby helping them make ecologically wise and informed day to day decisions. It is currently maintained by Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology, Colorado State University, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

BirdCast's predictions are based on Doppler weather surveillance radar. Radar was developed in World War II to detect enemy aircraft but through years of research



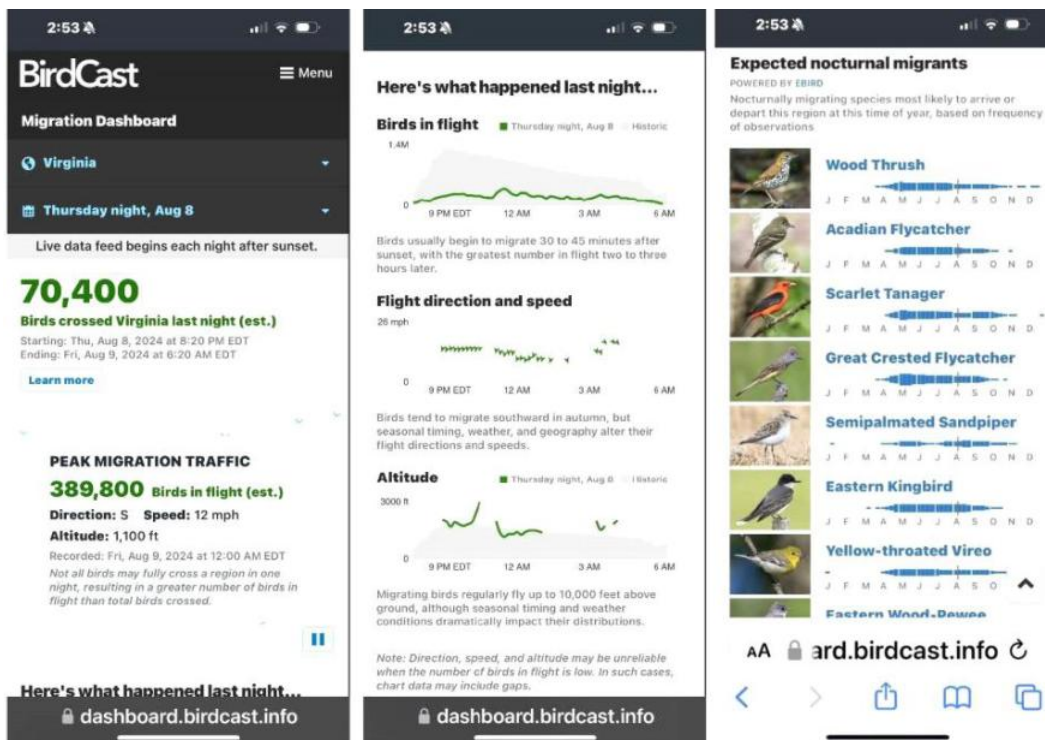
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and refinement, scientists found that it not only detects meteorological events but also human and biological objects ranging from aircraft and desert dust storms to forest fire smoke plumes, butterflies, dragon flies, mayflies, and birds – though enemy detection and weather were the original purpose.

The BirdCast website has a plethora of bird migration information including the history of BirdCast and the radar science behind it. But the real star on the website is "Migration Tools." The tools include bird migration forecast maps and live bird migration maps.

Bird migration forecast maps predict the nocturnal bird migration three hours after local sunset and the maps are updated every six hours. Enter your locality (state, city, county) and you will get estimates of the total number of birds flying over the locality and their direction, speed and altitude. Below are three screenshots for Virginia on August 9, 2024, taken on my phone. BirdCast gives you a wealth of data about this one night and the information changes every night due to weather, wind and the birds' desires.



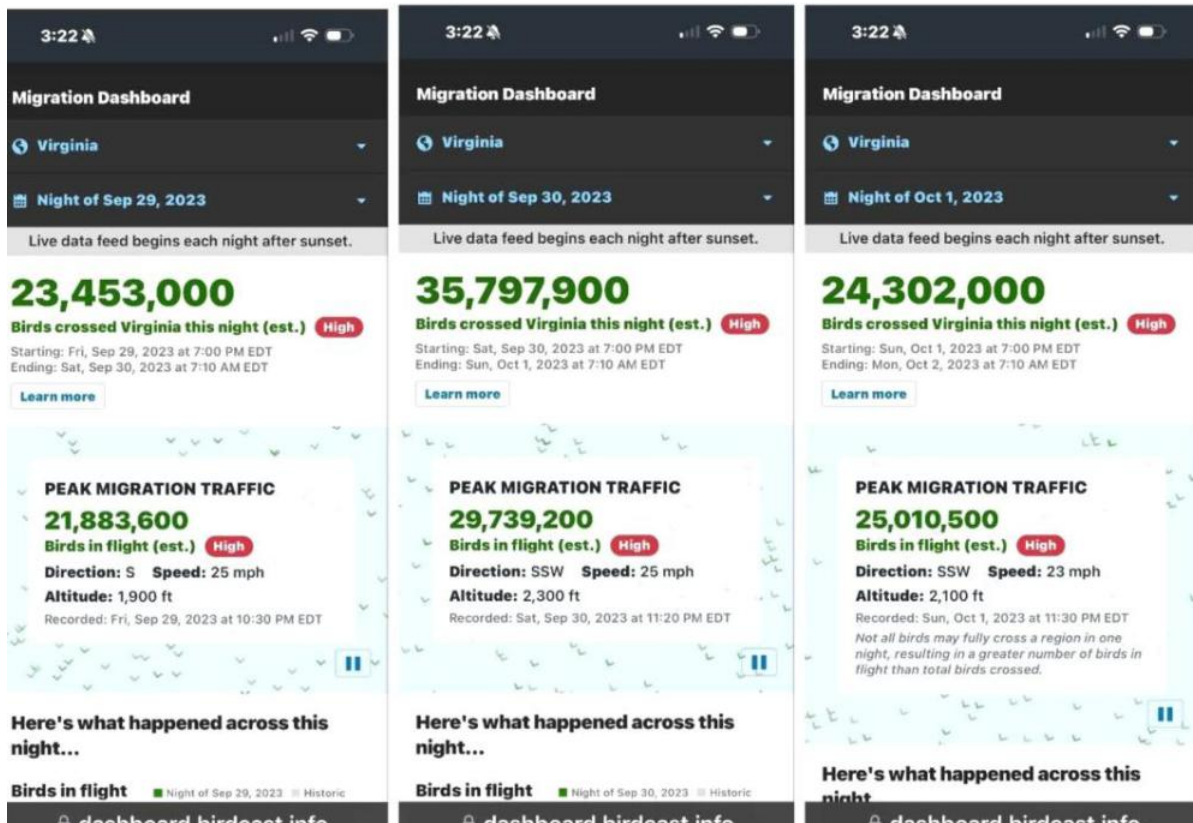
The numbers shown in this screen shot are low because migration had not fully started.



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The three screens below show 2023 data from September 29, 30, and October 1 during a migration peak time. Look at those numbers!



We are lucky in North America to have one of the world's most spectacular bird migration events. Billions of birds embark on seasonal migrations every year in search of food, shelter, and breeding grounds. So, check out these two digital platforms (websites) and learn what's going on at night above your head. Then go outside and watch the show.

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Activities Calendar

Check the FODR website for more information—DragonRun.org

September 2024

- 1 Newsletter Publication
- 14 (Saturday) Fall Paddle Registration – 9:00 AM
- 16 (Monday) Board of Directors Meeting
- 18 (Wednesday) Hike preparation
- 22 (Sunday) Member Hike
- 25 (Thursday) Trash Pickup

October 2024

- 9 (Wednesday) - Trash Pickup
- 6, 7 (Sunday, Monday) Paddle Crew Training
- 15, 16, 17 School Field Days
- 18 to 31 Fall Paddle Season Days
- 19 (Saturday) Citizen Science Event
- 21 (Monday) Board of Directors Meeting

November 2024

- 1-3 Paddle Season Days
- 12 (Tuesday) Stewardship Volunteer Event
- 14 (Thursday) Trash Pickup
- 16 (Saturday) Citizen Science Event
- 18 (Monday) Board Meeting
- 24 (Sunday) Annual General Meeting - Open to the Public

December 2024

- 1 Newsletter Publication
- 3 (Tuesday) "Giving Tuesday"
- 3 (Tuesday) Hike Preparations
- 8 (Sunday) Member Hike
- 10 (Tuesday) Stewardship Volunteer Event



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12 (Thursday) Trash Pickup

15 (Sunday) Dragon Run Christmas Bird Count

16 (Monday) Board of Directors Meeting

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Board of Directors for 2024

Executive Committee - One Year Terms

Jeff Wright, President
Carol Kauffman, Vice President
Kevin Howe, Treasurer
Adrienne Frank, Secretary

Directors

Anne Atkins
Andy Brown
Marsha Carlton
Maeve Coker
Anne Ducey-Ortiz
Jim Ewan
Gary Grabb
Andy Lacatell
Jack Kauffman
Steve Mathews
Dave Milby
Andrea Mitman
Harvey Morgan
Davis Rhodes

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Standing Committees, Working Groups, and Appointees

Appointees

Paddle Masters

Carol Kauffman
Jim Ewan

Safety Officer

Jack Kauffman

Membership

Carol Kauffman

Logistics

Davis Rhodes

Trash Wrangler

Mark Alling

Communications

Anne Atkins

Merchandise

Jack Kauffman

Hike Masters

Robin Mathews
Steve Mathews

Property Manager

David Milby

Committees

Outreach

Anne Ducey-Ortiz

Youth Outreach

Molly Broderson

Stewardship Management

Jeff Wright

Citizen Science

Maeve Coker

Communications

Anne Atkins

Hunting Lease

Andy Brown

Dragon Keeper

Art Gilbert
Andrea Mitman

Investment

Art Gilbert

Public Access

Property Committee

(TKNP)

Jeff Wright

Working Groups

Health of the Dragon

Occasional meetings of leaders focused on projects such as water testing, trash collection, invasive species mapping, and Dragon Keeper. This working group is our effort to track the health of the 40 miles of Dragon Run.

Dragon Community Science

Occasional meetings of leaders of various citizen science, community science, bird box trails, support to agency and university projects, vernal pools, and species counts to advance projects and share ideas and information.





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Donations

Marsha Carlton

Webmaster

Carol Kauffman

Administration

Jack Kauffman

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