



Friends of Lake Accotink Park Newsletter

November 2023

Mission: Protect, restore, preserve, and educate all concerning the natural, historical, and cultural resources of Lake Accotink Park



NOTES FROM THE FLAP BOARD

By Mary Keeser, FLAP President

We have had a very busy and impactful year thus far. You can keep track of all our activities, projects, and events through our social media and updated website—see the events tab. We do need your help to continue keeping our Lake Accotink park healthy, for our waterways, wildlife, land, and ecosystem. We plan, organize, provide supplies and outreach, coordinate, fund, manage, and execute, with our partners: monthly and special clean-ups, dog waste station care and refill, Margaret Kinder Education and Pollinator Garden care and educational tours, Young FLAPer program, community Lake Accotink Park day, national and watershed activities, pictures with Santa, high school events, various organizational speaking, FCPA working groups, support activities, and much more.

To all of our volunteers who give of their time, resources, and talents so that we can accomplish our missions, thank you—and thank you to our sponsors, donors, supporters, and dedicated partners who, through their combined efforts, continue to make 2023 an impactful year. Let's commit to continue to work together, ensuring we support and accomplish our mission: to protect, restore, preserve, and educate all concerning the natural, historical, and cultural resources of Lake Accotink Park. To volunteer, send your contact information to contact@flapaccotink.org.

Also critical to our overall success are our volunteer board, committee directors, and members who give selflessly of their talents, skills, and dedication to lead and work with their chosen committee—this has unquestionably enabled us to accomplish our missions. Thank you for being an active member of FLAP; please encourage your neighbors, colleagues, friends, and family to get involved as well. Together we can make a positive impact for our environment, our community, and our Lake Accotink park. See you on the trail.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Assembly of Care Packages for Deployed Service Members

WHEN: Nov. 3, 5 p.m.

WHERE: American Legion Post 176

Beaver Boogie 5K Walk Run

WHEN: Nov. 26, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

WHERE: Lake Accotink Park

Flapper, our Beaver mascot, will be at the starting line. Gift bags, Starbucks coffee

6520 Amherst Ave., Springfield, VA

Register at americasadoptasoldier.org in the Events tab.

4Q General Membership Meeting

WHEN: Nov. 16, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

WHERE: Community of Christ, 5610 Interchapel Road, Springfield VA 22151

Invited Guest Speaker: Charles Smith, project coordinator and branch chief, Public Works and Environmental Services

station, and more, *100% of proceeds go to FLAP projects and programs at Lake Accotink park.

[Register](#)

Pictures With Santa

WHEN: Dec. 9, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

WHERE: Lake Accotink Large Pavilion

Save the date! More info to come.



Caring For & Exploring the Pollinator Garden

WHEN: 2nd Sunday of every month

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

WHERE: Lake Accotink Park Margaret Kinder Pollinator Garden—Adjacent to the Marina

Our experts will guide you through the pollinators and pollinator plants, and starting and maintaining your own pollinator garden. Work alongside the experts as they care for the plants, water, and clean up. We'll provide the tools and gloves, or you can bring your own.

Sign Up



Monthly FLAP Lake Accotink Park Clean Up

WHEN: 2nd Sunday of every month

TIME: 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WHERE: Sign in at Lake Accotink Marina

Pick up debris carelessly dumped, check and refill bags in dog waste stations, trim vines, and more. We'll provide gloves, FLAP information, clean-up bags, tools, maps, and more. You will also be loaned a FLAP safety vest. Volunteer 4 times and receive your very own safety vest to personalize!

Sign Up

IMPACT

Washington Korean Women's Society

We were honored to be invited as a guest speaker and lead the group's trail walk at the Washington Korean Women's Society Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the US-ROK Alliance, held at Lake Accotink Park on April 16. FLAP president Mary Keeser discussed Lake Accotink park and the importance of our community

alliance of volunteers—who, through the giving of their time, talents, and resources, enable FLAP to complete its missions. Among the many honored guests were state senator David A. Marsden, delegate Dan Helmer, delegate Kathy Tran, and school board member Karen Keys Gammara.



Starbucks Global Month of Good 2023 Neighborhood Grants

The Starbucks Foundation has selected 1,900+ organizations across the U.S. and Canada to receive grants in its ninth round of Neighborhood Grants (over 19,000 were submitted). These grants were nominated and inspired by Starbucks partners who highlighted causes they are passionate about and organizations making an impact in their communities. We are thrilled to announce Friends of Lake Accotink Park was selected and received a grant.

Franconia Moose Lodge Donation

On Aug. 11, FLAP's president and treasurer presented a certificate of appreciation to Larry Gibeault, administrator of the Franconia Moose Lodge, for their generous financial donation to FLAP.



Earth Day (FCPA and Annandale High School)

We try and embrace every opportunity to discuss and display our many educational and environmentally impactful projects and activities at Lake Accotink Park (our mission). We, our legions of volunteers, manned our information tables at several 2023 Earth Day events in April. Thank you to all who stopped by and who have since participated in our volunteer activities.



Left: Lisa Kurtz, director of the Margaret Kinder Educational Pollinator Garden and Young FLAPer mentor, discusses our volunteer opportunities at Annandale high school.



Right: Jim Hickey, FLAP secretary, and Topper Shutt, WUSA-TV chief meteorologist, took center stage with Flapper at FCPA Earth Day.

Community Day at Lake Accotink Park

Thank you to our planning committee, FLAP board, FLAP committees, and community volunteers: Isabella and Dave for manning the concession stand; Margaret and Lisa for running the Pollinator Garden; Shep for manning our FLAP Information Station; Jim, Nicole, and Abe (and his family) for making things happen; Lake Accotink park manager Dan Grulke and his amazing staff. Super big thank you to our sponsors: Tony and his amazing team at Starbucks and Abe and JD from 7-Eleven. Only through your generosity were we able to make this year's Lake Accotink Park Community Day a huge success! Hope to see everyone back next year.

Bottom middle: Jim Hickey presenting a FLAP Certificate of Appreciation to 7-Eleven franchise owner (sponsor) JD.

Bottom right: Jim Hickey presenting a FLAP Certificate of Appreciation to Starbucks store owner/operator (amazing supporter) Tony.





Our Lake Accotink park history expert, Mary Lipsey, provided several history lectures, accompanied by walking tours (supported by volunteers) at the Community Day and the National Trails Day celebrations.



Lake Accotink Park Walk in History booklet now available—scan the QR Code.

Volunteer Spotlight: Abe Aldus

As a 100% volunteer organization, we are depending upon our community to apply their many talents and skills in order for us to accomplish our



missions and goals. We are pleased to announce the FLAP board unanimously selected and approved Abe Aldus to assist our FLAP treasurer (bookkeeping and reporting). Abe and his family have been long time volunteers at our monthly clean-ups. When Abe approached us and asked us how he could help, we embraced his generosity. Abe is currently serving in the military and has lived at Fort Belvoir with his wife, Gabi, and three children since 2020. He has been on active duty since 2013. “As our kids have gotten a little older, we have wanted to get out and do some volunteering. FLAP was a perfect match as we love the outdoors and parks. I will be in the area until early 2024, but I look forward to helping out in any way possible while I am here.”

PARK UPDATES

Lake Accotink Park Master Plan

The plan is on hold pending completion of the dredging study.
Questions? Contact Adam Wynn, project manager, at adam.wynn@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Visit fairfaxcounty.gov for updates and information on the Lake Accotink Park Master Plan.

Lake Accotink Park Staffing

We are currently looking to fill Manager on Duty positions and will be looking to fill marina and camp staff positions beginning in late March or early April. Apply at the Lake Accotink park visitor center or email park manager Dan Grulke at dan.grulke@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Lake Accotink Dredging Project Update

Send all questions to project manager Charles Smith at charles.smith@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Visit fairfaxcounty.gov for updates and information.

Save the Date: Community Appreciation Day

Lake Accotink park was officially dedicated August 25, 1962.

WHAT: Lake Accotink Park Community Appreciation Day
WHEN: Saturday, Aug. 24, 2024
TIME: 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

All activities are free.



Update: Lake Accotink Dam Stream Crossing Is Complete

By Dan Grulke, Manager of Lake Accotink Park

The project is complete! Thank you to Fairfax County Park Authority project manager Heather Lynch, who, through her leadership and finetuned program management skills, was able to accelerate the opening. This project consisted of the creation of approximately 300 linear feet of asphalt trail improvements and 325 linear feet on an elevated concrete pedestrian crossing over the dam outfall in Lake Accotink park. Total project costs, inclusive of design, permitting, testing, utilities, construction, and administration, were just over \$3

million.



Lake Accotink Park Gets New Playground

The 30-year-old playground was removed due to safety concerns. Fairfax County and FCPA staff, along with the Lake Accotink park manager, approved new structures totaling \$300,000 (see picture on right). More info can be found at fairfaxcounty.gov.



The playground is now open — a Grand Re-Opening Ribbon Cutting took place on November 2 to celebrate the completion.



FLAP Dog Waste Station Program

By Martin Shepherd (Shep), Deputy Director, Dog Waste Station Committee

It's the Law: Pet owners who violate Fairfax County's pooper scooper law may incur a fine of up to \$250. However, Friends of Lake Accotink Park has made it easy to avoid that penalty!

The Solution: FLAP maintains 11 dog waste stations (DWS) along the Lake Accotink loop trail. Each bag dispenser is near a park information kiosk and a co-located trash can for collection. FLAP purchased and dispensed over 140,000 dog waste bags in the past year. If you are wondering, one dog produces about .75 pounds of waste daily, which adds up to 105,000 pounds of harmful dog waste removed from our park. Based on Fairfax County Animal Control data, over 14,000 dogs live in neighborhoods surrounding Lake Accotink park. Scooping the poop improves the quality of Lake Accotink and downstream waterways, including the Occoquan Reservoir and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

Our DWS Program Promotes Best Practices: A higher level of compliance, contained waste, happier dog owners, happier non-dog owners, health and environmental reasons, and economics.

Through its sponsorship of the DWS program, FLAP helps Fairfax County Park

Authority by reducing environmental pollution and improving all users' overall enjoyment of Lake Accotink park.



Margaret Kinder Educational Pollinator Garden

By Lisa Kurtz, Director, Margaret Kinder Pollinator Garden Committee

It's a beautiful time to be in the garden — temperate weather to till the soil. During our May pollinator session at Lake Accotink, visitors learned about our native plants and how they could create a native sanctuary in their own yard. Volunteers pulled many encroaching weeds and other plants that took advantage of the gentle growing days. Especially prevalent were mugwort (*Artemisia* genus), tree saplings, and a variety of vines. Mugwort can be either native or non-native, as different species are found throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. It is traditionally used in cooking and medicine, but is also very aggressive in its growing habit and can take over a bed. Some saplings were removed, as they would compete for nutrients and create too much shade for our sun-loving plants. The vines included poison ivy (native, but aggressive) and oriental bittersweet (very invasive). Culling these plants will ensure a better environment for the chosen native plants that support a variety of local pollinators.

Native plants help sustain the pollinator insects, birds, and other wildlife. They also require less pesticide use, watering, and weeding—so less work and expense for you! If you're looking for some native plants for your own garden, use the Margaret Kinder Pollinator Garden as a starting point. Our garden will show what each plant looks like when mature.

If you want to support monarch butterflies, plant an area of milkweed (*Asclepias*). These are the sole host and food plants for Monarch caterpillars. An estimated 80% of their population has declined over the last few decades due to

milkweed habitat loss. Goldfinches love seeds from plants like asters and sunflowers. Oak trees are the caterpillar host for hundreds of butterfly and moth species, making it a keystone tree. To learn more about great native options for this area, you can visit nwf.org, which provides information based on your zip code and the research of Dr. Douglas Tallamy. He is the author of an excellent book on why we should all plant some natives, called “Nature’s Best Hope.” A video on the book’s principles, featuring Dr. Tallamy, can be found [here](#).



Educational Pollinator Garden Tutorial

Margaret Kinder Educational Pollinator Garden at Lake Accotink Park brochure is now available—scan the QR code.



Earth Day: It's Elementary

By Dave Gibson, FLAP Acting Treasurer and Board Member at Large

The weather was ideal for the Earth Day celebration April 29th sponsored by the PTAs of Kings Glen and Kings Park elementary schools. Kings Glen hosted the event. FLAP joined several other eco-conscious exhibitors, including

Sierra Club, Hidden Oaks Nature Center, US Fish and Wildlife, NOAA, and Fairfax Master Gardeners, as learning stops for youngsters to get passport stamps and to gain exposure to “green” organizations. FLAP president Mary Keeser kicked off the activities by leading a nature hike/cleanup around the school grounds. FLAP board members Jim Hickey (right in above picture) and Dave Gibson (center), along with Isabella Napoli (left), staffed the table and fielded questions from visitors of all ages. Parents visiting our table showed interest in our gardening and cleanup second-Sunday efforts, taking flyers and snapping photos of event QR codes. Some were surprised to know that dog-waste stations around the lake are a FLAP volunteer program funded by contributions to FLAP. Trucks with food and flavored shaved-ice treats made Earth Day tasty, while FLAP offered free bottled water to all and a water bowl for the several dogs in attendance. Our thanks to Christine Franklin of KP/KG PTA for inviting and facilitating FLAP’s participation.

Volunteer Spotlight: Nicole Wargel

We would also like to highlight one of our outstanding volunteers Nicole Wargel. Nicole started volunteering with us (clean-ups) shortly after completing her undergraduate degree from James Madison University while she was working full time as a teacher and volunteering to assist those in need. She noticed we could use help with our communications and outreach committee and stepped right in as the director of communications, leading her team to where we are today (she is still on the job). In 2021, Nicole received the coveted Elly Doyle Park Service Award. It is no surprise to us: Nicole recently graduated first in her class at Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, with her JD and passed the the DC Bar. Congratulations Nicole—you are a true role model for us all; thanks for your continued support.



YOUNG FLAPpers

Welcome New Young Flappers



We welcome Isabella Napoli (above left) and Medina Fayzieva (above right) as director and deputy of Young FLAPpers. Isabella, the Young Flappers director, has served as a volunteer for many of our monthly trash clean-ups and other activities. She got started as president of her high school's environmental club and is hoping to grow the Young Flappers even more by working with Medina to continue outreach activities through FCPS high school environmental programs and creating a bond of environmentalism that will grow in its contributions to our community.

Young Flappers say goodbye to director Yasmine Marrero as we welcome our new

Young Flapper director Isabella Napoli. Yasmine was intricate in creating the Young Flappers committee and expanded its reach through schools and organizations around the area. Yasmine has committed much to FLAP and she has received much in return, such as leadership, public speaking skills, and organizational abilities. Her participation in FLAP has given her many opportunities to explore and expand her interests in environmentalism. Yasmine will be taking all that she has brought to FLAP and all that she has learned from FLAP to Dartmouth college where we know she will create as big of, if not a bigger, impact on her community. “I’ve greatly enjoyed working with FLAP these past four years and creating close relationships with fellow volunteers. I love giving back to my environment and community, and love feeling accomplished and motivated after every volunteering initiative. It’s truly been an honor to represent FLAP and grow closer to its community, volunteers, and leaders—I’ll certainly miss it,” she said. Yasmine, we wish you the best in your adulthood and look forward to seeing all you are capable of achieving.

The Quarterly Trash-Off: A High School Showdown!

This Earth Day, four high school groups competed in the Friends of Lake Accotink Park’s quarterly Trash-Off: A High School Showdown! Edison, Lewis, Marshall, and West Springfield HS all fought to collect the most trash in two hours, but there could only be one winner... congrats to Lewis HS, who won the competition and received a first-place pizza party prize!



Young FLAPers held another FCPS High School Trash-Off challenge at Lake Accotink Park on October 29th. All local high schools were invited by our Young Flapper director Isabella Napoli; those who accepted the challenge arrived ready to win. Annandale High School sought out and retrieved the most trash (helping Lake Accotink, Lake Accotink Park, Chesapeake Watershed and its wildlife). Congratulations to Annadale High School and their trash hunter team who will be receiving a catered pizza party at their school. To all FCPS high schools—stay tuned for the next HS Trash Challenge.



LAKE ACCOTINK WILDLIFE CORNER

Don't Feed the Animals: Wildlife Feeding Facts



*By Katherine Edwards, Wildlife Management Specialist,
FCPD Animal Services Division*

Many people enjoy feeding wildlife because it allows them to have close encounters with animals; others believe it is contributing to the overall health and survival of the animal. It may seem harmless to offer a few snacks here and there, but providing food to wild animals can have unintended consequences for both humans and wildlife. Animals of primary concern include raccoon, fox, deer, black bear, coyote, and waterfowl.

Human and Animal Safety

Feeding of wildlife can threaten both human and animal safety. As wild animals are fed they tend to lose their natural fear of humans. This can create potentially dangerous situations when wild animals begin to associate people with food. There have been instances in county parks where animals, such as foxes, have approached people in picnic areas or along trails because they were accustomed to being fed. Feeding wildlife can also lead to aggression and competition among other wild animals, leading to fighting and injury, when populations become concentrated and animals are in closer contact than would naturally occur.

Diseases

Feeding wildlife increases the chance for rapid spread of disease by concentrating animals in higher numbers over a short period of time—more than they would normally experience under natural conditions. Healthy animals may become infected by direct contact with other animals or by eating contaminated feed, ingesting contaminated feces, or nearby vegetation. Any diseases, infections, or parasites can be spread more readily under these conditions (e.g., rabies, distemper, parvovirus, mange, viral enteritis aka “duck plague,” avian cholera, aspergillosis, chronic wasting disease, roundworm). Some of these diseases that affect wildlife also have human health implications.

Nutrition

Wild animals require a balanced diet for proper growth and development just like people do. Typically, many of the food items that people present to wildlife (such as

bread, corn, popcorn, pastries) equate to junk food that do not provide proper nutrients. Artificial feeding can lead to malnutrition and serious health problems for wildlife. For example, waterfowl who are fed artificial foods, like bread, and suffer from poor nutrition can develop a permanent deformity called Angel Wing, which renders them unable to fly. Feeding may also impact the ability of young animals to develop necessary foraging skills to survive once they are taught to depend on human-provided food.

Environmental Impacts

Crowding of animals at feeding sites may also damage the local habitat including accumulations of droppings or trampled vegetation. It is for these reasons that state and local authorities have implemented restrictions on feeding wildlife.

Park Rules—Feeding of Wildlife Prohibited

Fairfax County Park Authority regulations prohibit the feeding of any wild animal within a park unless the feeding is expressly authorized by the Park Authority by either a posted sign or in writing.

State Regulations—Administered by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

It is against the law to feed deer from September 1st through the last Sunday in April in Fairfax County. It is also illegal to feed bears—whether intentionally or inadvertently—in Virginia year-round. Additionally, it is unlawful to place, distribute, or allow the placement of food, minerals, carrion, trash, or similar substances when it attracts any species of wildlife in such numbers or circumstances to cause property damage, endanger any person or wildlife, or create a public health concern.

What we do in the parks impacts our wildlife community. Even though it may seem like a minor thing to offer a few crumbs of your cookie or piece of your peanut butter sandwich, it is shaping the behavior of the wild animals we love to see, and not in a good way. Unfortunately, when wildlife problems occur, it is usually the animal that suffers and pays the price—even when it is a human-created issue. For these reasons, please do not feed wildlife within county parks, clean up around picnic areas, and make sure to dispose of any trash in proper receptacles or remove it when you leave the park. Help us to keep our parks safe and our wildlife healthy and wild!



Critter of the Quarter: Bats

By Jim Hickey, FLAP Secretary

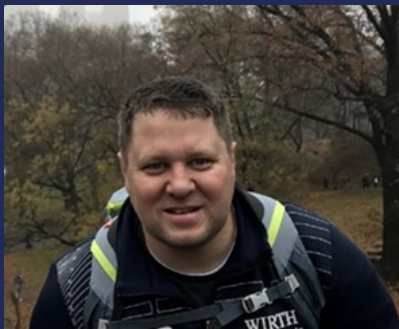
As a boy my favorite superhero was Batman, because he had no super powers—except maybe money. But real bats? All I knew was that they carried disease, attacked people, were dirty, and turned into vampires.

Over time I learned the truth about bats and now think they are real superheros. Bats eat 50-100% of their body weight in insects every night. And mosquitos are their favorite meal! Any creature that helps keep me from being bitten by skeeters should be in the Animal Hall of Fame.

Here in Fairfax County there are eight species of bats, with the Big Brown Bat and Eastern Red Bat (pictured above) being the most common. All the local bats are nocturnal, meaning they only come out at night. Like bears, they hibernate during winter, as their food supply would be very small. They usually live in large colonies and nest in small caves, rock crevices, tree hollows, and even under loose tree bark.

Bats are not blind, but their vision is not particularly good. They navigate by echolocation, emitting high frequency sound pulses (too high for humans to hear). Bats listen to the echo of these sounds to determine the size, shape, and texture of what is near them. It's like radar on steroids. They process the information incredibly fast.

Their maneuvers in flight are remarkable. So when you look up and see a creature performing aerial acrobatics worthy of Top Gun, you'll know a superhero is on the hunt.



Welcome to Our New Webmaster

Join us in welcoming our new webmaster, Chris Olsen. Chris is no stranger to Lake Accotink park, as he has enjoyed the park with his family for many years.

He has been hard at work updating our website: flapaccotink.org. More updates are on the way—check it out!

Submit your articles with photos for consideration in our next FLAP quarterly newsletter to publisher@flapaccotink.org. Please send by the end of November.

Friends of Lake Accotink Park Board

Position	Name	Email
President	Mary Keeser	president@flapaccotink.org
Vice President	OPEN	vice.president@flapaccotink.org
Secretary	Jim Hickey	secretary@flapaccotink.org
Treasurer	Dave Gibson (Acting)	treasurer@flapaccotink.org
Member at Large	Dave Gibson	memberAL@flapaccotink.org

Visit flapaccotink.org to see a full list of committee members and see other positions that are open. We're accepting candidates for board positions, as well as various other committees and special projects. It is your Lake Accotink Park—help make a difference for about an hour a month! Send an email to contact@flapaccotink.org.



Donate to FLAP

Text FLAP to 22828 to receive monthly updates.

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