



# Friends of Lake Accotink Park Newsletter

May 2024

*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*

This year marks our most active and successful year to date; we have accomplished this through our partnership with FCPA, Lake Accotink Park, and our community of dedicated volunteers, partners, and donors. All of the hard work is done by our volunteer board, committee directors, deputy directors, and members, who have all given selflessly of their talents, skills, and dedication to lead and work with their chosen committees. They plan, organize, supply, conduct outreach, coordinate, fund, manage, and execute, with our partners: monthly and special clean ups, dog waste stations, Margaret Kinder Educational Pollinator Garden, Young FLAPer program, various organizational speaking opportunities, FCPA working groups, support activities, and much more.

Thank you for being an active member of FLAP. We do need your help to continue keeping our Lake Accotink Park healthy for our waterways, wildlife, land, and ecosystem. We are privileged to meet and work with our community volunteer members, who selflessly give of their time and talents to improve the park and the overall quality of life for neighboring residents. Many of our volunteers have found themselves recruiting classmates, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and even strangers to help out. Together we can continue to make a positive impact for our environment, our community, and our Lake Accotink Park. See you on the trail.

You can volunteer and track all of our activities, projects, and events through our website ([flapaccotink.org](http://flapaccotink.org)—see the events tab)—also see our upcoming events below.

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## 2024 MEETINGS & EVENTS

### National Gardening Day

**WHEN:** June 1, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lake Accotink Park

Relax and enjoy a day of gardening: Work alongside our experts as they care for the pollinator plants, water, and clean up. We provide tools and gloves or you can bring your own. Our experts will guide you through the pollinators, pollinator plants, and how to start and maintain your own (any size) pollinator garden. Seeds, plants, and other items provided.

### National Night Out

**WHEN:** Aug. 6, 6–8 p.m.

**WHERE:** North Springfield Swim Club:  
5604 Earlehurst St. Springfield, VA 22151

Enjoy an evening for the entire family, with educational tables, police cars, motorcycles, fire trucks, ambulances, a DJ, crafts for the kids, swimming, horseshoe pit, sand volleyball court, tennis and basketball courts, and ping pong for entertainment; fully stocked Snack Shack selling tacos, hot dogs, burgers, and drinks from 5–7:30 p.m.

### Lake Accotink Park Community Appreciation Day

Lake Accotink Park was officially dedicated Aug. 25, 1962.

**WHEN:** Aug. 24, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lake Accotink Park

The festival will include key speakers, vendors, project updates, interactive

### General Membership Meeting

**WHEN:** Aug. 28, 6:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lake Accotink Park, in the large pavilion

### Young FLAPer Fairfax County- Wide High School Trash Challenge

**WHEN:** Sept. 29 12–2 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lake Accotink Park

Clean-up competition for FCPS high school teams—winning team gets a pizza party.

### General Membership Meeting

**WHEN:** Nov. 20, 6:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Community of Christ: 5610 Inverchapel Rd. Springfield, VA 22151

### 2nd Annual Beaver Boogie Run/Walk

**WHEN:** Nov. 30

- 9 a.m. Packet pick up
- 10 a.m. Race start
- 12 pm. Awards and free raffle

**WHERE:** Lake Accotink Park

### Pictures With Santa

**WHEN:** Dec. 14, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

- 10 a.m.–12 p.m. Volunteers needed to decorate
- 12 p.m. Santa arrives

**WHERE:** Large Pavilion adjacent to Lake Accotink Park Marina

For more information about all events and to register, visit the "Events" tab at [flapaccotink.org](http://flapaccotink.org).

nature activities, fishing, putt-putt golf, carousel rides, clinics, and much more.



### Caring For & Exploring the Pollinator Garden

**WHEN:** 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](#)

If you have questions,  
email [contact@flapaccotink.org](mailto:contact@flapaccotink.org)



### Monthly FLAP Lake Accotink Park Clean Up

**WHEN:** 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

*By Mary Keeser, FLAP President*

**Annandale High School 18th Annual World Fest**

FLAP supported the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Annandale high school World Fest, March 8 at Annandale high school. This year's theme was "Solidarity in Community." Co-create a more sustainable and just world by bringing forth critical issues in the world today and providing opportunities for people to take action and be more active in their local and global communities. The activities included educational tables, food, cultural items, guest speakers, and more.

### **1st Annual FLAP Beaver 1040 5K Walk/Run**

We want to thank all those who signed up, donated, and braved the hard winds, clouds, and cold weather to support and participate in our first annual Beaver 1040 5k Walk/Run, held on April 13 at Lake Accotink Park. The varied terrain course was a challenge for some but a welcome and exciting change of pace for all runners and walkers. Don't forget to sign up for our second-annual Beaver Boogie 5k Walk/Run on Nov. 30 at Lake Accotink Park—there will be many award categories, a free raffle, and more. A spaghetti dinner and packet pick up is available on Nov. 29—details to be posted in the Events section of [flapaccotink.org](http://flapaccotink.org).

Congratulations to our first annual 1040 5k Walk/Run winners (awards were presented by FLAP board members Jim Hickey and Dave Gibson):

#### Run

1st (23.05) Ted P. /2nd (23.32) Brian D. /3rd (27.31) Joy C. /4th (28.28) Susy A.



#### Walk

1st (45.07) Michael H./2nd (1:03.36) Gretchen T./3rd (1:04.15) Mike T.



**Celebrating Earth Day 2024**



FLAP supported several Earth Day events this year, by providing volunteer support, leading clean-up activities, and staffing our FLAP information tent at the Fairfax County Earth Day Celebration—held on Saturday, April 20, at Sully Historic Site in Chantilly—and at the Kings Glen and Kings Park elementary schools' PTA-sponsored Earth Day celebration on April 27. Thank you to the thousands of people we met and to those who donated and pledged to volunteer.



*FLAP board members Dave Gibson and Jim Hickey greet visitors and provide information and the coveted Young FLAPer (removable) stamp at the FLAP information table at the Kings Glen and Kings Park elementary schools' Earth Day. Volunteers also participated in a FLAP-led clean up—they traveled to Lake Accotink Park and collected more than six bags of trash.*



*FLAP board member Jim Hickey greets visitors and provides information at the Fairfax County Earth Day Celebration.*



## **Volunteer Spotlight: Dave Gibson**

*By Mary Keeser, FLAP President*

We are honored to spotlight Dave Gibson, an all-around dedicated FLAP volunteer. He is a native Idahoan whose love of nature grew out of day trips to Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, where big lakes, trout, and mountains are interlaced with beautiful trails. He is a Virginia Master Naturalist and has worked with local Girl Scouts on outdoor skills. His connection with Lake Accotink Park dates back to 1980 when he discovered the trail was wonderful for jogging and lead to a beautiful lake. A few short days later, Dave and his two-year-old daughter Diana made their way to Lake Accotink Park, where Diana discovered a turtle with a fishhook lodged in its body. She knew the turtle needed help; Dave did just that and has never looked back. Diana continues to enjoy the park by volunteering and exploring with her daughter Stacy, now 11-years-old.

Dave currently serves as the Friends of Lake Accotink Park member at large; acting treasurer; and all-around activity, event, project, and programs supporter. He had served as a volunteer trail monitor for several years before joining the FLAP board, where he continues to give selflessly of his time, skills, patience, and many talents. On behalf of Friends of Lake Accotink Park, our members, and all those who enjoy Lake Accotink Park, thank you, Dave, for your unwavering, dedicated service to our community.

*Above, Dave and his daughter Diana take a break at a recent FLAP volunteer event.*

## **Birds of Lake Accotink**

*Photos by Mike M.*

FLAP would like to thank Mike M. for capturing and providing these magnificent photographs, while discovering Lake Accotink Park. We are working with our web developer to expand our current photo gallery at [flapaccotink.org](http://flapaccotink.org) to include these photos and more.





## PARK UPDATES



### Lake Accotink Park News and Updates

*By Dan Grulke, Manager of Lake Accotink Park*

It is time to sign up for summer camp programs located at Lake Accotink Park and Crestwood Elementary School (supervised by Lake Accotink Park staff). A full listing of summer camps is available on the [FCPA website](#).

Camps at Lake Accotink Park include Lakeside Nature Explorer Camp, for kids 6-10 years old, and Accotink Adventure Camp, for those aged 9-13. Both camps are based outside, and each provides age-appropriate outdoor and nature-themed activities every day. Camps start on June 16 and the last day is August 16.

For hours of operation please visit our website: [fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-accotink](http://fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-accotink).

Please join us in welcoming back Erin Gray as the new operations manager of Lake Accotink Park: [Erin.Gray@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Erin.Gray@fairfaxcounty.gov) or [vray@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:vray@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Help us out—staff cannot always be everywhere all the time. If you notice safety issues during park hours, call us first. If you cannot reach us, call the non-emergency police. If you notice suspicious behavior either before or after official park hours, call non-emergency police. Need to report damage or maintenance concerns? Call the visitor center: 703-569-3464.

**The Lake Accotink Park Anniversary Celebration is on August 24, so save the date!**



## Lake Accotink Dredging Project Update

**Questions?** Contact Aaron George, the project coordinator and branch chief, Watershed Projects Implementation Central Branch, and Lake Accotink project manager, at [aaron.george2@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:aaron.george2@fairfaxcounty.gov).

[Get more updates and info.](#)

## Lake Accotink Park Staffing

We are in need of summer camp staff—must be 18 years or older. Apply at the Lake Accotink visitor center or email Lake Accotink park manager Dan Grulke at [Dan.Grulke@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Dan.Grulke@fairfaxcounty.gov) or Erin Gray, operations manager, at [Erin.Gray@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Erin.Gray@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## DPWES Update on Lake Accotink

*By Aaron George, Branch Chief, Watershed Projects Implementation Branch, Fairfax County DPWES*

As requested in the Preservation of Lake Accotink Joint Board Matter (Board Matter), presented and approved by the Board on January 23, 2024, the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) Lake Accotink project team is moving forward with three concurrent efforts to support the Lake Accotink project. These include a sedimentation study, dam assessment (supported by DPWES), and feasibility study for a smaller lake option as identified in the taskforce's findings. Since the dam is owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), the assessment of the dam is being led by FCPA with support from DPWES. All efforts will be supported by a robust and inclusive outreach and engagement plan.

DPWES has leveraged an interdisciplinary team of county staff to initiate activities. To ensure these efforts are prioritized and move forward in a timely manner, DPWES has successfully repurposed and recruited a staff position that is dedicated to the daily coordination and management of these efforts. This work requires engineers, scientists, and other professionals with expertise in a variety of technical fields. The Accotink team has been meeting with several consultants, as well as support agencies like United States Geological Survey (USGS), to ensure that the appropriate professionals will be involved in implementing and supporting this significant work. Collaboration and discussions continue with the consultants

so that both parties have a comprehensive understanding of the project requirements in order to develop a detailed scope and timeline for each effort.

The Accotink project team has been working diligently to define the work and outline an appropriate approach for this important next phase. Status of the concurrent efforts are summarized below:

### **Sedimentation Study**

#### Status Update

The Accotink team is actively working on a suitable scope of work to refine our understanding of the material moving through and/or being captured by Lake Accotink. USGS and consultant support are being leveraged to establish an additional gage location(s), perform expanded physical survey, and complete additional analysis to refine our understanding of both the existing system and the proposed alternative lake configurations. The timeline will be developed/refined by USGS and consultants concurrently with the scope of work.

#### Next Steps

The Accotink team will bring the USGS and consultant teams together to perform final refinements of the scope and complete cost negotiations and contracting.

### **Lake Accotink Dam Assessment**

#### Status Update

The Accotink team is actively working to develop a suitable scope of work to assess the condition and longevity of the Lake Accotink Dam. FCPA is working to identify adequate funding sources to support the effort. Additionally, through collaboration with DPWES, FCPA has identified and begun scope development with a dam safety consultant.

#### Next Steps

The Accotink team will continue additional scope and timeline development, which will be informed by the other Accotink project efforts led by DPWES, as well as continued studies being performed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

### **Feasibility Study**

#### Status Update

The Accotink team is retaining previous consultant support for the feasibility study and contract updates are in process with the consultant.

Sedimentation study and dam assessment scope and timeline will be incorporated into the feasibility study so that analysis and results are appropriately informed by the other efforts. The consultant is currently working on an outline scope and estimated timeline.

#### Next Steps

The Accotink team will refine the scope of work and timeline with the consultant and share for public input before finalizing contracting.

#### **Outreach/Engagement**

The Accotink team is committed to having a robust and inclusive outreach and engagement plan for the project, to include increased transparency during this project phase. The team is actively working to identify contracted support from a consultant who specializes in community engagement to serve as a neutral facilitator that informs methods, techniques, and strategies, while bolstering outreach and engagement for the concurrent efforts.

The Accotink project team appreciates the patience and understanding as we work through the necessary scope development and contracting efforts. Because of the interrelationships between these efforts and the complexity of both the technical and permitting analyses, the detailed timeline requested by the Board cannot be provided until the procurement for all consulting resources has been completed.



## **Pollinator Garden Update**

*By Lisa Kurtz, Pollinator Garden Volunteer*

In April, the volunteers did a major cleanup of the Pollinator Garden—clearing out old canes and foliage, tidying up around the edges, and taking out weeds that were also appreciating the rain and sun. I'd like to thank our constant stream of volunteers, who help keep this garden beautiful for your enjoyment, the health of our pollinators, and reintroduction of native plants.

In your garden, the conditions are probably the same. With spring comes a bounty of new growth that needs some nutrition to achieve full potential, as well as weeds and insects. Plants generally need nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K)—also known as NPK. Nitrogen supports overall growth; phosphorus helps with good root development, flower production, and fruit growth; and potassium helps with overall health and disease resistance. There are plenty of products on the market, and you can ask at a nursery for suggestions. To maintain a more organic

garden, compost is a great addition to your soil. It provides some of the nutrients your plants need to get a head start on the growing season. You might also use some fish emulsion, easily found in most garden stores or online.

For the not-so-desirable elements, it's tempting to control them with chemicals. But Master Gardeners would recommend a more measured approach. Even "selective" insecticides can unintentionally harm our necessary pollinators. Herbicides can harm other plants and animals than the ones intended, plus the excess ends up in our watershed and soil, which is harmful to plants, animals, and our families. Nature created an ecosystem to help curtail the insects that predate our plants—for example, ladybugs eat aphids so they're a natural control. You can also try companion planting to ward off some insects and disease. Garlic and other alliums help repel a host of things, like fungus and predators.

To help you get started or continue your maintenance routine, some Virginia Cooperative Extension articles are excellent guides. Links for vegetable crop planting and harvest suggestions, spring lawn feeding and care, and gardening in containers for those without much space should help you get started. Happy growing!

## Seniors Corner

*Meet the senior dogs that frequent Lake Accotink Park*

*By Lisa Kurtz, Pollinator Garden Volunteer*



**4 months old 17 years old**

## Chloe

Chloe is a senior mixed breed with wavy black fur and a charming grey muzzle. I found her when she was a young puppy, begging at a café in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Seventeen (yes, 17!) years and several countries later, she's still doing well, considering her age. Her walks are shorter and slower, but she enjoys sniffing out new smells and getting her photo with the FLAP Santa every year. Her favorite treats are chicken and salmon, and she loves meeting new friends and old. Maybe we'll get the chance to say hello sometime. Enjoy your walks in Lake Accotink Park!

Submit your senior puppy story, along with a photo, to [publisher@flapaccotink.org](mailto:publisher@flapaccotink.org).

## YOUNG FLAPpers

### Quarterly Trash-Off: A High School Showdown

*By Madina Fayzieva, Director of the Young FLAPpers*

The Young FLAPpers held another FCPS High School Trash-Off Challenge on April 28. All local schools were invited, but those who attended included Langley, Lewis, West Springfield, and Edison high schools. After two hours of hard work—especially in the pre-summer heat—Edison High School came out to be the champions and will receive a pizza party for their 20+ participants.

Despite the event occurring just an hour after the monthly Sunday cleanup, the teams still found an abundance of trash (to the benefit of Lake Accotink). The Edison students even found a bike abandoned in the woods. The day also called for lots of sunshine and heat, as the teams were surrounded by community members having picnics, playing mini-golf, and standing in long lines for the local ice-cream truck.

**The next Trash-Off clean-up event will happen Sept. 29, 12–2 p.m.,** which will surely have cooler temperatures and more students who are eager to participate.



The Young FLAPpers also say goodbye to former director Isabella Napoli, who served as an ambitious figure in previous FLAP events and whose outreach inspired many students to get involved in the program. Her contributions to the community will be continued by Madina, who previously served as the Young FLAPpers deputy director alongside Isabella.

To expand the nonprofit's influence and dedication to Lake Accotink, the Young FLAPpers will be recruiting team leads from local FCPS high schools to spark interest and spread the word. FLAP's initiative has a strong following, as many students aspire to honor one of their community's most valued recreational areas.

*Below:*

**1st picture:** Edison, West Springfield, and Lewis high schools post clean-up. Not pictured: Langley high school (they were still cleaning during this time!)

**2nd picture:** West Springfield students and team lead Julissa (right).





## LAKE ACCOTINK WILDLIFE CORNER

### **Spring Baby Boom: Keep Young Wildlife Healthy and Wild**





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

Springtime is here, and with the warming temperatures we see a boom in baby wildlife. Our Animal Protection Police Officers and Wildlife Management office receive many calls this time of year from residents who are seeking help for young wildlife that appear to be orphaned or abandoned.

While these actions are well-intended, it is important to realize intervention may be unnecessary and can be detrimental to wildlife. Many baby animals that are brought to wildlife professionals are in no need of help from humans. Baby animals left alone are not necessarily orphaned or abandoned; many species of wildlife will hide their young for safety, leaving them alone for extended periods of time.

Common wildlife frequently found and “rescued” in Fairfax County include squirrels, red foxes, raccoons, rabbits, skunks, opossums, and songbirds. If you come across a baby animal and are wondering whether to intervene, we offer guidelines below to determine if the animal needs help. If an animal is displaying these signs, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, veterinarian, or our Animal Protection Police for further assistance and instruction.

Signs that an animal needs help include:

- The animal shows signs of injury such as bleeding, swelling, or a broken limb.
- The animal is very cold, shivering, thin, or weak.
- The animal is on the ground unable to move or is nonresponsive.
- The animal is featherless or not fully furred.
- The animal shows signs of flies, worms, or maggots.
- The animal was picked up by a cat or dog, even if no injuries are visible.
- There is a dead parent nearby or parents are separated and cannot be reunited.

Do not attempt to treat or raise wildlife yourself. Please do not handle any baby wild animal and do not attempt to offer food or water unless instructed to do so by a professional. Many young animals require special diets and inappropriate food or feeding technique can lead to sickness or death. Wild animals can also cause injury or carry parasites and disease, even at a young age. Human handling may cause unnecessary stress or result in trauma to the animal and could increase the risk of disease exposure to humans. Please never touch a wild mammal

barehanded; picking up a young animal without gloves increases the risk for possible rabies exposure. As a safety measure and for the welfare of the animal, contact a professional before intervening. This could make a difference in the animal's life!

A young animal's best chance for survival is to receive natural care from its parents and remain wild. Before intervening, please learn more about which wildlife species and situations you are most likely to encounter and ways to determine whether an animal needs help at:

- [wildlifecenter.org/healthy-young-wildlife](http://wildlifecenter.org/healthy-young-wildlife)
- [blueridgewildlifectr.org/announcement-bar](http://blueridgewildlifectr.org/announcement-bar)
- [wildliferescueleague.org/animals/does-this-animal-need-help](http://wildliferescueleague.org/animals/does-this-animal-need-help)
- [aeroanimalrescue.org/found](http://aeroanimalrescue.org/found)
- [rewildnova.org/help](http://rewildnova.org/help)
- [humanesociety.org/resources/found-orphaned-or-injured-baby-wild-animal](http://humanesociety.org/resources/found-orphaned-or-injured-baby-wild-animal)
- [dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured](http://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured)

If you have questions about whether an animal needs help or to locate a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, you may contact the Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline toll-free at 1-855-571-9003. This helpline is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Our Animal Protection Police can be reached through the Police non-emergency number at 703-691-2131.



## Critter of the Quarter:

### Opposum

*By Jim Hickey, FLAP Secretary*

Our critter this quarter is the only marsupial in North America—the Virginia opossum. Most people drop the first drop “o,” so we will, too. Like all marsupials, the females have a pouch to carry babies in, as do their Australian relatives—the kangaroo and koala. The name possum comes from the Powhatan Tribe from the Tidewater area of Virginia.

Possums like to live in swamps, forests (especially rainforests), and shrubland. They are omnivores, dining on insects, rodents, birds and eggs, frogs, fruits, and grains. They can be helpful around gardens because they will eat insects and slugs, though they find plants tasty, too. And they love garbage—so keep a good lid on your trash cans.

Adults will reach the size of a small dog, weighing about 10 pounds and being 2-3 feet long, nose-to-tail. Sharp claws, a thumb on each foot, and a prehensile tail make them good climbers. They are good swimmers, too, despite short legs. They slow down in the winter but do not hibernate.

Usually solitary and nomadic, the possum is nocturnal. They will stay in an area as long as there is food, moving on when it becomes scarce. Possums were once hunted (including by Jimmy Carter) and eaten. They were usually served with sweet potatoes. Several hundred years ago they were raised on farms.

They really do “play possum,” too—often playing dead when needed. That is done primarily by the young. Alas, their lifespan is short: about two-and-a-half years. Predators include owls, hawks, foxes, and wolves. They do enjoy roadkill, which of course exposes the possum itself to great danger. Possums are probably seen by more people on the road than in the wild.

Along with playing possum, pop culture has a few marsupial references. Country singer George Jones was nicknamed Possum. And Pogo Possum was an iconic comic strip mid-twentieth century, featuring Pogo and many other animals. Creator Walk Kelly drew the strip with many layers of social and political satire so kids and adults could both enjoy it.

In 1971, Kelly drew an Earth Day poster with Pogo and a friend staring out over a large amount of litter. Pogo said, borrowing from Commodore Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”





## Snakes at Lake Accotink Park

*By Anthony Bulmer, Assistant Wildlife Biologist,  
Fairfax County Police Department*

Fairfax County is home to 18 different species of snakes. We have only one venomous snake and that is the eastern copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*).

Snakes play a vital role in the ecosystem that we are a part of. The main benefit humans receive from snakes is protection from rodents; rodents can cause certain illnesses in humans. In fact, rats and mice are known to spread more than 35 diseases to humans. Diseases carried by rodents can be spread to humans indirectly—through fleas, ticks, or mites that have fed on an infected rodent. Snakes play a vital role in protecting humans from these diseases because they eat rodents.

The best way to interact with snakes is to leave them alone. Most snake bites occur when people either go off trail in the park or when people pick snakes up. It is a good idea to stay on the trail; a snake may bite to protect itself if you reach for it, step on it, or try and handle it. Many snakes rely on camouflage and camouflage only works if you stay very still which makes the snakes almost invisible. Leaving the trail increases the chance you will not see the snake, and this is when bites occur.

A main reason why you should not handle snakes is because many snakes rely on “mimicry” for their own survival. If a non-venomous juvenile eastern rat snake resembles a venomous copperhead, hopefully the hawk won’t eat it. So, distinguishing a non-venomous snake versus a venomous one can be a bit tricky. Here are some of the keys: A copperhead has an elliptical pupil and all other snakes in Fairfax County do not. The pattern on a copperhead is said to resemble a saddle on a horse or a Hershey Kiss. Copperheads also have a hole between their eye and nose which is a heat seeking pit that helps the snake hunt.

Again, snakes are here to do an important job—they do not want to bite and the best way to interact with them is to leave them alone. You can always take pictures and send the photos in for identification. Happy Trails!

Copperhead being relocated by Karen Roos, Program Manager Lake Accotink Park Among her many certifications is a certified Snake handler



Submit your articles with photos for consideration in our next FLAP quarterly newsletter to [publisher@flapaccotink.org](mailto:publisher@flapaccotink.org). Please send by the end of July.

### Friends of Lake Accotink Park Board

Position	Name	Email
President	Mary Keeser	<a href="mailto:president@flapaccotink.org">president@flapaccotink.org</a>
Vice President	OPEN	<a href="mailto:vice.president@flapaccotink.org">vice.president@flapaccotink.org</a>
Secretary	Jim Hickey	<a href="mailto:secretary@flapaccotink.org">secretary@flapaccotink.org</a>
Treasurer	Dave Gibson (Acting)	<a href="mailto:treasurer@flapaccotink.org">treasurer@flapaccotink.org</a>
Member at Large	Dave Gibson	<a href="mailto:memberAL@flapaccotink.org">memberAL@flapaccotink.org</a>

Visit [flapaccotink.org](http://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](mailto:contact@flapaccotink.org).



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