

# *Riverbend Naturalist*

*Summer 2023*



*Riverbend Naturalist* is the newsletter of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at  
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## Coming Events and Issue Contents

- Exciting news — the Virginia Native American Festival returns to Riverbend Park on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup>! See the article in this issue for more information.
- This issue of the newsletter contains the following articles: John Callow's departure from Riverbend Park; the Virginia Native American Festival; the Park's summer camps program; update on FORB Board changes; and FORB's fall membership campaign.

## John Callow Starts New Position at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park

John Callow, longtime Riverbend Park staff member, including eight years as Manager of the park, has taken up a new position as Natural Resource Manager at the Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) announced recently. John actually started his career at that park in 1997, but moved to Riverbend Park in 2000. He will be sorely missed at Riverbend, where he worked for more than twenty years. John first came to the park in 2000 as the



Senior Interpreter. He has held a variety of positions at Riverbend since then, and became Manager in January 2015, having served as Assistant Manager for a number of years before that.

Several people asked to share their thoughts and reflections upon John's departure from Riverbend Park. First, let's start with John's own reflections.

**John Callow:** *For over 20 years, Riverbend Park has been home during my career. I was drawn to the park as a kid, when my grandfather would take me hiking and fishing there. In college, my summer months were spent working at Riverbend. The interaction between the river and land makes the park dynamic, and the variety of land and water habitats makes it unique. I am always fascinated to witness new wildlife interactions and discover more history of the land. The land that is now the park has been inhabited for over 12,000 years. Truly others throughout time have found the land to be special.*

*I am so grateful to all the people I have worked and interacted with over my years at the park. I had an exceptional mentor in Marty Smith, and have known some incredible colleagues over these years. My favorite and proudest experiences at the park are when people come back, people who have been in one of my camps or programs and they share with me how meaningful those moments were and where they are in life now. I admit, it also makes me feel old. At Riverbend, we have occasions where people come to our camps, then help lead summer camps, and then stay and*



*work at the park. Riverbend has a way of drawing you in and making you want to stay.*

*The park is lucky to have such a supportive group as FORB. It has always been understanding of park needs and always willing to support operations, especially when it comes to education. As the manager of Riverbend, I always knew FORB was willing to help however they could. I want to personally thank Hugh Morrow and the FORB Board for their support over my years as Park Manager. I am not saying goodbye, as Riverbend will always be home, but I am saying “see you later” as I pursue the next chapter in my career.*

**Timothy Hackman, FCPA Board, Dranesville Member:** *John Callow has been the Manager at Riverbend Park from the time Marty Smith retired at the end of 2014, and he was the Assistant Manager at Riverbend for a number of years before that.*

*John is a people-first individual, a great manager, and has been a terrific “face” of Riverbend Park to the general public. He is dedicated, engaged, selfless of his*



*time, and passionate about Riverbend and the Fairfax County Park Authority. He was a strong advocate to fill staff vacancies quickly and helped to protect staff when parks were closed due to the COVID pandemic.*

*While you may think that Riverbend was John’s sole focus, he was also responsible for overseeing the Great Falls*

*Grange Park and Scott’s Run Nature Preserve, both unstaffed areas. The latter was particularly challenging for John and his staff when parks were reopening mid-pandemic and crowds were swarming to Scott’s Run.*

*It was always great to see John engaged with visitors, summer campers, field trip students, and park volunteers. He has a wealth of knowledge about the Park, and welcomes questions and concerns from others.*

*Riverbend has always been a beautiful park that is well cared for, but John ramped that up, working to make sure trails were open and maintained; trash was picked up; water diversion logs put in place; the meadow restored; a full archaeological survey conducted, etc. During his tenure, Riverbend acquired a new Education Pavilion and a new Maintenance Facility, the latter providing space for equipment storage, as well as a workshop more spacious and less vulnerable than the cramped work area under the Visitors Center.*

*Although the Riverbend Native American Festival was discontinued during the pandemic, John fought hard to bring it back, and has been successful in doing so. This year's festival will be held in September, and we hope John will come back to enjoy the festivities.*

*As Manager of Riverbend Park, John has also been an ex officio member of Friends of Riverbend Park's (FORB's) Board of Directors. Through FORB's generous contributions to Riverbend over the years, the Park has received support for its summer programs, several cycles of new kayaks and canoes; a new patrol boat; underwriting of field trips; a high-powered telescope; and much other equipment. John and I (as a former President of FORB) greatly value the shared vision FORB and the broader community have for Riverbend.*

*I truly value John's friendship, and thank him for his dedication and service to Riverbend, and as a Board member of Friends of Riverbend Park. I join everyone in wishing him much success as the Natural Resources Manager at E.C. Lawrence Park.*

**Eleanor Anderson, FORB Board Member:** *More than anyone else I have known over the years of walking the trails of Riverbend Park and drinking in its beauty, John has conveyed an appreciation for this precious piece of our natural environment and for those who cherished it before us, in particular the Native*

*Americans who trod this ground long ago. John's easy, unassuming manner might seem to belie his deep and enduring commitment to preservation of this very special land; but to those of us who have had the privilege of working with John to promote this shared objective, we know how much Riverbend Park has benefitted from his dedication and creative leadership. I wish him all the best in his new position but I do miss seeing him as I have so often in the past, during walks with my dog Spike in the park.*

**Robert Gersony, Great Falls resident:** *John Callow was the park's liaison and manager for my son's Eagle Scout project in 2015; the project built a new trail between the park entrance and the meadow. Greg learned so much from John's patient guidance and coaching. John acted as a real mentor to my son, as he has to a generation of young Scouts and volunteers in our community.*

Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) wishes John the very best as he moves to his new challenge at E.C. Lawrence Park. Kylie Lee, Visitor Services Manager, will be Acting Manager of Riverbend Park until FCPA appoints a new Manager to replace John.



## Virginia Native American Festival Returning to Riverbend Park

It has been said that for almost 10,000 years, a traditional gathering place for the many native American tribes of northern Virginia was at the large bend in the Potomac River known today as Riverbend Park. To honor this long and rich history and culture, the park's first Virginia Native American Festival was organized in 2002 by Riverbend Park staff, with Marty Smith as Park Manager; Shirley "Little Dove" McGowan, Chief of the Upper Mattaponi tribe; and Cathy Mayes, FORB's Founder and first President. FORB provided \$23,000 in seed money to initiate the first two festivals in 2002 and 2003, but ever since then, the annual festivals have been self-sustaining and, indeed, profitable for the park.

The Virginia Native American Festival has been held every year since 2002 with the exception of the 2020-2022 Covid-19 years. The Rappahannock Dancers and Drummers have always been a feature attraction at the festival, with the arts, crafts, story-telling and other cultural items of interest of other tribes present as well. Representatives of the Chickahominy, Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes have participated in the past with booths offering Native American jewelry, pottery, leatherwork, and wooden decorative arts.



After the Covid hiatus of three years, Riverbend Park is pleased to announce that the Virginia Native American festival is returning this year, and will be held on Saturday, September 16, 2023. Don't forget to register early so you won't miss one of the highlights of the year! For further details, information and pre-registration, visit the Riverbend Park website at:

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend)

## 2023 Summer Camps at Riverbend Park

Summer camps are in full swing at Riverbend Park! More than 360 kids have registered for these nature and recreation-themed programs this summer. Camp programs started on June 12<sup>th</sup>, and will wrap up on August 18<sup>th</sup>. FORB has supported Riverbend's summer camps for more than fifteen years, and this year, provided \$12,000 to support the four summer interns who comprise half the camp staff. Kylie Lee, Riverbend's Visitor Services Manager, oversees the summer camp program, and she provided these photos of the happy campers and of the four FORB-supported interns.



The first three photos are from Fishing Adventures Camp. In the picture to the left, Jonathan Tampe, the Fishing Education Intern, is at the far left. Next to Jonathan, in the blue shirt, is David Fennel, the Fishing Instructor. Second from the right is one of the campers, and on the far right is Jacob Caricato, a camp leader who also assisted with the Fishing Adventures camp.



*The Fishing Adventurers campers make a float trip from Algonkian Park to Riverbend Park, casting along the way!*



The Fishing Adventures camp ended the week with a fishing charter on the Chesapeake Bay catching stripers, or “rockfish”, as they are called in Maryland. In the photo below, Jonathan Tampe, the Fishing Education Intern this summer, is on the left, with the proud campers showing off their catches.



A related camp to Fishing Adventures is the Anglers and Archers program. Two of the staff for this activity were Jonathan Tampe and Jacob Caricato, and are pictured in the second photo (below) on the next page. The campers for this program ranged in age from 8 to 12 years old. Riverbend Park is a prime location for fishing and boating programs.



*Anglers & Archers campers cast their lines from the shore on a beautiful summer day.*



*The campers celebrate the catch of a 10-pound catfish caught near the boat launch at the park.*

The photo below shows a scene during the Forces of Nature camp at the Riverbend Nature Center at the park. That day's theme was about how plants use water and how water evaporates. Emily McCann, Outdoor Education Intern (supported by FORB's contribution), is shown, working with the campers on water cycle coloring sheets, while other campers in the background observe their water evaporation bags taped to the window. The water cycle in nature is a vital part of its ecological balance.



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Meanwhile, the Art in Nature campers take a wagon ride to the northern end of Riverbend Park and go dip netting. In the photo below, the little girl in the middle shows the crayfish they caught. After examining it with magnifying glasses, they released it back into the river. Jimmy Dooly, next to the girl with the crayfish, is a FORB-supported Outdoor Education Intern.



In the Jr. Potomac Adventures camp, for ages 8 to 12, the kids learn how to perform rock climbing and navigate rope courses, among other exciting activities.



*Jr. Potomac Adventures campers take a trip to Great Falls National Park and do a rock climbing activity down to the beach below. Rock climbing is led by SportRock.*



*The campers have fun on a ropes course at Go Ape facility in Springfield.*

The Eco-Warriors campers learn about the watershed and how pollutants travel into waterways by using an Enviro-Scape as a demonstration, shown in the photo on the left, below.

The Insect Safari camp, a program for the youngest kids (4-6 years old), takes place at Lewinsville House, but is run by Riverbend Park staff. The photo below on the right shows Insect Safari Camp during free play after lunch. Outdoor Education Intern Christian Surak is pictured helping a camper sort the toys into similar shapes and colors.



Below is another photo from the Insect Safari camp. The young campers go on a bug scavenger hunt, checking off the various insects and annelids (segmented worms) they find. They also use observation containers to get close up views of these small critters before releasing them back into the wild.



Kids have enormously fun and educational experiences at Riverbend Park's summer camps, and FORB is happy to support these camps to help make them such a great success.

## Changes on the FORB Board of Directors

After serving as a Director of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) for eleven years, Jack Bowles has submitted his resignation due to many conflicting family and community commitments. Jack has been a valued and reliable board member, and has contributed his clear and intelligent judgement to the many issues FORB has faced over the past decade and more. He is a staunch advocate of ensuring that Riverbend Park remains an undisturbed natural resource for Great Falls and Fairfax County. The entire FORB Board of Directors and Riverbend Park staff wish Jack the very best in his future endeavors, and thank him for his outstanding service during the past eleven years.



*Jack Bowles*

Jack Bowles' term of office was due to expire at the end of 2024. Fortunately, the FORB Board has identified an excellent candidate to fill the balance of Jack's term. Effective July 1, 2023, Ron Hodge has been named as a FORB Director to serve out Jack's term.

Ron Hodge is already well-known to FORB Board Members, and he and his family have been very involved with Riverbend Park for many years. His four sons and a daughter have worked on Eagle Scout conservation and improvement projects at the park, and he and his wife, Lisa, contributed a major grant to FORB to support such projects.

Ron has lived and worked his entire life in Fairfax County, except during his years at Virginia Tech. After he retired, Ron earned his PhD and became a graduate programs professor to educate and assist aspiring leaders. “Giving back” is central to his fulfillment in retirement; joining the FORB Board fits into that goal.



*Ron Hodge*

Ron and his family are avid hikers, having traversed virtually every trail in Riverbend and Great Falls parks as well as hiking across Portugal and Switzerland! As he notes, “I would like to continue to preserve and extend this resource (Riverbend Park) to ensure it perpetuates, and protect it from threats, both man-made and natural.”



## FORB's Fall Membership Campaign Begins on September 1<sup>st</sup>

The Friends of Riverbend Park's annual membership campaign begins on Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through the end of the year, Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. Traditionally, FORB tries to renew existing members or recruit new members during this final quarter of the year to place memberships on a calendar-year basis. Membership dues are modest, but are an important source of income for the organization. It is one of the ways to support Riverbend Park, enumerated in FORB's flyer "Ten Ways to Support Riverbend Park."

Membership dues provide an average of about \$5,000 to FORB's income each year. In the past six years, the amounts have been close to this average but dropped considerably in 2020 due to the shutdown of Riverbend Park from Covid-19. The amounts realized from membership dues from 2017 through 2022 are summarized in the table below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Membership Dues</u>
2017	\$5,795
2018	\$4,600
2019	\$5,800
2020	\$2,375
2021	\$5,975
2022	\$5,650

Individual Membership dues have been \$25 per year for many years now. A Family Membership, good for two years, is \$100, and a Benefactor Membership for three years is \$500. All dues and donations to FORB are fully tax-deductible under IRS regulations, and receipts can be requested stating that no goods or services were received in exchange for dues or donations. Memberships may be obtained through FORB's website ([www.forbpark.org](http://www.forbpark.org)) or by mail at FORB, Post Office Box 1481, Great Falls, VA 22066-8481. Please be sure to include contact information (name, address, email and phone) so that we may include you on our distribution lists to receive information about news and events at Riverbend Park such as the Virginia Native American Festival coming up in September.

## Friends of Riverbend Park Contact Information

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