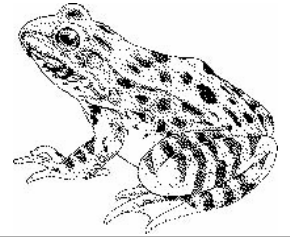


Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



March 2008

Email: info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

Website: www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

Wetland Restoration Update

Plans for the Huntley Meadows Wetlands Restoration Project continue to move forward as we get closer to summer when we hope to begin construction. We're currently in the process of finalizing site, construction and management plans. As various portions are completed, we will share current information at public meetings. Charles Smith (FCPA's agency naturalist), Dave Lawlor (Huntley's Natural Resource Manager) and myself have been trying to create plans that serve the project's four primary goals: encourage biodiversity; stay true to the site; serve our visitors; and create something practical and manageable. We continue to meet with other wetland experts from the region, including wetland ecologist William Sipple, the managers of Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware, and staff from both Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and Arlington County's Resource Division. We've gathered valuable advice and expertise from them all and very much appreciate their support of our project.

We're learning more about various options for the water control structure, spillway, earthen berm, and four excavated wetland pools. Combined with the expansion and augmentation of our meadows, placement of downed trees in the wetland to return some woody structure, and thoughtful planting of native, local eco-type plant species, we hope to have a project that stays true to the site's ecosystem and native landscape. It's so important to see both the large *and* long-term picture and to work toward a management plan that envisions Huntley Meadows as diverse, healthy, native, and sustainable for 50 years and even further into the future.

Another big challenge is making the project, and all its goals, compatible with various county, state, and national permitting regulations associated with working in a wetland. As the permitting process moves forward, there is always the possibility of delays. We hope to start work in July, but are prepared for delays pushing the

construction start-date into late summer or fall. Whatever date groundbreaking takes place, we won't lift a shovel until we have a plan that meets our goals, respects the site, and makes sense. As we look at the long list of species we hope to encourage with this project – wading birds, migrant waterfowl, aquatic mammals, insects, native fish, reptiles, amphibians, crayfish and native wetland vegetation – I am confident that we can create a viable wetland to support their needs.

Kevin Munroe
Park Manager

Park Manager Walk & Talk

Saturday, March 29, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Join the park manager for a walk in the wetland and a talk about wetland project updates.

Wetland Restoration Project

Public Meeting

Thursday, March 27th, 7 to 8:45 p.m.

Groveton Elementary School

6900 Harrison Lane, Alexandria, VA

Please join us as we present the latest plans and updates for the wetland restoration project. The program will include time for comments, group discussion, questions and a "what's next" portion where we discuss the project schedule and volunteer monitoring opportunities. No reservations are necessary; we strongly encourage everyone to attend. To find more information on the project, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/restorationproject.htm.



News from the Wild Side



Winter is a beautiful and exciting time of year at the park. I'd like to share a little about Huntley's wildlife sightings this past winter. I think I can sum it up by saying eagles, teals and grackles, oh my! We should throw beaver, barred owls and merlin in there as well, and the northern harrier wasn't anything to sneeze at either.

There have been bald eagles circling over the wetland for several months now. On at least two occasions, people have been treated to the sight of courting eagles. Claspings talons, they spin at dizzying speeds towards the ground only to release each other at the last minute and soar back up high above the wetland. It's an amazing sight and a clear sign of courtship and approaching spring. We may have eagles nesting somewhere in the park this year. To my knowledge, Huntley has never hosted an eagle's nest, or at least, one has never been found.

The ducks have been impressive and a treat. Flocks of over three hundred green-winged teals, peppered with small groups of northern shovelers, mallards, northern pintails, black ducks and hooded mergansers, have been here since November. With the ever-present Canada geese, these waterfowl species have benefited from a rain-filled wetland and are feeding on numerous grass seeds dropped from an explosion of summer annuals. Then there are the grackles – the iridescent, raucous, swirling flocks of thousands of common grackles who sweep through Huntley's forests and wetlands almost every day. An amazing display of nature's abundance, these insect-eating, seed-dispersing, squeaky-toned flocks are a pleasure to host at Huntley. I'll miss their large flocks when they break into smaller family groups this spring and summer.

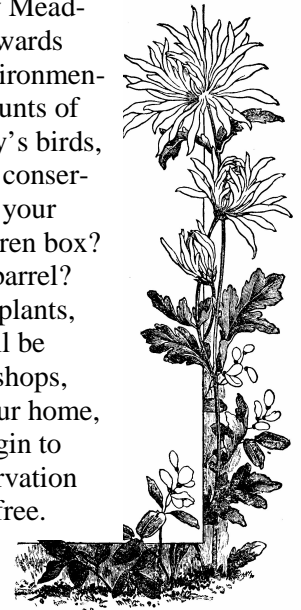
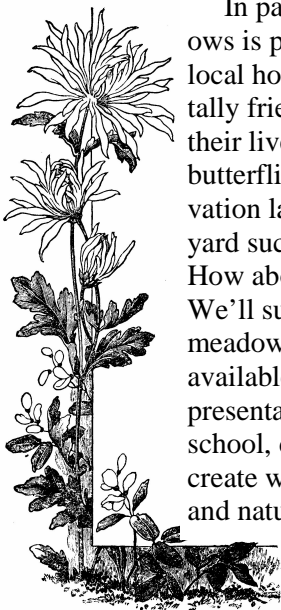
We had a merlin on New Year's Day, a great horned owl for the annual Christmas Bird Count and calling barred owls almost every day around the parking lot and the Cedar Trail. Last, but certainly not least, the increased water level this winter enabled beavers to work on a lodge and on several small dams. The beavers were visible from the observation tower during evenings immediately following heavy rains. All in all, it was a great winter for wildlife observation. Now we have the spring to look forward to, as migrants and summer residents return, frogs and turtles wake up, and insects and wildflowers fill the park. I hope to see you soon, out enjoying the amazing display of life at Huntley Meadows!

Kevin Munroe

Eco-Savvy Expo – Bringing Nature Home

Sunday, April 13, Noon-4 p.m.

In partnership with Green Spring Garden's Eco-savvy Symposium, Huntley Meadows is proud to present our first ever Eco-savvy Expo. This event is geared towards local homeowners who would like to support native species by creating an environmentally friendly yard. Wildlife found at Huntley Meadows spend significant amounts of their lives on other properties, including yours! Would you like to help Huntley's birds, butterflies, bumble bees and box turtles by turning your property into a model, conservation landscape? Or could you perhaps add some wildlife-friendly features to your yard such as a butterfly garden, backyard mini-meadow, mason bee box or a wren box? How about being the first in your neighborhood to conserve water with a rain barrel? We'll supply the info and materials you need to start *all* these projects. Native plants, meadow seed packets, rain barrels, bee boxes and wildlife gardening books will be available for purchase in our nature store. In addition, we'll have several workshops, presentations and nature walks focused on how to create space for nature at your home, school, church or business. Please join us as we kick off this new event and begin to create what will hopefully become a Huntley tradition designed to bring conservation and nature home. No reservations are necessary; cost is \$3 for adults, kids are free.

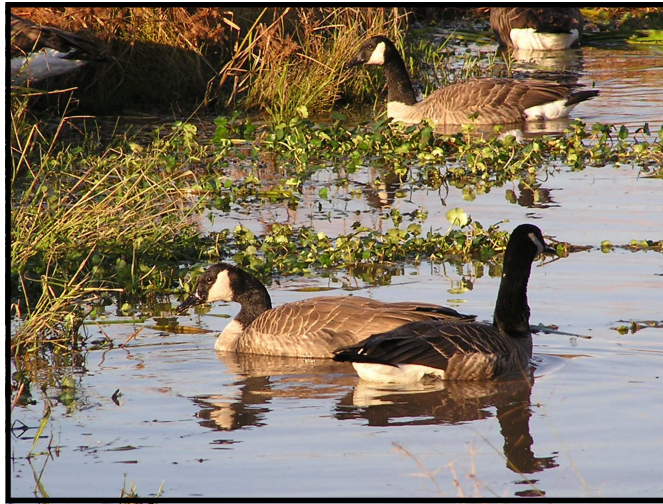


Huntley Happenings

Adopt - A - Highway Cleanup Saturday April 12th



Volunteers are needed on Saturday, April 12 to assist with cleaning litter around Huntley Meadows Park on Lockheed Blvd and Harrison Lane. Please meet at the Visitor Center parking lot at 9 AM to sign in and pick up some trash bags. Bring gloves and dress for the weather. Snacks will be provided when finished. We had a good response last time and hope to involve more volunteers this spring. Students who assist will be given community service credit - just bring the forms from your school for us to sign. Please call the park to register at 703-768-2525. Questions? Call Suzanne Lepple at 703-768-0462.



FOHMP Spring Birds and Bagels Saturday, April 26th

Join us for a morning of prime spring birding on Saturday, April 26th from 8 to 11 a.m. FOHMP board member and top-notch birder, Ben Jesup, will lead a birdwalk which will be followed by a breakfast of bagels, coffee and other treats served in the Visitor Center.

This program is free to FOHMP members but reservations are required. Please call the park to reserve your space at 703-768-2525.

HMP Spring Birding Programs

Spring Birds and Bagels
Saturday, April 19, 8 a.m.

Birding at South King's Highway
Saturday, May 3, 7 a.m.

Off-trail Birding at South King's Highway
Saturday, May 10, 7 a.m.
Call the park at 703-768-2525 to reserve.

Wetlands Awareness Day Sunday, May 4th, Noon to 3 p.m.

The biggest event on the HMP calendar is Wetlands Awareness Day. Hundreds of people come to the park to learn about the importance of and to experience the beauty of wetlands.

Interpreters are stationed along the boardwalk where they unlock the mysteries of wetland soils, give close-up looks at wildlife through telescopes and impart visitors with a sense of what an amazing place Huntley Meadows is. There's also a fun fair for kids with games, prizes and an old-fashioned cake walk.

Volunteers are needed for all events, including cake baking (mixes provided). If you're interested in helping, please call Melissa Gaulding at 703-768-2525 to sign up.

Historic Huntley Open House Sunday, May 18, 2-4 p.m.

Enjoy this twice-a-year opportunity to visit Historic Huntley, a Federal-style villa built in 1825 for Thomson F. Mason. Sponsored by Friends of Historic Huntley. FREE



Burn, Baby, Burn



Huntley Meadows Park is ready to ignite the second season of prescribed burns in the park's meadows. The Resource Management staff has prepared about twelve acres of meadows and forest to burn this winter. Typically, only meadows are burned but the resource staff has identified an area of forest which appears to be an ideal candidate for burning. It is almost entirely invasive plants and would be relatively simple to burn due to the asphalt trails surrounding the woods.

Approximately ten acres of meadow were burned last year and the results have been wonderful. In February of 2007, park staff burned the large back meadow and the first meadow on the left down the hike/bike trail. The back meadow showed several beneficial signs after the burn last year. There were four pairs of yellow-breasted chats breeding during the summer of 2007. This was a noteworthy event as very few chats have nested in the meadow area over the past several years. The back meadow also had more woodcock display sightings during the spring of 2007 than in the previous five years combined. Field sparrows and prairie warblers were also seen in the back meadow in late spring. Although proof of nesting was not found for these birds, they seemed to like the newly burned meadow enough to stick around late into the spring. Both of these birds have been on the decline in the last few years and we would be excited to have them breeding in Huntley Meadows again. We will keep our fingers crossed this year.

Park staff is running out of time to conduct the burns in 2008. Rain and poor weather has resulted in cancellation of burns scheduled for early February. A statewide burn ban goes into affect on February 15th and a waiver will be required to conduct burns after that date. I look forward to a productive spring in our meadows and continued burns to keep our meadows as healthy as possible.

Dave Lawlor
HMP Natural Resource Manager

Dave in his fire-fighting outfit



Fighting Invasive Plants at Huntley Meadows Park

Invasive plant species are substantially altering many native ecosystems across the country by overwhelming and destroying natural vegetation. The resulting decline in native plants means less food for insects, mammals and birds, and affects other species further up the food chain. Invasives species also lead to a loss of suitable habitat for nesting birds as well as a loss of shelter, cover and protection for other animals. Huntley Meadows Park is not immune from this assault. Japanese stiltgrass is crowding out low-growing native plants and Asiatic bittersweet vines strangle and kill trees. Barberry bushes are spreading in the understory, immune to browsing deer.

To help combat the problem of invasives, the Fairfax County Park Authority created an Invasives Management Area program that utilizes volunteers to remove invasive plants from local parks. The program is designed to restore forested areas, as well as to develop a cadre of knowledgeable, committed and skilled volunteers. The IMA site at Huntley was established in 2007 and, for now, is an area of a few acres near the visitor's center.

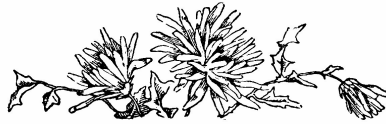
If you'd like to volunteer to remove invasives from Huntley, contact the park's IMA volunteer, Nancy Dale, at 703 765 8247 for more information. The public is invited to help during invasive workdays at Huntley. Workdays are scheduled for Saturdays from 9:30 to noon; dates are **March 15th**, **April 12th** and **June 7th**. Meet in the visitor's center parking lot and come dressed for working in the woods, meaning long pants, long sleeves and sturdy shoes. Please bring your own gloves and tools if you have them but some will be available for use. Students 12 and older working on Community Service hours are most welcome.

You can help Huntley Meadows and other natural areas by removing invasive species in your own yard. Seeds are easily dispersed by wind, rain, birds, and other animals and can invade protected areas. To learn more, check out Fairfax County Park Authority's brochures on invasive backyard plants and invasive forest plants. They are free and available at local libraries, Huntley Meadows Park, and are online at the county's website. Helpful sites for identifying invasive species include www.invasive.org/weeds and www.nps.gov/plants/alien/factmain.htm. A list of native plant alternatives to common invasives can be found at www.vnps.org/brochures.html. Learn more about the IMA program at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/ima/.

Upcoming Art Shows

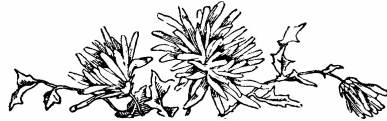
Teapot exhibit

Kentucky ceramic artist Laurie L. Hughes returns for a special one month show and sale of her handmade teapots and cups. Inspired by nature and ceremonial Japanese tea sets, her unique and often whimsical works are sure to delight. Please join us for the opening reception and an opportunity to meet the artist on Sunday, March 9 from 2-4 p.m.



Nature Photography

Bob and Jorja Feldman are local, award-winning nature photographers. Their spectacular collection of photographs, taken in the park and around the world, will enliven the Visitor Center during April and May. Meet Bob and Jorja at the opening reception on Sunday, April 6 from 2-4 p.m.

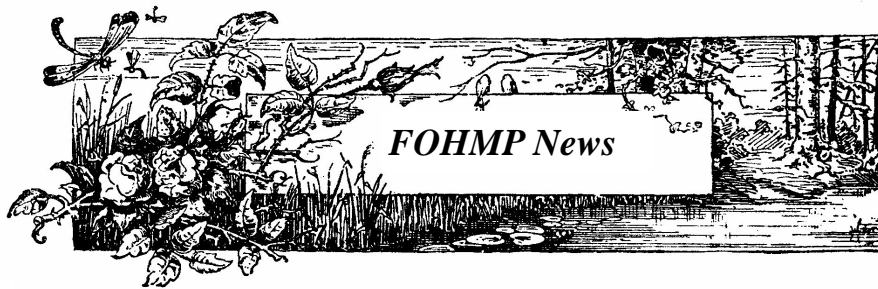


HMP Photography Fundraiser

As a special fundraiser for HMP, a selection of professional quality photographs taken at the park are now available for purchase in the Visitor Center. Photographer C. Reese Burgoyne has made a generous donation of several, beautiful 13” x 19” images. Photographs from past FOHMP contests and donations from other photographers are also for sale. All proceeds will benefit resource management projects in the park.

Many thanks to all the photographers who have donated prints to the park. And thanks in advance to all those who help support this fundraiser by purchasing prints!





A Sense of Clarity

As I was walking along the Cedar Trail in February, I was struck by how crisp and clear my view was through the woods. With very little foliage and undergrowth, the eye is not distracted and I could just about see the wetland from trail marker #2! The air was clear and cool and there was very little sound. I felt a strong sense of clarity.

In our daily lives we make many choices. Some we make subconsciously, with very little thought. Others require research and analytical thinking. Then there are those that we follow our instincts on and are heartfelt.

I believe it is clear to all of us that the unique habitats and wildlife that live at Huntley Meadows Park are worth our efforts to protect and preserve. We come to the Park for many reasons - birding, photography, study and interpretation, exercise, companionship, spiritual renewal, etc. Many of us leave with "gifts." I hope that you will continue to choose to support Huntley Meadows Park and other "wildlife sanctuaries" through your membership in "Friends" organizations, volunteering, and visiting.

Kathi McNeil

FOHMP President

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park would like to thank the following new Lifetime members:

- Gary Filerman*
- Colette Hodes*
- Karen and Gene Kronen*
- Sophia R. Martin*
- Michael and Pamela McMillie*
- Annette J. Miller*
- Mary Carroll Potter*
- Robert N. Shapiro*
- Judith T. Uehlein*
- Sandra Wilson*
- Anonymous*



We appreciate the support from our members that allows FOHMP to achieve our goal of helping to preserve and protect the park. If you would like to give a "lifetime" of support to Huntley Meadows by becoming a life member, please send a donation of \$150 to:

Treasurer, FOHMP
3701 Lockheed Blvd,
Alexandria, VA 22306

Thank you,
Connie Carpenter
Membership Chair

We also extend our deepest thanks to the Howard Schreier Fund for the generous donation made in memory of long-time FOHMP member Ruth B. Sharkey (1921-2005).

Used Book Sale Fundraiser

Please donate your gently-used nature books to our FOHMP book sale. Drop them by the visitor center anytime it's open..

All funds from the book sale are used to support park projects. Check out our ever-changing selection of books donated by fellow nature lovers.



Internships

Two 11-week internships for college students are available at the park this summer. Running from June 2 through August 15, one internship focuses on environmental education and visitor center operations, and the other gives experience in a variety of resource management activities. Please call the park at 703-768-2525 for more information. Applications are due March 7.



Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon 2008



Even after a relatively mild winter, the start of the spring birding season is always an exciting time.

Cardinals, chickadees, and house finches can already be heard singing in the morning. Woodcocks are displaying in Huntley's meadows, raptors are building nests, and wood ducks are investigating the park's nest boxes. Before long, warblers will appear in treetops which were covered in snow only a short time ago. All signs point to spring and to the 12th Annual HMP Birdathon on May 6th!

Each year on the birdathon day, staff and volunteers set out before dawn to count bird species present in the park. This event has grown from what was once an annual survey by park staff into a fundraiser for a resource management intern as well as a celebration of two very special people. The birdathon provides an opportunity to remember Ken Howard and Ed Weigel, who for years instilled children, birders and countless park visitors with an appreciation of Huntley Meadows and nature. They shared their time, wisdom, wit, and enthusiasm with one and all, acting as true ambassadors for the park. Their good work continues to this day through the internship which is supported by donations raised from the birdathon.

An internship provides a young person with an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a future in conservation. Your donation could help the next Ed Weigel or Ken Howard get started. This year, as always, we will hope to reach 100 species for the day. We've done it five times now, with a record of 108 bird species in 2004. If you donate only one dollar per species, then reaching 100 species would produce a donation of \$100. That would go a long way towards helping us reach our goal of \$2,700.

I believe this is an outstanding cause. Like many of you, I knew Ken and Ed well, and count myself fortunate for the insights into the natural world that they provided me. I hope you feel the same way.

Thank you very much,

Andy Higgs
Birdathon Coordinator



2008 HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK BIRDATHON

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DONATION AMOUNT: _____

Please make checks payable to FCPA-HMP and write donations on the memo line.

Mail this form and check to:
Birdathon, Huntley Meadows Park,
3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306

Results will be posted by June 6 on the FOHMP website: www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

***Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
Membership and Renewal Form***

Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining the Friends group. Become a member today and help to protect and preserve the park. Your annual dues will keep you informed and help to fund the nature center's programs. Fill out and mail the application to this address:

**Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd.
Alexandria, VA 22306**

Dues information:

- \$10 Individual
- \$15 Family
- \$5 Student/Senior
- \$150 Lifetime membership

Name: _____

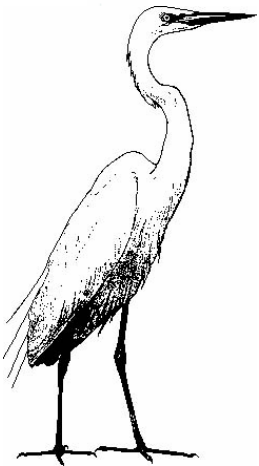
Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd
Alexandria, VA 22306



Please check your mailing label for accuracy and notify us of any changes. Your membership expiration date is in the upper left corner.