

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



June 2016

Website: www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark

Annual Meeting

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park annual meeting is **June 18, 2016 from 3-5pm** in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center auditorium.

All Members and friends are invited to hear our guest speaker, and all attendees will receive a free native plant seedling!

Please RSVP at 703-768-2525.

2016 Bird-a-thon Summary

I have to admit that I was a little discouraged the morning of Bird-a-thon. We were in the midst of our wet weather pattern, and that Tuesday was chilly and threatening rain. Luckily, folks were prepared with rain coats, rain pants and umbrellas. No gray skies were going to dampen our spirits or our determination to hit the trails looking and listening for birds. The good news is that it never did rain, and the sun actually made an appearance. The bird activity increased, and it turned out to be a fantastic morning in the Park.

The day held many birding highlights. There were sightings of the usual suspects, such as Red-winged Blackbirds, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Great Blue Herons and Tree Swallows and some shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl, including Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser ducklings. As for me, I loved hearing the unexpected bubbly song of the Marsh Wren in the central wetland and catching glimpses of the tiny, colorful and always flitting Warblers. We (the royal we) saw or heard 23 Warbler species. Another highlight for me was having the chance to spend time catching up with friends who share my love for Huntley Meadows Park and its wildlife.

Thanks to the 18 dedicated volunteers and staff who got up bright and early to comb every nook and cranny of the Park. Over breakfast at Denny's, we totaled the number of birds heard or seen that morning. We had tied our previous high of 108. After breakfast and lots of coffee, some volunteers went back into the Park and added a Bald Eagle and a Black Vulture to raise our total to an all-time high of 110 species!!! (YAY)!!!

A big thank you to all who participated in the Bird-a-thon count and to everyone who generously donated to this fundraiser which supports our 2016 summer Resource Management Internship. It's not too late to help us meet our goal of \$2,800. Let's make this our best Bird-a-thon effort ever.

Thank you,
Ann Stat and the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

Tree Swallow in flight, by Ed Eder.



Heroes

What does it mean to be a hero? A hero inspires me to do more, to strive to do better in everything. My heroes reach for something bigger and better; they are persistent and do not give up. My heroes consistently think outside the box. They work hard to be realistic. My heroes seem to shine brighter and help light the way through challenging times. They help me find inspiration so that I can continue to advocate for the protection of Huntley Meadows Park.

Nature is also one of my heroes. Nature stands strong in the face of challenges to its core. Our native trees stand tall and strong even during windy, bad weather. Trees bend and sway in the wind, sometimes losing all of their leaves. The bending results in healing growth that strengthens them. Trees give back by cleaning the air we breathe and absorbing storm water that otherwise might destroy property. Nature surrounds us always, we only need to protect and care for it in the same way that it protects and cares for us.

FOHMP are also my heroes. Those of you who submitted public comments on the Dominion Virginia Power project, volunteer for Park projects, lead programs, attend events and organize activities, are all my heroes. You make it possible for me and the FOHMP Board of Directors to advocate for the protection of all things Huntley Meadows Park.

By Cathy Ledec
President of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP)

Dominion Virginia Power Update

Dominion Virginia Power is replacing power lines that currently traverse the easement at the south boundary of Huntley Meadows Park. The plan calls for installation of electric poles that are much taller than the current supports. This will adversely affect wildlife in the area, both at ground level and in the air, as well as the view from the porch of Historic Huntley. Thanks to all who responded to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP)'s plea asking our membership to weigh in during the public comment period that closed June 8th, as well as those who gave testimony at hearings regarding this project.

Board members for both Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH) and FOHMP presented to the Fairfax County Park Authority Board on May 25th. During this information sharing session, Friends members outlined testimony provided to the State Corporation Commission (SCC) regarding our concerns about the project and our requests for project modifications to ensure preservation of natural and cultural resources. More information about FOHMP requests can be found at <http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org> or email us at friendsofhmp@gmail.com.

At this time, we are preparing for the SCC hearing on June 15 in Richmond where Friends Board members will express our concerns regarding the Dominion project. We thank our membership for their continued support to the FOHMP Board of Directors as they urge Dominion Virginia Power to protect the natural and historical resources of Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley.

From Todi Carnes, President of FOHH:

FOHH stands united with the FOHMP in efforts to modify Dominion Virginia Power's proposed project so that its adverse impacts upon cultural and natural resources are mitigated to the greatest extent possible. FOHH extends a special thanks to FOHMP President Cathy Ledec for her tireless and continuing leadership in educating and rallying both officials and citizenry to engage and make a difference in this matter.

Thoughts from Park Manager Karen Sheffield

Sitting on the porch of Historic Huntley, the expansive view of Huntley Meadows is captivating. From Mason's villa, I am transported back to his era when hilltop house placement demonstrated one's importance in the community, and the carefully sculpted terraces demonstrated power and control over the landscape. Bringing myself back to present day, I take in the serenity of the view.

Our interpretation of nature, history and landscape are uniquely our own. Whether you are a birder, dog walker, history enthusiast, jogger, and/or on family time together, the Huntley's connect you to meaningful, positive experiences, sometimes filled with wonderful surprises.

This reminds me of Volaire and other landscape artists who were featured at the recent Philips Collection special exhibition "Seeing Nature: Landscape Masterworks from the Paul G. Allen Collection". The exhibit attributes David Hockney amongst others who "shape new views of nature, expanding further landscape's ability to help us see our world anew."

The blooming of the crimson-eyed rose mallow brings thoughts of how Georgia O'Keeffe would have painted the scene. Late afternoon walks lead to thoughts of how impressionists would have expressed the light and color in the wetland.

As you visit Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley, I hope the parks inspire you. Your view of, love of and interest in nature and history is personally yours. Thank you for embracing the Parks' missions. I hope you enjoy the time you spend here.

I look forward to talking with you at the FOHMP annual meeting on June 18.

"Sanctuary" - Collages and Ceramics

by Kathryn Horn Coneway

"We go to sanctuaries to remember the things we hold most dear, the things we cherish and love. And then - the great challenge - we return home seeking to enact this wisdom as best we can in our daily lives." -William Cronon

I love that the first sign greeting visitors says "Wildlife Sanctuary" - Huntley Meadows Park is truly a sacred space, and I feel fortunate it is so near my home. The time I spend here provides a chance for renewal. There are wonderful moments of connection along a path when another visitor will whisper to point out a frog in a pool or a bird overhead. We share a sacred space, even as we each inhabit our own experience.

Preparing for this show has been a great way to energize my creative practice and allow the Huntley Meadows sanctuary to inspire my art work. My collages and mixed media work are inspired by weekly walks along the boardwalk observing the changing of the seasons. Allowing the "wisdom" gained from my walks to inspire my creative process also allowed me to experience that renewal in my daily life while creating pieces for the show.

I have been documenting my experience of creating the Huntley Meadows show on my blog "366 Days of Making," a 2016 project to create something every day for one year. To see more of my work and some images of these pieces in progress, visit www.kathrynconeway.com.

I look forward to the opportunity to exhibit work at Huntley Meadows Park this summer.

****Kathryn's work will be on display from June 4 through August 28.****

Deer Management Update

By David Lawlor

In August of 2015 a deer population survey was conducted in Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) using infrared (IR) cameras and the Jacobson et al protocol. Currently the IR camera survey is accepted by leading researchers to be the best method of assessing deer populations. Although some methods use slightly different calculations, they are all very similar. The last deer population survey done at HMP was in 2007, so the Park was definitely due! The IR, or game cameras, are a limiting factor and the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) purchased 15 cameras in 2015 to support the deer management program. Survey protocol dictates one camera be installed for every 160 acres, and each camera should collect data for a minimum of 10 days with 14 days preferred. Cameras are placed throughout the Park, generally in remote areas to reduce vandalism, etc., and bait is placed in front of each camera to attract the deer. Deer are placed into categories including age (if possible) and gender and numbers are tallied for each photo. The raw numbers are entered into a ratio driven model which estimates the population. The County Wildlife Biologist supplied 2,000 pounds of corn to bait the camera sites. HMP's Resource Management staff monitored all camera sites every two days for 17 days to ensure bait was present, batteries were operational and the cameras were operating properly. HMP staff also analyzed the data, which involves sorting through thousands of photos, counting deer and identifying individual bucks which serve as the basis for the ratio driven model.

The camera survey results indicate a deer population of 176 deer in the Park or 72.4 deer/mi². The ideal ecological carrying capacity for eastern forests is 15-20 deer/mi². This indicates the Park's deer population is still four to five times over ecological carrying capacity. It is inherently difficult to acquire accurate numbers for any wildlife population, and deer are no different. Recent telemetry research indicates deer immigrate, emigrate and travel much more than previously thought. The 2015 deer survey is merely an estimate, and the trend data is probably more important than the actual number. The population trend data for HMP is provided in the Chart at the top of page 5. The chart shows the last five deer population surveys as well as harvest numbers broken down by archery and sharpshooting back to 2001. In 2009 there were no deer management activities at HMP, which was the first year of County budget cuts.

The Park's deer population is slowly rising as indicated by the trend line in the chart and the fact that our current population is higher than 2001. This observation is even more noticeable when you factor in that over 600 deer have been removed over those 14 years via the deer management program and countless others through deer vehicle collisions and emigration. Over the past five years, the archery harvest numbers have plateaued. Acreage designated to the archery program has climbed from 280 acres in 2011 to 725 acres in 2016. These facts prompted staff to search for more options to reduce the deer herd as soon as possible. Recent meetings between HMP staff and FCPA staff running the deer management program have resulted in several benefits for the Park. Huntley Meadows is being added to the sharp-shooting schedule again in 2016-2017 after a 2 year absence, and there is a future commitment to conduct annual sharpshooting in the Park

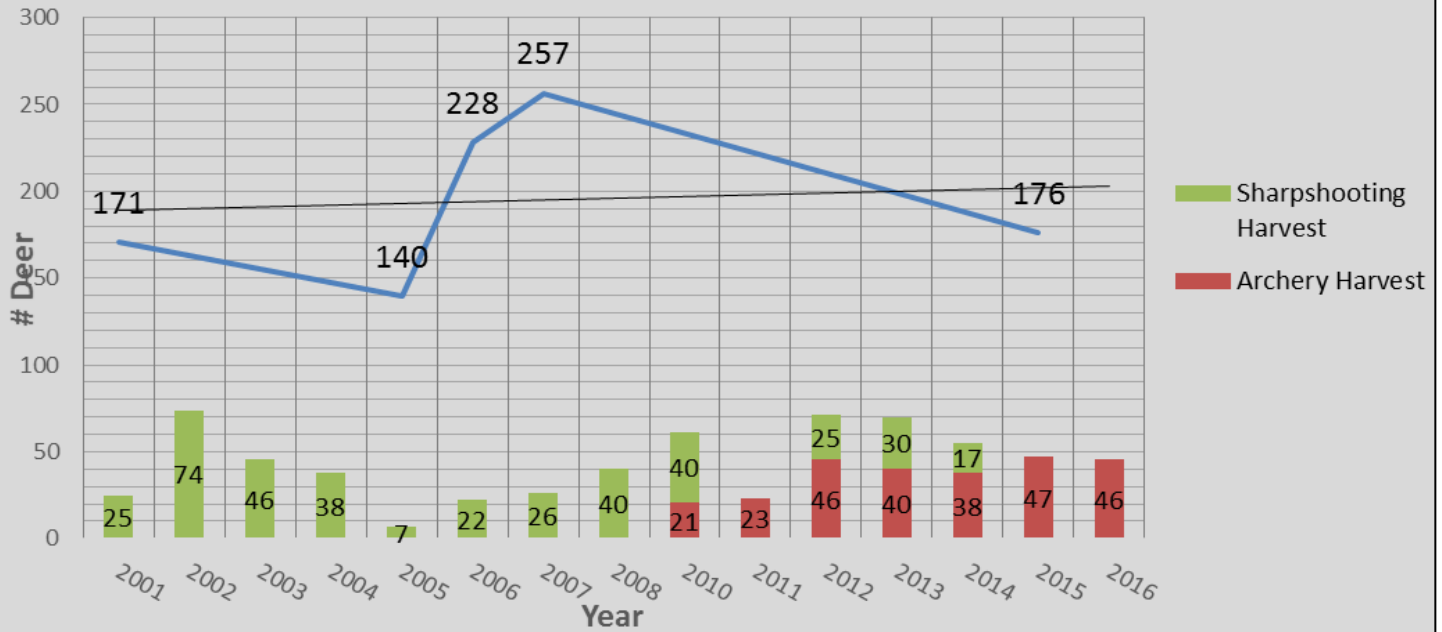


Photo of male deer captured with IR camera.

as well as deer population surveys on a more regular basis. Although the deer population is still very high, Park staff has noticed an increase in preferred browse throughout the Park especially in the southern section of the Park where the archers have been hunting since 2010. This observation has not been quantified yet but browse survey transects were created in 2016. These transects will be assessed annually in an attempt to quantify the vegetative response to the increased deer harvest anticipated utilizing both archery and sharpshooting on an annual basis.

Thank you all for your continued support!!

HMP Deer Population and Harvests Trends



From 'Deer Management Update' (pg 4). Population & harvest trend data for Huntley Meadows Park from 2001-2016.

Where does my contribution go?

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park supports a wide range of programs throughout the Park. Your membership dues and donations are critical to the success of our organization.

Some items we fund(ed):

- Educate the public and the Fairfax County Park Authority on the impacts of Dominion Virginia Power's proposed changes to the easement at the south boundary of the Park. (See page 2 for details.)
- Creation of Huntley Meadows Patches, now on sale in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center (VC) gift shop.
- Scholarships to support three interns for the summer of 2016. These interns will complete much needed programming projects. But most importantly they will assist Staff during day camps that educate and entertain our next generation of naturalist and environmental stewards.
- Environmental protection apprentice who will study with Park experts to learn best practices for wetland, forest, and meadow management.
- Quarterly newsletter to keep our 450+ members up-to-date on what is happening at the Park. Newsletter expenses have fallen with our "GO GREEN" initiative to provide more newsletters by email.
- Printing of various Park brochures and the frog stickers that adorn so many young visitors.
- Specialized training for Staff. This is usually several thousand dollars annually.
- School trips for schools throughout Fairfax County and neighboring counties. Kids are our very best ambassadors - we hear from many visitors that their kids visited on a school field trip and wanted to come back to show their families what a special place Huntley Meadows Park is.
- A donation to the Raptor Conservancy, one of our biggest entertainers on Wetlands Awareness Day. The contribution is used to feed and care for beautiful birds of prey that can no longer live in the wild.
- Generate merchandise to sell in the Visitor Center gift shop, e.g., hats, shirts, magnets, and lapel pins.
- Purchase of tools, and supplies for trail restoration, planting, invasive removal, and field studies.
- Production of the annual photography show, which celebrates local photographers and their work snapped at the Park.
- An ad for FOHMP in the playbill for West Potomac High School's production of *Starlight Express*. West Potomac students help us each spring with watershed cleanups.

Face of Facebook

Ever wonder who the face is behind the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Facebook page? It is Allyson Lohr, our volunteer Facebook administrator, who has been doing a fantastic job of maintaining our site for several years. She started visiting Huntley Meadows Park with her family as a child and then was a summer intern at the Park several summers ago. Allyson is currently working on her Masters Degree in Biology at George Mason University with the goal of teaching high school Biology.

Her enthusiasm shows in her great postings, so please visit the site at: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark>. FOHMP thanked Allyson recently with a framed certificate of appreciation and a gift card.



Allyson Lohr with her certificate.

Monday Morning Bird Walk

By Harry Glasgow

The Huntley Meadows Monday Morning Birdwalks this spring have been extraordinary. In May alone, records for species heard and/or seen and number of birders were broken. The number of migratory species broke long standing records for the Monday Morning Birdwalk. On May 2, the group tallied 85 species with about 15 Warbler species. After word of that got around, we drew 50 birders the next week who were not disappointed. The species count that day was 90, with almost 20 Warbler species counted. We were most impressed with the migrating Warbler abundance. Many birders added to their life lists with Hooded Warblers, Wilsons Warblers , Yellow-throated Warblers, and many more. On May 9 we spotted several Thrush species: Wood, Swainson's, and Veery. Although we had fewer birders on May 16, 78 species were tallied.



Wood Duck hatchlings in nest box. Photo by Kat Dyer.

During this frenzy, we also spotted both Least and American Bitterns. Our hope, of course, is that the Bitterns will nest here, but I think that's a long shot. The sentimental attractions, of course, were the Hooded Merganser and Wood Duck family parades, with some Canada Goose goslings thrown in for good measure. It's worth noting that one Sora was reported by other birders on one day in April. This has been one of the best springs I can remember.

The Monday Morning Bird Walk has been a weekly event at Huntley Meadows Park since 1985. It takes place every week, rain or shine (except during electrical storms, strong winds, or icy trails), at 7AM (8AM from November through March), is free of charge, requires no reservation, and is open to all. Birders meet in the Park's parking lot at 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA. Questions should be directed to Park staff during normal business hours at (703)768-2525.

Huntley Meadows Park Programs

All programs **require reservations**, unless free. Sign up online using Parktakes. Search "Huntley" at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes, or call 703-222-4664. For help, call Huntley Meadows Park at 703-768-2525.

JUNE

11 Saturday - Wetland in Bloom (Ages 5-Adult) 1-2:30pm. Take a plant ecology hike to the wetland during peak bloom. Search for birds and mammals that use these plants for food, shelter, and nesting. Canceled if rain. \$6. Registration Code: 3402842201

18 Saturday - Ancient Plants Sketch Hike (Ages 13-Adult) 10am-12pm. Learn about ferns, moss and their allies on a 1.5 mile hike (flat terrain) while keeping a field sketch book. All materials are included; thank you to the Running Brooke Fund for supplying the take home field art kits! \$7. Registration Code: 3403834601

Ice Cream at Historic Huntley (Ages 2-Adult) 1-3pm. Make and enjoy hand-cranked ice cream as Huntley's Harris family may have done. Discover how the histories of ice cream and Huntley follow a similar path from elite luxury to family fare. Tour included. \$8. Registration Code: 5782039101

Wild Side Wagon Ride (Ages 5-Adult) 2-3:30pm or 4-5:30pm. Take a tractor ride to parts of the Park that are difficult to reach on foot. Learn how Staff manage each of the three Huntley Meadows Habitats; meadow, forest, and wetland. Enjoy refreshments while looking for wildlife. Meet at 6901 S. Kings Highway. Canceled if rain. \$7. Registration Code: 3402864903 or 3402864904

21 Tuesday - Summer Solstice Sketch Ride (Ages 13-Adult) 7-8:30pm. Take a sketch tour on the 'wild side' on the longest day of the year! Learn drawing basics while exploring, by bike (flat pavement, total of 3 miles). Bring water and a backpack to stow your art supplies provided by the Running Brooke Fund. Meet at 6901 S. Kings Highway. \$6. Registration Code: 3403834701

25 Saturday - Evening Walk (Adults) 8-10pm. Hike the trails after dark, looking and listening for night animals. \$7. Registration Code: 3403881801

JULY

2 Saturday - Evening Walk (Adults) 8-10pm. See 6/25. \$7. Registration Code: 3403881802

9 Saturday - Poetry Sketch Walk (Ages 15-Adult) 10am-12pm. Take a walk that combines nature study, drawing and poem craft in the forest and wetland. We'll be reading American poets while writing poems of our own to accompany sketches. \$7. Registration Code: 3403034101

10 Sunday - Birding for Beginners (Ages 12-Adult) 8-11am. See 6/5. \$8. Registration Code: 3403842501

17 Sunday - Dragonflies (Ages 12-Adult) 9-11am. Learn about the life cycle, behavior and identification of Huntley's many dragonflies and damselflies. Canceled if

rain. \$7. Registration Code: 3403842301

How to Draw Your Dragon (fly) (Ages 12-Adult) 1-3pm. Join naturalist/artist Margaret Wohler to learn tips and techniques for drawing dragonflies and other insects. \$7. Registration Code: 3403820101

23 Saturday - Sketch Hike: Historic Huntley (Ages 11-Adult) 10am-12pm. Join park naturalist and artist Margaret Wohler for a hike through history. Meet at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center and hike up to Historic Huntley. \$7. Registration Code: 3403899401

Toys at Historic Huntley (Ages 4-Adult) 1-2pm. Make your own toys and play games children who lived at Historic Huntley may have once played. House tour and scavenger hunt included. \$6. Registration Code: 5783832601

Evening Stroll (Ages 6-Adult) 8-10pm. See 6/25. \$7. Registration Code: 3403827901

30 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy (Ages 12-Adult) 8-10pm. Observe constellations, comets and other current events happening in the heavens above. Canceled in case of rain or other severe weather. \$7. Registration Code: 3403865101

AUGUST

6 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy (Ages 12-Adult) 8-10pm. See 7/30. \$7. Registration Code: 3403865102

13 Saturday - Delicious Dairy at Historic Huntley (Ages 2-Adult) 1-2:30pm. Churn your own delicious butter and taste fresh cheese you can make at home. Discover how Huntley, once summer home for the wealthy, became a dairy farm. House tour included. \$7. Registration Code: 5783827201

Evening Stroll (Ages 6-Adult) 8-10pm. See 7/23. \$7. Registration Code: 3403827902

21 Sunday - Birding for Beginners (Ages 12-Adult) 8-11am. Learn about the Park's birds and some basic identification skills. Program begins with an indoor discussion. Children ages 12-16 must be accompanied by a registered adult. \$8. Registration Code: 3403842502

24 Wednesday - Summer Wagon Ride (Ages 5-Adult) 9:30-11am or 5-6:30pm. See 6/18. \$7. Registration Code: 3403842101 or 3403842102

26 Friday - Summer Wagon Ride (Ages 5-Adult) 9:30am-11am or 5-6:30pm. See 8/24. \$7. Registration Code: 3403842103 or 3403842104

27 Saturday - Ice Cream at Historic Huntley (Ages 2-Adult) 1-3pm. See 6/18. \$8. Registration Code: 5783039101

31 Wednesday - Summer Wagon Ride (Ages 5-Adult) 9:30-11am or 5-6:30pm. See 6/18. \$7. Registration Code: 3403842105 or 3403842106

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

Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining our Friends group. Dues contribute toward funding new initiatives and programs, and your membership support will help us to be stronger advocates for the Park.

Fill out this form and mail the application to:

Dues information (Annual):

- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$10 Student/Senior
- \$150 Lifetime Membership
- Donation

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____



Alternatively you can use our PayPal feature on the Membership page of our website <http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html>.



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