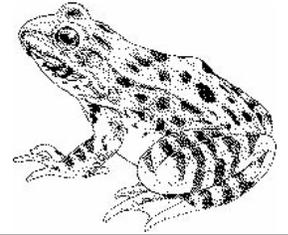




# Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



June 2008

Email: [info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](mailto:info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)

Website: [www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](http://www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)



## ***Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Annual Meeting***

*Saturday, June 14th, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.*

Please join the FOHMP board and park staff for our annual meeting on what we hope will be a beautiful summer evening. Festivities will begin in the Visitor Center with refreshments and socializing. A brief meeting will follow with highlights of the past year and recognition of new life members. We'll then adjourn to the wetland for a mid-summer's eve stroll on the boardwalk. Celebrate the park with the best friends of the park. We look forward to seeing you there.



### ***Ann Stat Receives Excellence in Interpretation Award***



*Ann, on left, with volunteer Jennie Lewis.*

***Congratulations, "Champagne Annie!"***

On April 8, the Resource Management Division of the Fairfax County Park Authority honored Huntley Meadows Park naturalist, Ann Stat, with the **2008 Excellence in Interpretive Services Award**. The award recognizes interpretation's critical role in fulfilling the FCPA mission and celebrates the exceptional interpretive skills of Park Authority employees. For more than twenty years, Ann has channeled her amazing energy into the gift of interpretation, delighting visitors, students, and volunteers along the way. Over her many years at the park, Ann has given 22,000 hours of consistent, high-quality interpretation. From Ann, approximately 375,000 children and 125,000 adults have received accurate and insightful information about the parks, wild-life, wetlands and stewardship of natural resources. With humor, enthusiasm and energy, Ann connects with her audiences and makes nature relevant and accessible.



## News from the Wild Side

### The Park Manager's Report



What an active, water-filled, flower-covered, amphibian-soaked spring this has been! In April alone, there were sightings of and songs from bullfrogs, green frogs, pickerel frogs, southern leopard frogs, American toads, spring peepers and gray tree frogs. Before June is over, we'll be able to add green tree frogs and Fowler's toads. I'm crossing my fingers that one summer we'll hear our first eastern spadefoot, an elusive, mostly subterranean frog that occasionally crawls out of sandy soils after long summer rains.

It was also a good spring for woodland wildflowers. Spring beauties covered the forest floor in impressive carpets of downy pink and we found bluebells and sessile trillium in places where they'd never been seen. Possible results from the deer management program? We'll be setting up a few deer exclosures this year to examine the relationship between plants and deer populations.

And, of course, birds. At Huntley in spring, chances are you'll see some unusual avian visitors. On a single day in March, the wetland hosted western, horned and pied-billed grebes. In April, blue-winged teal, American bittern, common moorhen, king rail, Virginia rail and sora all appeared. Mississippi kites will be back by the time you read this, circling over the wetland hunting dragonflies. Common yellow-throat, white-eyed vireo, yellow-billed cuckoo, ovenbird and ruby-throated hummingbird are here for the nesting season after spending the winter in Latin America.

Don't forget to explore and enjoy the Hike-Bike Trail off S. Kings Highway. Look for wild turkey, indigo bunting, field sparrow, yellow-breasted chat and the long sleek body of the elegant black racer, one of the park's most impressive snakes. I'll end by inviting you to enjoy one of the many programs offered this summer. Visitors can explore the park with trained naturalists and find a few of the floral and faunal gems that fill Huntley Meadows in every season.

**Kevin Munroe**



At Huntley's **Eco-savvy Expo**, we shared over 150 environmentally friendly landscaping practices with local residents. People purchased over 100 native plants from Nature-By-Design, 15 rain barrels, native wildflower seed packets, bee and bird boxes, plus took home plant lists and brochures. We held three well-attended programs; a butterfly gardening presentation, rain barrel workshop and a nature walk. It was a great success and one that we hope will lead more people to an awareness of what they can do to help the environment.

Implementing eco-friendly landscape practices at home improves the environmental health of neighborhoods and of local watersheds. For instance, when residents anywhere in the Dogue Creek watershed practice eco-savvy landscaping, that helps the health of Huntley Meadows Park. If more local residents used rain barrels and made their gardens more eco-friendly, the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed would benefit.

I'd like to thank the many volunteers and Friends of Huntley Meadows Park members that made the event a success. A very special thanks goes to FOHMP for sponsoring the rain barrel program and for generously agreeing to fund another 15 barrels for re-sale. With the profits going to support the park's needs and programs, the Eco-savvy Expo benefits the park as well as the public and the



### **Park Manager Walk & Talk and Wetland Restoration Project Update**

Saturday June 7 & July 12, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Saturday August 23, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The Park Manager walks will continue through the summer months. This is a great opportunity to walk the park with staff and have one-on-one discussions regarding ideas and updates on the restoration project. Right now, the restoration plans are still in the permitting process. Work on the dam could begin as early as July. Stay in the loop by attending a manager's walk in the park. An added bonus is the wildlife that may be seen on these summer evening walks, such as beaver, muskrats, bats and perhaps owls. Meet in the Visitor Center. Call 703 768 2525 for more information.

## Café Cattail – ‘What’s Perkin’

Friday, June 20, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Four times a year the Huntley Meadows auditorium is transformed into a cozy coffeehouse. Small tables for four are decorated with dark green, leaf-print tablecloths and flower-filled vases. The rich smell of brewing coffee and fresh baked brownies greets the congenial group of Café Cattail regulars and newcomers. The atmosphere is supportive. There is a strong sense of community here -- people of all ages brought together by their love of nature and its expression through the arts. Some come to listen and watch, or sign up to share. There is sure to be an amazing, eclectic mix of talent -- music, poetry, dance, and visual arts.

## 2008 Naturalist Intern

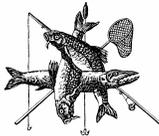
**David Bretschneider**

This year’s Naturalist Intern is David Bretschneider, a senior at George Mason University, who is completing a degree in Parks, Recreation and Leisure Studies with a minor in American History. He has 20 years of experience in retail management, and now is shifting his career focus to parks. David has experience as a volunteer interpretive guide at Manassas National Battlefield and as a teacher with the School Age Child Care program in Fairfax County. He and his wife love visiting parks. We look forward to having him join the teaching team this summer.

## Introduction to Fly Tying

Sunday June 15  
12:30 to 1:30

If woolly buggers and hare’s nymphs pique your interest, you may want to try your hand at the intricate art of fly tying. Equipment and materials provided. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. \$10



## Wetland in Bloom

Saturday June 14  
9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Take a plant ecology hike to the wetland during peak bloom of buttonbush, swamp rose, and lizard’s tail. Search for birds and mammals that use these plants for food, shelter, and nesting. Reservations required. Cancelled if rain. \$6

## Summer Stroll

Saturday June 28  
8:00 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Glittering fireflies, gnawing beavers and a parade of raccoons – evidence that Huntley Meadows Park never sleeps! Learn about Huntley’s night life through a short lecture and a walk to the wetland. Sponsored by FOHMP. Cancelled if rain. \$2

## Dragonflies

Sunday June 29  
9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Learn about the life cycle, behavior and identification of Huntley’s many dragonflies and damselflies. Venture to the wetland to observe these acrobatic fliers in action. Reservations required. Cancelled if rain. FREE

## Birding for Beginners

*Optics and Field Guides*

Sunday July 13  
8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Interested in birding? We can get you started! Learn about the birds in the park and some basic identification skills. Program begins with a discussion of field guides and optics. Reservations required. \$2



## Summer Birds and Bagels

Saturday July 12  
8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Explore the woodland and wetland to observe summer bird life. Following the walk, cool off and enjoy juice and bagels at the Visitor Center. Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot. Binoculars and field guides recommended. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. \$6

# Natural Resource News

## Deer Tick Survey

In January 2008, the Fairfax County Health Department tested 18 ticks that were removed from seven deer culled at Huntley Meadows Park. Only one tick tested positive for Lyme disease. This equates to a 5% infection rate. A previous sampling from 12 deer culled in December 2007 yielded 29 deer ticks with none testing positive for Lyme disease. The 47 deer ticks were taken from 19 deer, which averages out to 2.5 deer ticks per deer sampled.

This puts the Park's total for this winter at 47 deer ticks and one positive, or a 2% infection rate for Lyme disease. This is better than last winter's infection rate of about 12%. This low infection rate doesn't mean we can let our guard down. Keep in mind it is winter and there are fewer active ticks than during the warmer months. Also, forty-seven ticks is a small population for statistical evaluation and would be borderline statistically significant. The Health Department's numbers may be slightly different from what I have stated because they perform fiscal year reports and our winter survey (Dec. and Jan.) includes data from two fiscal years. However, the survey is sampling the same generation of deer ticks, and therefore can sensibly be combined.

As a comparison, the Health Department went to the Sully Woodlands managed hunt on January 16<sup>th</sup> and found 600 ticks of which 76 were positive. This equates to a 12.7% infection rate. The 600 ticks were collected from 80 deer, averaging 7.5 deer ticks per deer. The Health Department will continue to monitor ticks in future years and I will give updates about the presence of Lyme-bearing ticks as I receive information.

*Dave Lawlor*

*Natural Resource Manager*

## Natural Resource Management Intern 2008

Marissa Gavaghan is the 2008 Natural Resource Management intern. Marissa is a recent graduate of Virginia Polytechnic and State University, and has a major in Wildlife Biology and a minor in Biology. She has previously worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service at Patuxent River Wildlife Refuge, managing invasive plants, monitoring water control structures, and assisting with other research projects and data collection. Marissa worked with the Fairfax County Wildlife Biologist conducting a small mammal survey which studied the effects white-footed mice have on the outbreak of Lyme Disease in the Cub Run Stream Valley. She also researched urban wildlife and issues associated with animals like deer and geese. She was a congressional intern this spring, her fourth year at Tom Davis' office, where she worked with constituents and gave tours of the Capitol. Marissa has also been trained and certified to teach elementary school students about the environment, natural resources, conservation and sustainability. She assisted on jaguar research in Belize and completed an externship for the Natural Resource Conservation Service working with conservation and soil specialists on water quality issues and macro-invertebrates.

## *Huntley Meadows Park Wildlife*



Mike Ready, on a Monday Morning Birdwalk, enjoying the abundance of water from a very wet spring.  
*(left photo)*



A Canada goose enjoys the increased water level as well.  
*(right photo)*

## Upcoming Art Shows

### *Wildlife in Watercolors*

*Paintings by B.J. Opfer*

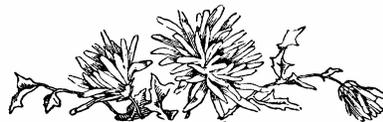
*June 29th to August 31st*

*Artist's reception, Sunday June 29th, 2 to 4 p.m.*

B.J. Opfer is an accomplished wildlife artist who has been painting local wildlife for 25 years. His paintings have been exhibited at art shows in Northern Virginia and at nationally recognized juried shows. Using watercolors to emphasize the softness of feathers, his paintings are sensitive and realistic portraits. Birds from his backyard are often his subjects as well as waterfowl and shorebirds of the coastal region. His portfolio also includes small mammal paintings. Original paintings will be on sale as well as prints. A portion of the proceeds supports Huntley Meadows Park. The public is invited to attend the artist's reception on June 29th.



Pileated woodpecker by B.J. Opfer



### *Digital Photography Class*

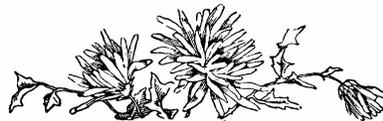
*Saturday June 21 and Saturday June 28, Ages 18 and up*

### *Photocamp*

*July 14th to 18th, ages 12 to 16*

Want to get more from your digital camera? The Park is offering two popular programs for teens and adults to help you! Experienced photographer Corey Hilz will lead outdoor photography sessions and indoor photo critique. You may know Mr. Hilz's work from his recent exhibits at Meadowlark Gardens and the Fairfax County Government Center. The fee is \$90 and reservations are required. There is only room for 12 participants so sign up early!

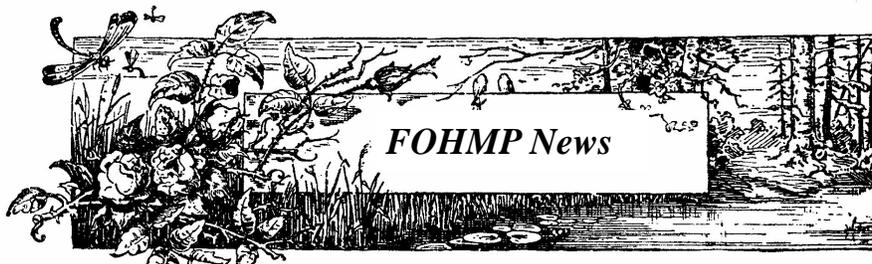
From Monday, July 14 through Friday, July 18 (9-1 p.m.), teens 12 to 16 years work with Corey Hilz learning to use digital photography and printing to capture plants, animals, and scenery in the Park. Their best images will be entered in the Friends of Huntley Meadows annual photo contest. This five-day camp is sponsored by FOHMP and costs \$100. There is only room for 12 participants, so call the Park to reserve a space for your teen.



## *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. Photographs are reasonably priced. Some are matted, some framed and some are sold as prints. Images include photographs of birds, animals, plants and landscape scenes. Take home a memory of Huntley Meadows 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.



## Water

It's a Monday morning in April, it's raining, and I'm out in the Park checking bluebird nestboxes. The temperature is not too bad, so aside from a slightly dampish feeling, it's pretty nice outside. What begins as a dreary and damp morning soon becomes bright and memorable. The leaves have just come out on most of the trees and are a brilliant and clean green, brightening up things considerably. As I walk along the boardwalk, I meet one other person who points out an orchard oriole, a bird I don't see very often. I continue on, listening to the drip, drip of the rain in the wetland. Rain is the lifeblood of the wetland. I can feel the pulse of the life-giving waters as they move under me. Everyone, including me, feels so much better when there is water in the wetland. It only seems natural that it should be so.

I extend my walk down the informal trail where there have been sightings of a prothonotary warbler. As I listen for the warbler, my eye catches a female merganser not more than a few feet in front of me. She is very agitated, making grunting sounds and zigzagging in the water. It seems like she's overdoing it a bit until I see coming toward her a unit of about 10 chicks. They are so close together it's hard to count. Once they connect with mom, they are practically crawling up on her back. She darts with them through the grasses, still vocalizing, and they anticipate her every move. Needless to say, I forgot all about the prothonotary until I heard it call!

As I walk back toward the raised area on the loop, I enjoy the flurry of swallow activity above. When I bring my gaze back to the boardwalk, there are at least two dozen swallows (tree, barn and rough-winged) perched along the fence rails on both sides of the boardwalk – all looking my way! It is as if they are daring me to pass over the bridge and it is one of those moments when I wish I had a camera. They are chattering away and preening and, I assume, enjoying the shower.

All along this walk, I think about water – how it enters the wetland, how it flows through the wetland, and where it goes from the wetland. When it's hot and dry, I'll remember days like I have experienced today. They will come again but it is our responsibility to ensure that they do.

**Kathi McNeil**

**FOHMP President**

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

**Mark Jett**

**Anna McKenna**

**Brett and Margaret Wohler**

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 Carpender**  
*Membership Chair*



## **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.*

*Thanks for your support!*

## **Highway and Invasive Plant Clean-up**

**T**hanks to Curtis Gibbons, Charlie Davis, Suzanne and Fred Lepple, Jacob Williams, Alejandra Parraga and Malcolm McNeil for pitching in and helping to clean up Lockheed Blvd. and Harrison Lane. On the same Saturday there were volunteers working hard to remove invasive plants in the Park. Kudos to Nancy Dale and Alison Niedbala for coordinating the IMA program.



## Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon 2008



This year's Birdathon was held on May 6<sup>th</sup> and provided participants with plenty of birds to count. Ninety-five species of birds were found by the four teams of staff members and volunteers. There were sixteen species of warblers, seven species of shorebirds, and even a couple of rails, sora and Virginia. Among the many highlights were a singing, and hopefully breeding, prothonotary warbler; a quick look for Ann Stat at a Mississippi kite; three yellow-breasted chats for Larry Cartwright's team; a pair of woodcock that Ben Jessup saw flying over the wetland; and a black-burnian warbler that Marianne Mooney spotted after a long search. The most common species was red-winged black-bird, with one hundred and nine individuals counted. The most abundant warbler was common yellowthroat, with fifty-seven individuals, followed in a close second by ovenbird, with a total of forty-two. Most of the warblers were counted by song, rather than by sight, which would have taken us a good deal longer. As for common birds that were not so common that day, there was just one green heron seen, and no one reported any mockingbirds, house sparrows or rock pigeons.

Every year, the Birdathon gives us a chance to reflect on the lives of two volunteers, Ken Howard and Ed Weigel. The proceeds generated from donations go towards sponsoring, in their memory, an internship at the park. Thanks again to everyone who contributed their time, expertise, and donations to this wonderful cause. If you haven't yet sent in your donation, please send a check made out to FCPA-HMP to Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306. Specify *Birdathon* donation on the memo line. Thank you.

*Andy Higgs*



*Our intrepid Birdathon participants celebrate at Denny's! Clockwise from left: Sy Fishbein, Melissa Gaulding, Andy Higgs, Ann Stat, P.J.Dunn, Jim Matthews, Ben Jesup, Chris French and Larry Cartwright. Birders not in the photo are: Suzanne Malone, Marianne Mooney, Gary Myers and Paula Sullivan.*

Fred Siskind  
Nancy Dupree  
Connie Carpender  
Dorothy Raduazo  
Barbara Perry  
Helen Halpin  
Art Dealy  
Warren and Becky Smith  
Sandra Galletta

Larry Cartwright  
Joe Sasfy  
Marianne Mooney  
Nancy Roeper Dale  
Stuart and Pam Davis  
Andy Higgs  
Barry Pearson  
Colette Hodes  
Michael Ready

Jessie Bynum  
Suzanne and Fred Lepple  
Barbara Stewart  
Tom Nardone  
John and Barbara Perry  
Paula Sullivan  
Friends of Huntley Meadows Park  
Virginia Native Plant Society,  
Potowmack Chapter

***Many thanks to the following people who donated to the 2008 Birdathon:***

### ***Birder's Exchange Collection Drive***

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park are once again collecting used optics for the Birder's Exchange program. Administered by the American Birding Association, the program puts used binoculars, scopes and field guides into the hands of scientists and others who work on bird research in Latin American countries. This program supports underfunded scientists and directly benefits the conservation of neo-tropical migrants.

During the months of May and June, bring your donation to the Huntley Meadows Park visitor's center from 9 to 5 daily (closed Tuesdays). FOHMP will ship the equipment to the ABA. **All optics should be in good working order.**

***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:** \_\_\_\_\_

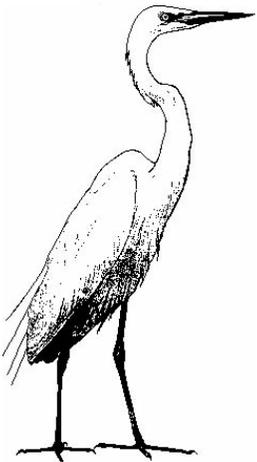
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.