

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



December 2011

Email: info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
Website: www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

Huntley's Holiday Happening

Sunday, December 11th, noon to 3:30 p.m.

Join us for our fourth annual winter holiday event! Enjoy refreshments while you do your holiday shopping in our Visitor Center gift shop. At 1:30 p.m., attend the opening reception of the FOHMP Photography Show with photos taken exclusively at the park. Later, make a holiday craft. After that, do some more shopping! A wide array of nature-oriented gifts are available for purchase including Gwen Frostic notecards, calendars, nature books for all ages, animal ornaments, locally handcrafted jewelry and Huntley Meadows t-shirts and visors. When your shopping is done, take a walk in the park. A perfectly enjoyable way to spend a December afternoon. *Please come!*

Special Winter Programs

Flying Dragons

Saturday January 14, 4-5:30 p.m.
Ever wonder how dragonflies can hover, dip, dive and zoom at 40 mph through the air? How many species live in Northern VA? What do they eat, who eats them and what kind of courtship do they have? The answers are all bizarre and surprising—you won't want to miss this colorful power point presentation of local dragonflies. We'll end with discussing how to create the perfect dragonfly pond on your own property. \$6 (Adults)

Bird Feeding and Gardening

Saturday January 28, 4-5:30 p.m.
Let Huntley Meadow's park manager and Audubon Society programmer Kevin Munroe share all his secrets to bird feeding and bird gardening: best feeders, seeds, birdbaths, native plants, landscape techniques and problem solving. We'll cover them all, including the best way to deal with pesky squirrels! Learn how to plant for each season, and take home a list of native plants with blooms for every month of the year. \$6 (Adults)

All A-Buzz About Bees

Saturday February 25, 4-5:30 p.m.

Learn all about the fascinating lives of our native bees, how they contribute to the human world and what you can do to attract them to your gardens. We'll discuss the best plans for bee boxes and how to build and care for them. \$6 (Adults)
All programs require reservations. Sign-ups can now be done online at the Parktakes site. Please go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes. Or call 703-222-4664.

*First photo
of a coyote
caught in
daylight at
Huntley
Meadows.
Photo taken
by
Yukun Xing*





Park Manager's Message

A Walk on Huntley's Wild Side



Have you ever been graded by a Green Tree Frog? Or asked the advice of a King Rail? Both species can tell us a lot about the health of our local ecosystems. They, and countless other wildlife, speak loudly with their presence, or lack thereof, if we can just learn to listen. If you'd like to learn more about the health of your backyard, neighborhood park or the wetlands at Huntley Meadows, there may be no better way than looking for **indicator species**, such as King Rails and Green Tree Frogs. At Huntley, we call them Target Species, and we're using them as guides for the park's Wetland Restoration Project. The concept of using specific species to indicate habitat health, whether it be a wetland, rainforest, grassland, or even suburban backyard, has been around for a long time, and has helped guide many environmental projects.

So how do indicator species work? It comes down to the difference between habitat specialists and habitat generalists. Habitat specialists are animals that have very specific needs, when it comes to food and shelter – only fully-functioning habitats can support them. Find one of these species, and you have a pretty good idea of what kind of habitat you're in. In contrast, habitat generalists are far more adaptable, able to change their food and shelter depending on what's available. For example, American Robins can be found in northern boreal forests, the Florida Everglades, California deserts, and on Virginia golf courses. They are habitat generalists, happy with insects, worms, berries and almost any available structure to hold a nest. Least Bitterns on the other hand, need marshy wetlands, and are partial to a particular type, called a hemi-marsh. They feed on aquatic invertebrates, with a special taste for crayfish, and require a specific combination of water depth and vegetation density for nesting. Least Bitterns, along with Green Tree Frogs and King Rails, are habitat specialists, and therefore make excellent indicator species.

What this means is, if you want to figure out how functional and healthy a habitat is, it helps to learn what wildlife specialists live in the habitat in question, and then use them as yardsticks for measuring the health of that habitat. The habitat we want to foster in Huntley's central wetland, the type that attracts the most biodiversity, is called a hemi-marsh. We've developed a list of habitat specialists that act as indicator species for a healthy hemi-marsh.



To make it clear that they are the end-goal of the wetland restoration project, we call them Target Species. Our goal is to restore the wetland to a hemi-marsh healthy enough to support a thriving community of very picky habitat specialists. We're using their needs to guide the restoration's design and management, and their presence will be the thermometer that takes the project's temperature.

Park staff and volunteers have provided data on these Target Species for decades, long before we developed that term, or planned a restoration project, simply because they're interesting species and worth recording. Now that we've decided to use them as project guides, we've spent the last three years gathering specific and focused data. The Monday morning bird-walk gang, led by the indomitable Harry Glasgow, makes note of any Target Species seen. The park's Resource Manager, Dave Lawlor has developed detailed fact sheets on most of the Target Species. Several recent research projects involving field collections and monitoring have provided additional data. And last, but certainly not least, Marianne Mooney creates a spread sheet that records all Target Species sightings from the previous week.

Several FOHMP board members, and many FOHMP members and volunteers, have been instrumental in gathering this information. It's accurate to say that over half of the data on Target Species has come from FOHMP in some way, whether directly, or via funding and support, both now and over the park's long history. **Those of you reading this can help.** Please check the FOHMP website, or ask at the Visitor Center, for a full list of Wetland Restoration Target Species. Keep your eyes open for them whenever you visit Huntley Meadows, and **record your sightings in the front desk log book.** Marianne checks the log book for relevant data to transfer onto the spreadsheets. If you also include a reading from the **wetland water gauge**, you will have given two data points to help guide the restoration project.

In the spring newsletter, I'll talk about how you can use indicator species to increase the health of your own backyard. Remember, "Think Globally, Act Locally". Environmental health starts in our own neighborhoods.

Kevin Munroe



Monday Morning Birdwalk Seeks Birds, and Birders!

The Monday Morning birdwalk has been a regular Huntley Meadows event since 1985. It was started by Ken Howard and Ed Weigel, expert birders and faithful Park volunteers who were always willing to help visitors who had bird questions. Gradually, a growing number of birders met Ken and Ed on Mondays for a walk. Thus a tradition is born. Today, while Ken and Ed have long since passed away, the Monday Morning Birdwalk has become a local Northern Virginia institution, drawing people from all over the area, and from faraway places in the United States and beyond. Every Monday morning, birders gather in the Huntley parking lot off Lockheed Boulevard. In the summer months we gather at 7, but in December, January and February start time is 8. Either way, some are bleary eyed, unshaven, and nearly still asleep, but all are ready for a rewarding, gentle walk in the Park. Ed Weigel always kept precise records of the early walks he and Ken led, and we have continued that tradition. As a result, the Monday Morning birding records go back over 25 years, and are among the most complete in the area. Our typical species count ranges between about 35-40 in the summer, and up to 60-65 in spring.

The Monday Morning Birders have scored some great victories over the years. About 15 years ago, the group reported a Black Rail in the middle of the central wetland. Word spread, and within hours, the boardwalk was crowded with birders with some of the most elaborate photographic equipment available at the time. And there they sat . . . for days. Black Rails are extremely elusive, so this guy was rarely spotted over the next month. But there were just enough sightings, with photos, to keep the throng in place. Navigating the encampments of stools, coolers, and enormous lenses all along the boardwalk became difficult. Other firsts for the Monday Morning group was the Mississippi Kite in the late 1990s; the return of King and Virginia Rails in the last few years, and within the past month, a Red-necked Phalarope who apparently dropped in for a quick snack and left.

The greatest obstacle for most who want to come on the walk (besides the need to go to a job) is the hour. Look at it this way – traffic at 6 is a little lighter, when we are done you still have the rest of the day, and you can join the group for breakfast at the local Denny's and help compile the day's list and talk about your other birding adventures. Climb out of that bed and join us! You never know . . . there may be a Phalarope in your future!

Harry Glasgow

Boardwalk Reopening Celebration

Huntley Meadows Park celebrated the official reopening of the boardwalk with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 22. Since August, the boardwalk has been closed to visitors while crews worked to replace the surface boards. The surface of the half-mile long lumber boardwalk, first constructed in 1993, was replaced with high-density polyethylene boards made of 100 percent recycled materials. The 132,269 pounds of plastic came from 965,568 milk jugs collected from a recycling plant.

"For Huntley Meadows Park, we've this wonderful dual mission of environmental education and resource protection, and this boardwalk is the perfect marriage of those two focuses," park manager Kevin Munroe said. "It's an excellent opportunity for education, obviously, and it's done in a way that allows us to protect our resources. Every project, every program, every development we do in the park, we always try to keep that two-pronged mission in mind, of environmental education and resource protection."

Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay reported that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recently dedicated dozens of acres to Huntley Meadows behind Hayfield Farm off of Telegraph Road and emphasized that the park is continually growing. The land will be protected indefinitely as a result of the transfer.

Friends of Huntley Meadows board member Adam Bucher thanked the staff of the park, the TMJ construction crew and the community for its support. "The staff has done an excellent job managing this project," Bucher said. "To everyone in the community that came here to support this event, this was a huge commitment for the Park Authority."

After the ribbon cutting, Munroe led visitors along the boardwalk to view birds and other wetland flora and fauna.

(excerpted from the Bellehaven Patch)



Winter Happenings

Multi-media Art Show
Sculptor and painter James Strohmeyer
March 3 to April 29, 2012
Artist reception, March 4, 2 to 4 p.m.

James Michael Strohmeyer was born and raised in Mesa, Arizona and divides his time between there and the Washington area. He was an artist-in-residence at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. In 1993, he founded Wet Paint Productions, a design and fabrication business which transforms space into art. His custom artwork is in a number of homes and businesses in the southwest. The public is invited to attend the opening reception.

The Blues by James Strohmeyer



The beavers have been quite busy at Huntley this fall. Water levels at the start of the boardwalk have been raised by the new dam work. And their lodge seems to grow higher each week. Come out to see all the construction!

Photos by Marianne Mooney



Huntley Meadows Park Meeting Room Rental

Have your office or club retreat in the midst of a premier wetland sanctuary!



The Huntley Meadows Visitor Center is a great place for a meeting, training or team building. The multi-purpose room can be set up with tables and chairs for up to 50 people – full AV equipment available. Participants can enjoy the Center’s informative exhibits on local natural and cultural history, as well as the gift store featuring nature-related books, jewelry, and stationery. A naturalist-led tour of the 50 acre wetland on the half-mile boardwalk trail can be arranged for an extra fee. Tables can be set up for a self-catered lunch. The rental fee is \$50/hour (20% discount for non-profit). Please call 703-768-2525 to reserve.



Winter Programs



The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park invite you to attend the opening reception of the 2011 Photography Contest on Sunday December 11, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

The FOHMP Photo Contest is a nature-themed photography contest and a Friends of Huntley Meadows Park fundraiser. The public is invited to attend our opening reception and awards presentation. All photographs were taken at the park and include entries in a youth division. The photographs can be seen in the multi-purpose room through February. All monies raised from entries and sale of photographs go to support Huntley Meadows Park. Please come to our opening reception where you can meet the photographers and enjoy refreshments.

Woodpecker Watch

Saturday January 7, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

As they drum and drill on trees, woodpeckers are ridding our yards and woodlands of ants, wasps, and grubs. Watch a variety of woodpeckers on the park's suet feeders, learn how to attract them to your yard, and hopefully glimpse a flicker on its mission to eat a thousand insects in a day! Reservations required. \$6

Birding for Beginners

Saturday January 8, 8-10:30 a.m.

Winter is a great time to begin birding. Program starts with a discussion about field guides and optics then we'll walk to look for resident birds. Reservations required. \$6 Adults

Café Cattail

Friday January 20, 7-9:30 p.m.

Welcome to Huntley Meadows' very own coffeehouse! Enjoy a relaxing evening applauding our community's talents. Musicians, dancers and poets are encouraged to share their arts with a nature theme. Sponsored by FOHMP. Free

Park Manager Walk and Talk

Saturday January 21, 3-5:00 p.m.

Join Kevin Munroe for an informal walk. Find out about the wetland restoration project and learn about the wildlife for which the Park is known. No reservations needed. Canceled if rain. Free (Adults)

Birding for Beginners

Sunday February 12, 8-10:30 a.m.

Sharpen your waterfowl identification skills while birding with a park naturalist. Meets in the Visitor Center parking lot. Reservations required. \$6

Winter Hike- Wonderful Wetland Waterfowl

Saturday February 18, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Hike the boardwalk to the observation tower, looking for green-winged teals, pintails, swamp sparrows, winter wrens, and hopefully spot a bald eagle. An expert birder will share natural history and identification tips, and set up a spotting scope for your bird watching enjoyment. Reservations required. \$6

Evening Wildlife Walk Saturday March 5 5:30-7pm

Explore the Hike/Bike Trail in hopes of discovering calling frogs and owls, migrating waterfowl and displaying American woodcock. Bring optics and a flashlight. Meet at the park's South King's Highway entrance. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. \$6

Just for kids

Young Explorers Science Series

Mondays, 3:15-4:30 p.m. Begins January 9, 6 classes. Through activities, crafts, and trail walks, children learn about animals in winter and how nature is preparing for spring. (6-8 yrs.) Reservations required. \$76

Nature Detectives - Evergreens

Wednesday December 14 or Thursday the 15th 10-11 a.m. or 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Listen to a winter tale, and then make an evergreen ornament. Reservations required. \$8 (3-5 yrs.)

Nature for Tiny Tots

Begins Tuesday January 10 or Wednesday the 11th 10-11:00 a.m. Parents work with their children to explore a different nature topic each week, with songs, crafts, and stories. Six classes meet every other week. Reservations required. (24-42 mos.), \$65

Young Naturalists' Science Series

Tuesday January 10, 3:30-5pm., 6 week series. Through activities, crafts, and trail walks, children learn about animals in winter and how nature is preparing for spring. Reservations required. (9-12 yrs.), \$76

Science for Homeschoolers

Wednesday January 11, 1:30-3pm. Students explore marsh, meadow, and forest to learn about patterns of cycle and change, plant and animal adaptations, and how scientists classify living things. Six classes meet. Reservations required. (6-9 yrs.), \$76



President's Message

I have some good news on the budget front for the next fiscal year, July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013! All Fairfax County departments have been asked to submit proposed budgets that include scenarios for a 1%, 3% and 5% budget cut. The good news is that the Park Authority has submitted a budget proposal to the County Executive that has NO cuts to the Resource Management Division. Keep your eyes and ears open for news about the budget proposal! The County Executive will give his proposed budget to the Board of Supervisors in February 2012. Public meetings will then be held to gather citizen input, followed by a vote on the adoption of next year's budget by the Board of Supervisors in April. We will keep you posted as to what you can do to help.

The bad news is that the parks within the Resource Management Division are struggling to keep their quality staff and programming. It's challenging for the staff, as they are continually under pressure to increase their revenue. You may notice some changes to the programming at HMP. I applaud Nancy Pryor and Brooke LaPorta, who are working hard to create programming that is of interest to the public and is revenue generating.

FOHMP is helping support the programming and the Visitor Center operations at HMP. We have given money to the Park to help cover seasonal salaries. This ensures that the Center is well-staffed on the weekends and that school field trip requests can be accommodated during the week.

I, for one, believe that the parks within the Resource Management Division are an invaluable source of education for people of all ages and that park staff are stewards of our natural and cultural resources. It is not always easy and practical to try to make these educational and conservation functions into revenue generators. Fairfax County should be proud to support environmental and cultural education and stewardship of these resources, using them in a way that will benefit all and create a better place to live, work, learn and play!

Kathi McNeil, FOHMP president

FOHMP board member and Huntley Meadows Park volunteer **Harrison Glasgow** received his 20 years of volunteer service award this past October. Congratulations, Harry, and thank you from all of us.



Photo by Mike Ready

**Friends of Huntley Meadows
Park Budget
Fiscal year July 2011-June 2012**

Income

Dues	\$ 4,500
Donations	2,500
Sales	2,500
Photo Show	450
Yearly Appeal	6,000
Co-sponsorships	1,000
Parking Donations	8,000
Total Income	\$24,950

Expenses

Grants:

Naturalist Intern	\$2,800
Scholarships	800
Wetlands Awareness Day	500
Facility Equipment	1,000
Resource Man. Equip.	300
Seasonal Salaries	5,000
Mastenbrook grant	10,000
Misc.	500
Total Grants	\$20,900

Operating Expenses

Website	\$350
Newsletter	1,200
Sales	1,000
Fundraising	700
Misc.	300
Total Operating	\$3,550
Total Expenses	\$24,450

NET INCOME \$500

Remember to donate your gently-used nature books to our FOHMP book sale. Just drop them off at the Visitor Center during open hours. Good condition appreciated. Please, no book sets. 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!





Huntley Notes



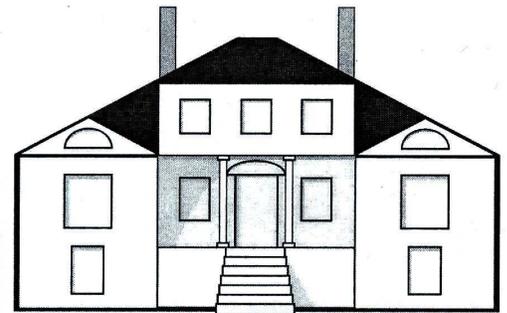
Historic Huntley

Please join me in welcoming Historic Huntley to Huntley Meadows Park! This recently restored historic structure is just up the street from the main Park entrance on Harrison Lane. The House and outbuildings were built in the early 1800's by Thomson Francis Mason, the grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall. The house has been recently restored by the Fairfax County Park Authority using money designated for the project in County bonds that were passed in 1998 and 2008 and has "returned to its roots" as a part of Huntley Meadows Park. Huntley Meadows Park was once part of the Huntley estate and farmed by a tenant farmer and slaves prior to the Civil War. During the Civil War, the house and land were occupied for a period by the Third Michigan Infantry. After the war, there were several owners until 1989 when the Park Authority purchased the house, outbuildings and surrounding 2.75 acres.

The house is also significant as an example of federal style architecture including Palladian influences. Students from George Washington University and Virginia Tech have studied various aspects of the architecture of Historic Huntley.

The Friends of Historic Huntley was formed in 1990 and have been a driving force in the preservation of the site and its restoration. With the support of the Park Authority, HMP, and Carolyn Gamble, they have also been holding open houses twice a year so that people can come and get background on the site and take a look inside.

The Interpretive Plan for the site focuses on educational use with advertised programs for all ages and promotion of field trip visits by schools and universities. A part-time historian will be hired to develop and present programs, promote visitation to the site, and create and manage a volunteer program. If you know anyone interested in the historian position, please have them contact Carolyn Gamble or Kevin Munroe.



HISTORIC HUNTLEY

VILLA WITH A VIEW



The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park would like to thank the following new Lifetime members, *Dexter Hinckley and Cathy Pardee*.

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

Please remember the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park in your year-end giving. We appreciate your generous support and help.



Holiday Gifting

This Christmas, give the gift of nature to friends and loved ones through a membership to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. Your gift will support the park and will introduce someone new to Huntley Meadows. A life membership is \$150, family memberships are \$20, and individual memberships are \$15. For all new gift memberships, the recipient will receive an announcement of their membership, a current FOHMP newsletter and the Great blue heron park patch. An additional purchase of a HMP sweatshirt, hat or t-shirt would complete the gift!



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

Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining our Friends group. By becoming a member, you will help to protect and preserve the park. Dues help fund new initiatives and programs and your membership will help us to be stronger advocates for the park. Fill out and mail the application to this address:

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

Dues information:

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

Name: _____

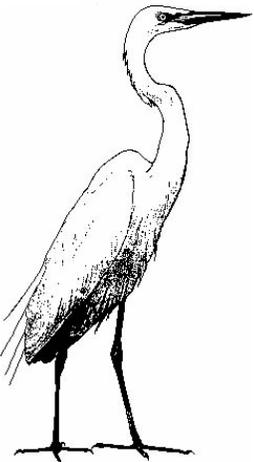
Address: _____

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.