

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Fall 2017

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

Impacts to the Park

By Cathy Ledec, President of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

Two important Fairfax County project efforts are underway that you may, or may not, know about. The two projects I'm referring to are (1) EM-BARK Richmond Highway and (2) the proposed Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) road widening between Napper Road and Jeff Todd Way. It is time for all of us to submit public comments so that we can positively influence these projects as they move through their planning phases. Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) is developing a position statement on both of these projects. Our goal is to protect Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) from negative environmental and historic impacts of these project efforts.

Both projects may impact HMP directly and/or indirectly, and we are working hard to avoid and/or minimize these impacts. It is time for us to combine our voices and provide public input to the requisite processes. We hope you will consider submitting comments, attending the upcoming public meetings, and /or supporting us by expressing orally or in writing the need for balance and environmental protections, especially for Huntley Meadows Park. Remember, our natural resources need us to speak up for them to ensure that they will still be around for future generations to experience and enjoy.

'Impacts' continued on page 3

Holiday Merchandise

Visit the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center gift shop for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) pins, cinch bags, long and short sleeve t-shirts with above heron image printed on the front, ball caps and more winter caps styles. In addition, staff has cultivated a diverse collection of nature and history related items and books.

All proceeds from logo items and used book sales go to the FOHMP and Friends of Historic Huntley to support Park activities.



Note from the Park Manager

By Karen Sheffield

Have you taken a stroll on the boardwalk this year? Much has improved since the Wetland Restoration Project was completed in 2014. The vast, dense stands of cattails have mostly disappeared. There is more water in the wetland. Trees just past the tower are beginning to die and fall as this area transitions from forest to a low vegetation/open water environment.

The Restoration Project raised the total water level capacity about 18" and in doing so changed the footprint of the wetland as we knew it in 2012. The wetland today is managed as a hemi-marsh, 50% open water/50% vegetation. A hemi-marsh is a habitat that can support high plant and wildlife diversity. Staff manage this habitat by controlling the amount of water leaving the wetland. With this tool and the increased water level potential, previously dry areas are now inundated with water, and the vegetation is transitioning in these areas.

'Park Manager' continued on page 3

You Are Invited!

The annual Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Show opening reception is December 10, 2017 from 1-3pm. Please join us to congratulate the winners and vote for your personal favorite. Light refreshments will be served as friends and photographers mingle and admire the many submissions.

Become a Board Member

There is an opening for Treasurer (one of the four Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Officer positions) that needs to be filled as soon as possible. This is a volunteer position and a crucial role in the smooth functioning of this organization. If you would like a full job description or feel you are a qualified candidate, please email friendsofhmp@gmail.com.

Monday Morning Bird Walk

By Harry Glasglow

Those who look at nature in a sort of sentimental, Disneyish way are often shattered when they witness some of the harsh realities of the actual world. More than once, I've tried to comfort people who watched a Hawk swoop down on their bird feeder, grab one of "their" Chickadees, and then calmly tear it apart in their yard. They are devastated by this ruthlessness.

The previous edition of this newsletter contained a bit about brood parasitism, another fact of nature that some find appalling. Brood parasites lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, and do not provide any parental care for their own offspring. Care that the "hosts" provide to the young parasites is care denied to their own young. This can have a detrimental effect on the reproductive success of the hosts and may affect their population numbers as a consequence.

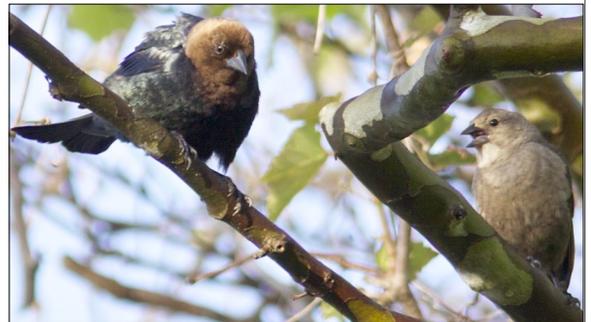
If we can look at these occurrences without judging them by human social conventions, and instead see them as an integral part of nature, our joy of being outside will grow. However you perceive the creation of our world, what has developed is a natural outcome of that creation. The Hawk taking the Chickadee is an expression of the natural world. The Hawk has to eat, too. And its diet includes Chickadees. The nest parasitism discussed in our last newsletter is also a natural behavior for some species.

The nest parasites we encounter in North America are usually Brown-headed Cowbirds. Parasitism by Cowbirds is increasing and has been reported as high as 70% (i.e., 70% of found parasitized nests had Cowbird eggs in them). The main reason for this increase is probably habitat fragmentation.

Host species have developed many defense strategies against brood parasites. These include shifting their breeding season so it does not correspond to that of the parasite; outright attack of the parasite; warning calls; nest concealment; egg discrimination; young discrimination; and removal of the parasitic egg or young. Hosts may employ one or several of these strategies.

Brood parasitism is one of the most interesting phenomenon in the animal kingdom and demonstrates the amazing relationships animals can have with one another. Let me encourage readers to look into this and other natural behaviors that we might find displeasing or distressing. If we can raise our thinking above simple sentiment and understand the evolution that produced these behaviors, our understanding of nature will be strengthened and heightened.

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 October 23rd - March), is free of charge, requires no reservation, and is open to all. Birders meet in the parking lot at 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA. Questions should be directed to Park staff during normal business hours at (703)768-2525.



Brown Cowbird male displaying for a female.
Photo by Ed Eder.

'Impacts' continued from page 1

Upcoming public meetings:

EMBARK Richmond Highway: (1) Lee District Land Use Committee: December 4, 2017 at 7pm, Helen Wilson Community Room in the Franconia Government Center and (2) Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations: December 11, 2017 at 7pm, Mt. Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parker's Lane, Alexandria, Virginia. Early drafts of the Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can be found here: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/embarkrichmondhwy/draft_plan_text_10-26-2017.pdf.

VDOT road widening proposed for Richmond Highway between Napper Road and Jeff Todd

Way: A public meeting was held on November 6, 2017, and the open written comment period will close on December 6, 2017. The project web site is: http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/richmond_highway.asp. You can find a comment sheet that can be used to submit comments to VDOT at: richmondhighway@vdot.virginia.gov.

FOHMP will be developing position statements for both of these projects. Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark/> and check in at our website at <http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/> for details. Of course you can always contact us at friendsofhmp@gmail.com if you have any questions in advance.

I hope to see you either on the trails at HMP or at one of the aforementioned public meetings. I also take this opportunity to wish you and yours a very Happy Holiday Season!

'Park Manager' continued from page 1

You may observe other subtle changes as you visit the wetland. With areas transitioning from forest to low wetland vegetation, a pair of red-headed woodpeckers nested in a tree this spring. Because the maximum water levels were raised about 18" areas along the boardwalk are now deeper water sections causing the vegetation to change. In some cases, these areas will transition to open water areas of the hemi-marsh. Native plant diversity has greatly increased in the central wetland, from 10 plant communities in 2012 to 49 communities in 2016. Least bitterns and rails have visited the Park with more regularity than before the project, and last year a juvenile rail was spotted in the wetland.

We've seen incredible results in a short number of years post-restoration with plant diversity and wetland expansion. Staff manage the habitat to restore appropriate winter waterfowl food, create a hemi-marsh environment and ensure substantial native plant diversity.

In elementary school, we learn that living things need all elements of their habitat to survive: space, shelter, water and food. According to water quality studies performed by staff, macroinvertebrates and crayfish abundance has not increased since the wetland restoration project. The 2017 growing season was a shock year (see below) to foster macroinvertebrate abundance in the wetland, meaning that water levels were kept higher than usual.

Shock years are necessary to properly maintain the wetland. Returning the wetland to a healthy hemi-marsh requires variable water levels. In general, winter is the high water time and summer the low. However, to maintain a healthy wetland, the water level cannot follow the same prescription for water height each year. Every so often a shock year is needed to reset or reboot the wetland to boost a management goal by creating very wet or very dry conditions during the growing season. We hope the 2017 high water shock year will provide an environment for macroinvertebrate populations to recover.

The 2014 Wetland Restoration Project was made possible through a Fairfax County Park Authority Park Bond. Staff actively manage the wetland and other Park habitats that we hope will continuously create meaningful experiences on your visits. I thank you for supporting parks and voting yes on park bonds.

Thank You to the Following Donors

In memory of Park legend Norma Hoffman, the following donors gave generously to the Fiends of Huntley Meadows Park in her honor:

Edgar Kley	David Kessler	Jim Lingebach	Sara Friedman
Alton Echols	Fred Siskind	Robin Kessler	Anonymous
A. Shenagga	Eleanor M. Worth	Jim & Roberta Bucher	

In memory of Friend of the Park Juan Osuna, the following donors gave charitably to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park in his honor:

Cory Shindel	Karen Grisez	Leslye Orloff	Alison Seiler
Francisco Mirkow	Steven Lang	Andy Schoenholtz	Janice Liebowitz

Memoriam contributions can be made via Paypal on our website at <http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html> or by mailing checks made out to FOHMP to:

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

Be sure to indicate in who's name you are donating in the note section for either method.

Introducing Huntley Intern Carol Black

My name is Carol Black, and I am the Outdoor Education and Community Engagement Intern at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). The internship is funded by a grant from RunningBrooke, a local non-profit seeking to get kids moving.

I am a former elementary and middle school teacher from Loudoun County. In April of this year, my husband and I moved to the Mt. Vernon area. As an avid hiker, cyclist and outdoor enthusiast, I was very excited to find this internship. In my internship position, I am currently facilitating a once-a-week, after-school program with Hybla Valley Elementary School. Fifth grade students come to the Park to engage in physical activities such as jogging and hiking through the Park. The jog/hike is a precursor to a short lesson aimed at reinforcing science concepts learned in school. We are making observations, drawing in a sketch book, and identifying ecosystems and plants, birds, and animals which call HMP their home. We are also emphasizing the importance of being outside, being good citizens of the Earth, and incorporating exercise into our daily lives. This year's program has been split into two semester-long sessions, so that we can reach more students.



Carol engaging the students in movement during class.

'Tis the Season of Giving



Donate to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) as you shop this holiday season.

If you shop on Amazon, you can identify FOHMP as your favorite charity. For every transaction you complete, FOHMP will receive a donation equal to 5% of your purchase. Simply register FOHMP as your preferred charity at <https://smile.amazon.com>.

This costs you nothing and costs FOHMP nothing. Amazon makes the donation automatically!

Karen Is Recognized!



Sarah Baldwin, Acting Director of FCPA giving Karen Sheffield her award at the FCPA Trailblazers Award Ceremony in September.

Congratulations to Park Manager Karen Sheffield recipient of the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) Trailblazers 2017 Stewardship Award as an individual who protects and enhances environmental values, diversity of natural habitats, and cultural heritage.

In 2017 Karen's role as Huntley Meadows Park Manager brought her to the front lines, and into the trenches, of natural and cultural resource protection. One of Karen's primary efforts this year was collaboration with members of the public, partner groups, outside companies, other Fairfax County agencies, County attorneys, and even the Board of Supervisors to greatly reduce negative environmental impacts. The result was preservation of ~13 acres of sensitive wetland habitats and over 800 trees, and protection for a newly-recognized, nationally significant historical site.

Karen also oversaw several resource management projects in 2017 and held all involved to the highest standards of preservation. There was the rehabilitation of the Tenant House at Historic Huntley, which included the aid of archaeologists and an historic preservation intern to document the historic elements of the building that would be destroyed during the renovation process. Karen coordinated the investigation of the current condition of the Historic Huntley ice well and determined needs for its stabilization. In addition, Karen and Resource Manager Dave Lawlor have been working hard to uphold the Park Authority's policies on a Department of Public Works Environmental Services (DPWES) project in which a new pipe in a community bordering Huntley Meadows will divert stormwater to a new location on Huntley property. The new outflow location currently has no flow and will eventually meet a small ditch within the Park. Dave and Karen have been working with DPWES on the plan design to limit potential negative impacts. Finally, Karen attends public meetings and committee meetings on EMBARK, a Route 1 Richmond Highway Revitalization Project, that includes both the significant widening of Route 1 and the revitalization and high density rezoning of the commercial areas immediately adjacent. Huntley's concerns include: three of the seven half mile high density commercial development circles border Huntley or come within blocks of the Park; the view shed impact of the structures from Historic Huntley; and maintaining a healthy link between the watersheds and central wetland of Huntley downstream through Route 1 and into the Potomac River.

Karen has gone above and beyond to uphold FCPA's natural and cultural resource policies and protections to ensure that future generations will benefit from the treasures Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley provide to the public. We thank Karen and wish her continued success!

WANTED: USED BOOKS

We are looking for used book donations for our used book sale in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center gift shop. We are especially interested in books with the following themes:

- Guides (animals or plants; other parks or natural resource areas)
- Environmental protection and preservation
- Local and Native American history (DE, MD, VA area)
- Kid friendly (nature/natural history theme)
- Children story telling/reading



Bring books to the front desk in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center.

All proceeds from book sales go to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park to support Park activities.

Reflections on Norma Hoffman Memorial

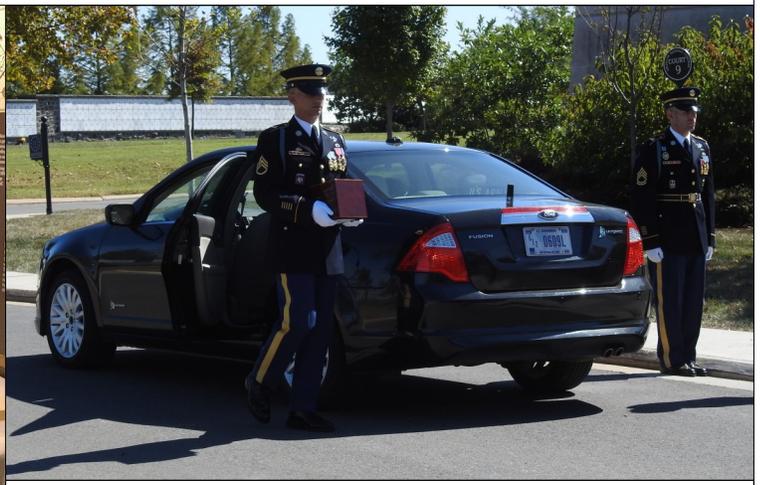
By Cathy Ledec

A beautiful, sunny autumn day greeted all of us the morning of October 4, 2017. This was a day that our friend Norma Hoffman would have enjoyed. Many friends and fans of Norma joined together with her family for a final farewell. It was a journey filled with sadness. At the same time, I could not help but think about how perfect the weather was on this day and how much Norma would have enjoyed the warmth of the sun shining down on us. A large group traveled to the Columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery for the service. For some the feelings of sadness were still fresh. Many tears were shed and hugs were shared as we said our goodbyes to our dear friend.

Following the cemetery ceremony, a reception was held at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center in Huntley Meadows Park. More hugs were shared and remembrances were spoken by many in a touching tribute to Norma. We welcomed numerous dignitaries, including Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay; Former Mount Vernon District Supervisor Gerry Hyland; Sara Baldwin, Acting Director of Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA); Aimee Vosper, Deputy Director, FCPA; Dr. Cynthia Jacobs-Carter, FCPA Board Member for the Lee District; Cindy Walsh, Director Resource Management Division, FCPA; and many, many friends from Norma's many-faceted and full life. We were treated to a special dance from Carolyn Gamble, long time friend of Norma's. This filled my heart with so much joy, thank you for sharing this special moment with us. I hope everyone felt the love and friendship that was present on this day. I truly felt the presence of Norma's spirit and know that she was happy to see all of us come together. I know that her spirit continues to be amongst us and watches over us as we continue to work to protect and preserve Huntley Meadows Park.



Guests writing 'love notes' to Norma Hoffman. Photo by Nancy Pryor.



Two members of the Military carry the urn containing Norma Hoffman's ashes. Photo by Cathy Ledec.



Many friends of Norma Hoffman filled the Auditorium of the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center to share stories and honor Norma. Photo by Nancy Pryor.



Fred Hoffman (center) talking with friends. Photo by Nancy Pryor.

Huntley Meadows Park Programs

All programs **require reservations**, unless free. Sign up and find detailed descriptions online using Parktakes. Search "Huntley" at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes, or call 703-222-4664 to register.

DECEMBER

- 1 Friday - Family Owl Outing** - (6-Adult), 5-6:30pm. \$7. Registration code: 3404039402
- 2 Saturday - The Art of the Book; Calligraphy** - (12-Adult), 1-2pm. \$7. Registration code: 5784053101
- 2 Saturday - Owl Outing** - (Adult), 4:30-6:30pm. \$8. Registration code: 3404866602
- 10 Sunday - Naturally Beautiful** - (Adult), 2-4pm. \$10. Registration code: 3404053301 (Learn how to use essential oils to make your own beauty products)
- 16 Saturday - Christmas at Huntley** - (4-Adult), 4:30-6pm. \$8. Registration code: 5784053701
- 16 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy** - (12-Adult), 5-7pm. \$8. Registration code: 3404865102

JANUARY

- 6 Saturday - Winter Hike-Marvelous Meadows** - (9-Adult). 2-3:30pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401881001
- 7 Sunday - Winter Birding** - (Adult), 8-11am. \$10. Registration code: 3401059001
- 20 Saturday - Family Owl Outing** - (6-Adult), 4:30-6pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401039402
- 21 Sunday - Winter Birds and Feeder Workshop** - (4-Adult), 12-2pm. \$10. Registration code: 3401041201
- 27 Saturday - Wild Origami Workshop** - (6-Adult), 11am-12pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401053501
- 27 Saturday - Evening Stroll** - (6-Adult), 5-7pm. \$8. Registration code: 3401827901
- 28 Sunday - The Art of the Book; Calligraphy** - (12-Adult), 1-2pm. \$7. Registration code: 5781053101

FEBRUARY

- 3 Saturday - Sketch Hike: Winter Trees and Landscapes** - (12-Adult), 10am-12pm. \$8. Registration code: 3401027701
- 3 Saturday - Hot Cocoa Wetland Night Hike** - (6-Adult), 5-6:30pm. \$8. Registration code:

3401059101

10 Saturday - Magic of Dragonflies - (Adults), 2:30-4pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401058901

10 Saturday - Family Owl Outing - (6-Adult), 5:15-6:45pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401039401

11 Sunday - The Art of the Book: Paper - (12-Adult), 12-1pm. \$7. Registration code: 5781053001

18 Sunday - Winter Birding - (Adult), 8-11am. \$10. Registration code: 3401059002

24 Saturday - Live Owl Prowl - (Adult), 12-1pm. \$10. Registration code: 3401058701

24 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk - (Adult), 5:30-7:00pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401834001

MARCH

3 Saturday - Sketch Hike: Winter Trees and Landscapes - (12-Adult), 10am-12pm. \$8. Registration code: 3401027702

3 Saturday - On Mason's Land - (4-Adult), 1-2:30pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401053801

3 Saturday - Family Woodcock Walk - (8-Adult), 5:30-7pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401011902

10 Saturday - Festival of Owls - (4-Adult), 12-2pm. \$12. Registration code: 3401041101

10 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk - (Adult), 5:45-7:15pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401834002

17 Saturday - The Art of the Book: Bindings - (12-Adult), 10-11am. \$7. Registration code: 5781053201

17 Saturday - Family Woodcock Walk - (8-Adult), 6:45-8:15am. \$7. Registration code: 3401011901

24 Saturday - Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery - (4-Adult), 12-2pm. \$10. Registration code: 3401052301

24 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk - (Adult), 7-8:30pm. \$7. Registration code: 3401834003

NOTE: Huntley Meadows Park offers a variety of teacher workday, winter break and spring break camps as well as programs for Girl and Boy Scouts. Visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows-park/calendar.htm> for more information and to view the complete list of classes offered. Or call 703-768-2525 to speak with a staff member.

Go Green

We now offer an electronic version of our quarterly newsletter! If you wish to receive your newsletter via email, please notify us at: friendsofhmp@gmail.com.

FOHMP does not share our email list with any other organizations.

**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