



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Winter  
2023 Newsletter

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## Let's Talk Money . . .



By: Ben Jesup, Interim FOHMP President

Talking about money is usually awkward, but often important. So here goes.

Happily, and thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, the financial state of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) is excellent. The installation of the parking donations boxes a number of years back was a real game-changer. The donation boxes have given us a steady stream of donation income that seems to have established a sustainable financial resource for FOHMP. Unfortunately for Park patrons, COVID brought cutbacks on programs and events at the Park. At the same time, FOHMP expenses associated with these programs were also eliminated during Covid. As a result, our reserves have been growing. Of course, we are a non-profit with a mission, and the Board is united in wanting to see the funds we take in wisely invested to benefit the Park, its mission, and its visitors.

This year, we are strategically increasing our spending. Most importantly, we are increasing the number of interns we fund this year from eight to ten! Two of these interns have specific funding sources, and we thank the Virginia Native Plant Society and Bird-A-thon donors for their support. Interns are crucial to the success of the Park. They allow us to leverage the expertise of the staff to accomplish additional programming and important aspects of managing the natural resources at Huntley. And we provide the best setting to hook talented young people on a career path related to natural resources management and environmental education.

Another big part of our spending is the Norma Hoffman Financial Assistance Program (see *Grateful Reflections on 2022* in this issue). Named after our own beloved Norma Hoffman, and supported largely

by the generosity of her family, this fund helps subsidize visits to the Park by school children with financial need. There is no more important goal of the Park than to invest in our children—they will be the future stewards of the Park. Not only is there the chance that these visits provide a spark for some of the participants, leading to their engagement with nature and its protection, but they also can serve to improve the lives of these children, many of whom face significant challenges. This is how we make the world an incrementally better place.

Finally, we are talking with Park staff about providing substantial support for several big (for us) capital investments at HMP. One possibility is contributing to replacing all of the very long-in-the-tooth (and in some cases now-illegible) signage on the Hike/Bike Trail. We'll keep you informed.

The upshot is that we can do more to help the Park and its programs. Although we intend to spend down our reserves to some extent, we are also planning carefully to ensure that our increased spending is sustainable over the long term. We know that there are a myriad of excellent causes competing for the generosity of our members, but we hope to continue to make FOHMP worthy of your continued generosity. If you have the ability, please consider making an additional donation to support our favorite Park.

Donations can be made by clicking [HERE](#)<sup>1</sup>, and clicking on the DONATE button.

P.S. A huge shout-out to our Treasurer, Katie Baker. Her excellent work helps us make sure that we can provide resources where they are needed. Katie is not only a Treasurer, but a treasure.



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<sup>1</sup><http://fohmp.org/>

1 - 2022 Naturalist Intern Porter Cather shows campers a corn snake.



2 - School children look at a frog below the wetland boardwalk.

## Seeking Poets and Poems Inspired by Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) or Historic Huntley (HH)



If your visits to HMP or HH have moved you to write in verse about your experiences there and/or the wonders of nature or history you've witnessed or imagined to be there, the Friends of Historic Huntley invites you to share HMP- or HH-inspired poems at a poetry reading. The event (time TBD) will be held on April 15, 2023 as part of Arts and Architecture Day at Historic Huntley. To sign up or seek more information, please contact Ms. Todi Carnes at [todicarnes@verizon.net](mailto:todicarnes@verizon.net)<sup>2</sup>.

Photo Credit: Photo of Historic Huntley Mansion by the renowned Virginia architectural historian, Calder Loth.

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<sup>2</sup><mailto:todicarnes@verizon.net>

## Grateful Reflections on 2022



By: Karen Sheffied, Huntley Meadows Park Manager

Happy 2023 everyone! It should be a great one at Huntley. Reflecting back, I'd like to share two of the things that I've been most grateful for from 2022.

I am very grateful for Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) volunteers who so graciously give their time and expertise in so many different areas. Each volunteer's role supports visitors' meaningful experiences and/or enhances our treasured resources. One example of an influential volunteer is Dave Gorsline, who has volunteered at Huntley for 29 years and counting. Dave heads up the Park's Duck Box Program. His role includes everything from box maintenance and monitoring to coordinating all the duck box volunteers.

The 'duck boxes' are the big wooden boxes with a four-inch hole at their fronts positioned on poles in the wetland. You can see the boxes from the boardwalk. They are nesting habitat used by Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Boxes like these have helped the Wood Duck population rebound from critically low levels. Today, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) ranks Wood Ducks as a species of least concern, meaning that their population has rebounded and is not currently under severe threat. It's a conservation success story, and HMP is proud to be a part of it.

Each spring, many birders and photographers eagerly await the new Wood Duck chicks' first (and only) plummet down from the box and splash into the water! It's a spectacular sight if you're lucky enough to witness this moment. A more common sight is watching a Wood Duck or Hooded Merganser mother leading her ducklings across the wetland. When you do observe this, you can, in part, thank Dave

Gorsline and the duck box volunteers. Dave was recognized as the 2022 HMP Volunteer of the Year and an Outstanding Volunteer at the Fairfax County Park Authority Ely Doyle awards.

So much gratitude goes out to all Huntley volunteers. You make visitors' experiences a positive and meaningful one. Visitors may not always see you, but they enjoy the benefits of your efforts. Thank you!

The other area I'm so grateful for while reflecting on 2022 is the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Norma Hoffman Financial Assistance (NHFA) fund. This fund provides the opportunity for students with financial need to attend our naturalist-led learning experiences at the Park that complement their school curriculums. In the fall of 2022, HMP experienced a 100% increase in demand for school field trip financial assistance. An additional 815 students were able attend these naturalist- and historian-led learning experiences at HMP this fall thanks to the NHFA fund. However, as a result of increased demand, the amount appropriated for the 2022-2023 school year has been almost completely drained. Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) and private donors are currently providing more funds to assist school children's attendance at the quickly booking spring 2023 HMP field trips. I am so grateful for these donors and FOHMP's support to help ensure so many school children can experience HMP and enrich their learning comprehension through our programs. This need does not seem to be a short-term issue, so thank you everyone for helping make the Huntley experience accessible to all students!

I hope everyone has a wonderful 2023 filled with delightful visits to Huntley!



*3 - Volunteer Duck Box Coordinator Dave Gorslin maintains a box.*





4 - High School Students learning the importance of wetlands in watersheds from HMP Naturalist Margaret Wohler.

## Do You Need a Receipt?



The 2022 tax season is here, and your membership dues or donations to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) may be tax deductible. FOHMP will automatically send out tax letters to all individuals who donated \$250 or more during 2022 in accordance with IRS requirements.

If you donated less than \$250 and would like an official receipt, please send your request to [MembershipFOHMP@FOHMP.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:MembershipFOHMP@FOHMP.onmicrosoft.com)<sup>3</sup>, and we will be happy to provide one.

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<sup>3</sup><mailto:MembershipFOHMP@FOHMP.onmicrosoft.com>

## Support the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 27th Annual Bird-a-thon



Lindsay Schneider, the 2018 Resource Management (RM) Intern said of her time working with Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) staff and volunteers: “Their wisdom and passion for nature has been inspiring and incredibly beneficial in furthering my understanding of species and their habitats.” The 2021 intern Emery Poulsen explained that she “had a wide variety of experiences and played a number of different roles.” Learn more about Lindsay’s and Emery’s experiences by reading their contributions to our 2018 Winter and 2021 Fall newsletters; newsletter archives located [HERE](#)<sup>4</sup>.

Experiences like Lindsay’s and Emery’s are why, early on many a May morning, Park staff and volunteers have walked the trails through HMP to count birds. This annual survey, held since 1996, evolved as an event to remember and honor two exceptional men: Ken Howard and Ed Weigel. Both were volunteers who shared their love of nature with any Park visitor lucky enough to chat with them. Their work continues through the Park’s RM Internship, made possible by funds raised through the HMP Bird-a-thon. This internship provides a young person with needed hands-on experience as the intern begins a career in conservation. Over the years, many on the Board of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) have had the privilege of interacting with the interns, and we all believe this opportunity has a positive impact on their future endeavors as the next generation of stewards of our parks and green spaces.

Those who participate in the bird count fundraiser for the interns enjoy their involvement with this campaign. They have counted birds in all kinds of conditions, from cold and rainy to downright hot, tallying anywhere from 90 to as many as 108 species in one day! But no matter what happens, the feeling is that it’s always such a treat to be in the Park. Anticipation of meeting a new RM Intern and what valuable experiences that intern will receive provides trail conversation throughout the morning.

The FOHMP Board requests donations to support this annual event. Your generous donation will help us reach our goal of \$3,000 to fund the 2023 RM Intern. You can donate a set amount, an amount for every bird counted, or an amount for each species counted. Donations can be made online. Go to the dedicated page for Bird-a-thon on our website [HERE](#)<sup>5</sup>, and clicking on the Donate button.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.fohmp.org/newsletter\\_archives.html](http://www.fohmp.org/newsletter_archives.html)

<sup>5</sup><http://www.fohmp.org/birdathon2023.html>

Thank you for your continued support,  
The Board, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

Photo Credit: Clapper Rail foraging in the wetlands. Photo by Ed Eder.

## 2022 Audubon Photography Awards Exhibit



# AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Reception:  
Saturday, March 4, 2023  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Huntley Meadows Park  
Norma Hoffman Visitor Center  
3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22306  
(703) 768-2525

Exhibit will be up and viewable  
when the Visitor Center is open and  
no programs are being held. Call the  
Visitor Center for more info.



A traveling exhibition of the 2022 Audubon Photography Awards is to be displayed in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium from February 22nd through March 15th. In the 13th year of the contest, winning photos, videos, and honorable mentions were selected from 2,416 entrants from all 50 states, Washington D.C. and seven Canadian provinces. The prize-winning photos show appreciation and wonder for birds and the places they inhabit.

In summer of 2022, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) approached the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Board about hosting the 2022 Audubon Photography Awards traveling exhibit at Huntley Meadows Park. Of course, we readily agreed. Visitors to the exhibit will enjoy the stunning winning images from the 2022 contest. Information about entering the 2023 contest can be found [HERE](#)<sup>6</sup>.

Please join the ASNV, FOHMP, and Huntley Meadows Park staff at an **Open House** featuring the Audubon Awards exhibition to be held on Saturday, March 4, 2023 from 1-3 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

The Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium closes occasionally for programs. Before you visit, please call 703-768-2525 to see if the exhibit will be available for viewing at the time you wish to visit. Norma Hoffman Visitor Center hours during the exhibition are:

February – 11:00 am – 4:00 pm daily (closed Tuesdays)

March – 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Monday – Friday (closed Tuesdays) and Noon – 5:00 pm Weekends

Photo Credit: White-tailed Kites, 2022 Audubon Photography Awards grand prize winner by Jack Zhi.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubon-photography-awards-official-rules>

## 2022 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest & Fundraiser Recap



By: Katie Baker, FOHMP Treasurer

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) annual photography contest drew over 60 entries this year. This annual show provides an opportunity for FOHMP to raise funds, gives Park photographers a place to showcase their work, and provides visitors an opportunity to see the great diversity of flora and fauna at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP).

A panel of three judges—James Fatemi, Samantha Ros, and Tyler Reber—scored photos in seven categories (impact, technique, composition, lighting, subject/center of interest, originality, and story/mood). The judges awarded ribbons to eleven photographs. In addition to these awards, visitors to the show may vote for their favorite photo to receive the People’s Choice Award.

Many of the photographers have listed their photos for sale with proceeds going directly to FOHMP. All proceeds from the show (entry fees and donations from sales) are used to support the staff, educational events, and natural resource management at Huntley Meadows.

The photo contest entries are on exhibit at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center through February 10th. The Center is open Monday – Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed Tuesdays) and on weekends from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium closes occasionally for programs. Please call 703-768-2525 beforehand to see if the exhibit will be available for viewing at the time you wish to visit.

**Here are The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 2022 Photo Contest & Fundraiser Winners:**

**1st Place Overall**

*Yellow Reflection*

Eric Steiner

**2nd Place Overall**

*What Happens Next?*

Eric Steiner

**3rd Place Overall**

*A Lovin' Mouthful*

Monica Martin

**1st Place Youth Entry**

*Dragon Landing*

Sean Featherly

**Honorable Mentions:**

*Close Formation*, Daniel Gilman

*Pintail Abstract*, Nuala Hastings

*Yummy!*, Eva Lanyi

*Adrift*, Eva Lanyi

*Eastern Tiger Swallow*, Paul Lebras

*Shelter from the Rain*, Monica Martin

*Winter's Rest*, Eric Steiner

*Tranquil Tree Frog*, Galen June – youth entry



5 - 1st Place Youth Entry winner Sean Featherly's Dragon Landing



6 - 1st Place Overall winner Eric Steiner's Yellow Reflection



## Wetlands Awareness Day Returns



The first Sunday in May will once again be a day to celebrate wetlands! Visit Huntley Meadows Park this May 7th for a chance to learn from staff, volunteers, and Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Board Members why this Park and its habitats are so important and special. More information to come.

## Wetland Dynamics through the Seasons



Join Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) on March 1st at 7:00 p.m. for an online Zoom program. Dr. Colin Rees, a zoologist and biodiversity expert, will discuss nature's seasonal dynamics in a freshwater tidal marsh. Dr. Rees is the author of *Nature's Calendar*, a book that explores the ecological connections and adaptations of wetland organisms.

You must register in advance for this Zoom program by using the hyperlink [HERE](#)<sup>7</sup>. The Zoom session will also serve as FODM's annual meeting at which we will elect 2023 officers and members of the Board of Directors.

## Resources to Learn More About Huntley Meadows Park



Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) is run and managed by the Fairfax County Park Authority. To find out more about Park hours, visitation rules, rental opportunities, and programs, visit the Parks' website by clicking [HERE](#)<sup>8</sup>.

Programs at Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley provide a unique look at the diverse history and nature of HMP and its associated historic site. Program topics offer scouts, families, other groups, and individuals of all ages a chance to experience nature, art, and history with experts on this special natural area and historic home.

Learn more about available programs and sign up to participate on the Park's website at: [HERE](#)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup><https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudOggqzkvG93aDK-7mOekcoGc1vAggc3l>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows>

<sup>9</sup>[https://fairfax.usdirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place\\_id=7891](https://fairfax.usdirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place_id=7891)