

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

June 2009

Email: info@friendsofhuntlymeadows.org
Website: www.Friendsofhuntlymeadows.org



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Annual Meeting



Saturday, June 13th, 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.



***Next year is the 25th Anniversary of the Friends of
Huntley Meadows Park
Congratulations!***

FOHMP Accomplishments

- ❖ Provided the park with resource management equipment, from two-way radios to waders to spotting scopes and binoculars
- ❖ Financed trail and interpretive signs, most notably the Wildlife Photographers recognition sign
- ❖ Supported the visually impaired interpretive initiative with Braille brochures, maps, a guided audio walk and two Braille discovery boxes
- ❖ Funded a yearly scholarship for the Naturalist Intern
- ❖ Started the Birdathon to raise funds supporting the yearly Natural Resource Management Intern
- ❖ Sponsor Wetlands Awareness Day
- ❖ Sponsor the Highway Clean-up
- ❖ Sponsor the long-running Birds and Bagels program as well as Swamp Serenade, Evening Wildlife Walk, and Café Cattail
- ❖ Purchased needed equipment including an LCD projector and laminator
- ❖ Provided scholarships for Title I schools to attend field trips at Huntley
- ❖ Created the FOHMP website to promote the park



Park Manager's Message

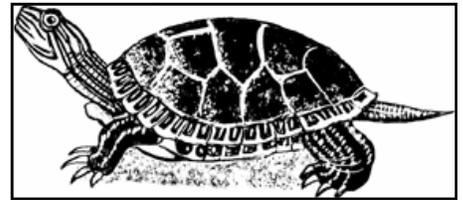
A Walk on Huntley's Wild Side



Herptiles (herps) is a term derived from herpetology and used by some naturalists and enthusiasts for reptiles and amphibians. A fascinatingly diverse group, it includes frogs and toads, salamanders, lizards, turtles, tortoises and snakes. In Fairfax County, there is simply no other natural area with as impressive an array of herps as Huntley Meadows Park. Several species are found here in larger numbers than anywhere else in Northern Virginia. In addition, we have a state threatened turtle, two southern frog species at the northern edge of their range and more unusual snakes than any other park in this area.

Their calls and high visibility make the park's frogs some of the more popular herps. Huntley has perhaps the largest population of Southern Leopard Frogs in the county. Having them here at all is impressive as Huntley is close to the northern tip of their range. They disappear quickly just north and west of the park. Another species of the park living at the very northern end of its range is the Green Tree Frog. A denizen of southern swamps, its range has expanded to include Huntley in just the past ten years. In fact, visiting naturalists have doubted our assertions that they are quite common in the park. We've had to produce photographs to prove our case. Stroll down the boardwalk anytime from May to September and you'll see Southern Leopard Frogs. To hear Green Tree Frogs at their height, walk the wetland on a June evening. You'll be bombarded by their raucous calls.

Turtles are also a visitor favorite. Besides the common painted and snapping turtles, we have two very special species that are found together in only two other sites in Northern Virginia. One, the Wood Turtle, is a state threatened species. A turtle of New England and the northern mid-Atlantic, it's at the southern edge of its range here. The Spotted Turtle, shunning the heat of summer, is often seen from the boardwalk in spring and fall.



Lastly, my favorite herp group – snakes. Incredibly beneficial, almost entirely harmless, beautiful, elegant and surprisingly delicate, these misunderstood animals are fascinating to watch and a joy to have around. Huntley is arguably the best park for snakes in this part of the state. Huntley not only has healthy populations of black rat, black racer, northern water and eastern garter snakes, but also possibly the largest population of eastern ribbon snakes in the D.C. area. More exciting is the fact that eastern hognose, eastern king and rough green snakes are relatively common here. A snake enthusiast could go for years without seeing any of these species. All three are seen here every year, especially the green snakes as they hang out around the boardwalk. King and hognose snakes are especially rare in the county. At Huntley, you're likely to see them sunning on logs along the Cedar Trail or hunting through the meadows off the Hike-Bike Trail.

I've barely touched on the park's herp diversity. You can find a complete list of the park's herps on the FOHMP website, or can pick up a checklist at the Visitor Center. To learn more about these scaly, song-filled, web-footed, egg-laying marvels, check out our summer snake programs, evening summer wetland strolls or our ongoing park manager walk and talks. To help preserve these valuable critters, keep cats inside, reduce your mowing and pesticide use and refrain from collecting wild herps. Spread the word that these imperiled creatures are both fascinating and valuable to have as neighbors!

Kevin Munroe

Park Manager Walks
 Join the Park Manager for a walk in the park. Learn what's happening at Huntley and see some wildlife along the way.
Saturdays
June 20, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
July 18, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
August 22, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
FREE - Reservations required



Sunday, June 7 noon to 1:30 p.m.
Ssnakes!
 (Families, children 6 and up) Learn about some of Huntley's scaly inhabitants, then take a walk to spot some snakes. Reservations required. \$6/adult, \$4/child



Huntley Meadows Happenings

Wetland in Bloom

Saturday June 13
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



Dragonflies

Sunday June 28
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. \$6

Café Cattail – 'What's Perkin'

Friday June 19
7 to 9:30 p.m.

Four times a year the Huntley Meadows auditorium is transformed into a cozy, community coffeehouse where you'll find poetry, sing-alongs, dance, music, brownies, coffee and laughter all tied up with a passion for nature. Share your talents or just sit back and enjoy.



Birding for Beginners

Optics and Field Guides
Sunday July 12
8:00 a.m. to 11:00 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. \$6

Summer Stroll

Saturday June 27
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. \$6



Summer Birds and Bagels

Saturday July 11
8:00 a.m. to 11:00 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. \$8

Plans for the Ken and Willa Howard Outdoor Classroom are Underway

Ken and Willa Howard loved Huntley Meadows Park. Ken spent his retirement on the park's trails, observing wildlife and teaching others about the birds and mammals of Huntley. We called him "Mr. Huntley Meadows Park" as he was our most well-known park representative. A fierce protector of the environment, he held developers and politicians' feet to the fire whenever Huntley was threatened. In honor of his dedication, the park's top volunteer award was named the Ken Howard Volunteer Award. After his death in 1995, Willa moved back to Arkansas but every year she returned to present the award to the chosen volunteer. Willa passed away in 2007 but in one final act of generosity, the Howards bequeathed \$21,000 to Huntley Meadows Park. Because Ken was an educator above all, the staff has decided that construction of an outdoor classroom would be a fitting way to use these funds and to honor their memories.

Natural Resource News

Fields on Fire: Controlled burn at HMP, 2-17-09



Brian Moore gets his hose ready.



Charles Smith and Dave Lawlor plan the burn.



***Congratulations to
Dave Lawlor on
receiving the Outstanding Performance Award for employees of Fairfax
County.***

Natural Resource Management Intern 2009

Alice Milikin has accepted the 2009 Resource Management Internship. Alice lives next to Huntley Meadows Park in the Hayfield neighborhood. She is entering her sophomore year at George Mason University and is pursuing a degree in parks and recreation. She has already proven persistence and motivation during the internship interview and hiring process and promises to be a very valuable addition to the staff at Huntley Meadows Park for the summer of 2009. I would like to thank you all for your continued support of the Natural Resource Management Internship.

Dave Lawlor

Natural Resource Manager

Naturalist Intern 2009

This summer there will be a familiar face at the park, Nancy Pryor. Nancy has been the park's administrative assistant for the past two years. Her position will be ending on July 1 as part of the FY2010 budget cuts. Nancy is using this opportunity to continue her naturalist studies as our intern this year. She is looking forward to more teaching and outdoor exploration. Thanks to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park for making the internship possible.

Carolyn Gamble

Summer Art News

Macro and More

Photographs by Ed Eder

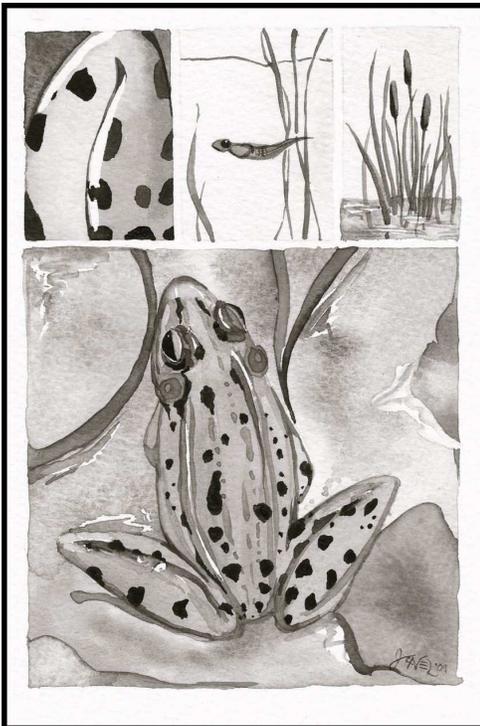
June 3 to July 31

Presentation and reception, Sunday July 26, 11:30 a.m.

From June 3 through July 31, the auditorium will be filled with the photographs of Ed Eder. His interest in Huntley Meadows dates from 1982 when he started exploring the wetland. Ed often visits the park at dawn to catch photos of elusive birds like the Virginia rail and least bittern. He also photographs insects attracted to the walls of the Visitor Center by bright security lights. Ed uses a macro lens to capture detailed images of moths, ambush bugs, owl flies and other colorful insects. He is currently working on a moth species inventory at Huntley Meadows documented by macro-photographs. On Sunday, July 26 at 11:30 a.m., there will be a closing reception featuring a PowerPoint presentation by Ed. The public is invited, please join us.



Polyphemus moth by Ed Eder



Jenna Fournel

A Natural Perspective

Art by Jenna Fournel

August 2 to September 30

Reception on Sunday August 2 from 2 to 4 p.m.

This August, experience a multimedia art show that explores the ways in which nature can shape our view of the world. Through paintings, etchings, photography and collage, artist Jenna Fournel attempts to capture the whimsy, wonder, and beauty of the wild things she loves. Most of the images featured in this colorful show are inspired by the plants and animals Jenna and her 1-year-old son have met on walks through Huntley.

Jenna studied children's book illustration under Roberto Innocenti in Florence, Italy. That experience inspired her to find ways to synthesize the beauty of words with the beauty of images. She finds themes in nature conducive to this pursuit.

Her watercolors have been exhibited at The Art League and she has created many pieces on commission but is thrilled to be featured at Huntley Meadows for her first solo show in 10 years. Jenna is currently the communications director for the Center for Inspired Teaching. She lives in Alexandria with her husband, son and two dogs.

Huntley Meadows Park Meeting Room Rental

Have your office 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 to suit the needs of your group of up to 40. As a bonus, participants will enjoy the 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 wetland on the half-mile boardwalk trail can be arranged for an extra fee.

The rental fee is \$50/hour (20% discount for non-profit).
Call (703) 768-2525 to find out more and to make a reservation.



President's Message

In a few hours I'll be at Huntley Meadows Park, standing in the mud, sharing with the public what I know about wetland soils as part of Wetlands Awareness Day. I'm looking forward to it! Much of my work for the Park this spring has been at the computer, on the phone, and at meetings. The Board of Supervisors adopted a budget for FY2010, which includes giving the Fairfax County Park Authority back \$825,848 to cover 11 positions at Riverbend Park, Lake Accotink, Lake Fairfax, and Burke Lake. In my opinion, this was a knee jerk response to the Park Authority's proposal to charge gate fees at these parks and the public disapproval thereof. Nonetheless, we are thankful to get this money.

The BOS also restored the position at Green Spring Gardens that oversees the Garden Plots, Farmers Markets, and Master Gardener programs. This is good news! The bad news is that the Administrative Assistant positions at all the RMD sites will be abolished and there will be less money for seasonals and other merit positions.

My daughter Madalena and I spoke on April 1 at the county budget hearings. We heard Park Authority Board Chairman, William Bouie, speak and ask the Supervisors not to abolish the Administrative Assistant positions. Madalena and I used our 3 minutes to make this same request. We shared with the Supervisors how important we think Environmental Education and Resource Management are in Fairfax County for the present community and for the future. I followed up with letters to Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and Lee District representative, Jeff McKay.

It is my feeling at this point that the BOS believes that they have done their part by giving the Park Authority a position and some money back. Now, we must work with the Park Authority to make sure that the Resource Management Division receives the support that it requires to do its job which is: *"To identify, preserve and interpret the cultural, natural, and horticultural resources of Fairfax County and the Fairfax County Park Authority; to encourage the enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of these resources by citizens and visitors; to contribute positively to the sense of community and quality of life in Fairfax County, and to provide leadership, both within the Park Authority and in the community, in protecting and maintaining the county's heritage; to maintain museum accreditation and the highest professional standards of stewardship and interpretation."*

On April 30, three FOHMP board members (Connie Carpender, Marianne Mooney, and I) attended one of the "Listening Forums," hosted by John Dargle, Jr., Director of the Park Authority. These forums advertise the following: *"Input on how the Park Authority can best meet the community's needs is invited. Staff will use the gathered information to guide decisions regarding the organization and the agency's service delivery."* Our concerns about the Resource Management Division were by far the dominant topic at this forum. Mr. Dargle was a gracious host and he did listen. Some questions were answered. Many of our questions seem to be tied to decisions from the Park Authority Board Meeting on May 13. One question I am eager to hear the answer to is: How many positions will be filled with the \$825,848 and how many of those will be at Riverbend Park? When the Administrative Assistants found out that their positions were being abolished, they were offered positions at Headquarters. I'd like to know what they are needed to do at Headquarters that is more important than what they were doing at the sites. I did find out from Mr. Dargle that our Friends group can help supplement seasonal and intern salaries at HMP.

As members, you have been a part of my efforts this spring. Everything I presented and asked for I did as a representative of FOHMP and the Federation of Friends Groups. Thank you for your support and for your efforts in contacting Supervisors and Park Authority Board members. I'm going to ask that you follow up with your representatives. We need to keep a pulse on what decisions are being made. **Listening Forums with Mr. Dargle will be held on June 11 at Audrey Moore RECenter and on July 30 at South Run RECenter at 7pm. I strongly encourage you to attend the Listening Forum to be held at Huntley Meadows Park on September 17, 7pm.**

Just remember that John Dargle, Jr. says, "I work for you." Let's hold him to that.



Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon 2009



Dateline Birdathon XIII: Tuesday May 5th Predawn hour

Huntley's woods were enveloped in darkness and all was quiet when I arrived at 5:30 am. I switched on my ball cap flashlight and headed down the pitch-black trail. Just then, a wood thrush sang out. Upon reaching the wetland, a Turkey gobbled in the distance. A few moments later, a Sora whinnied from the marsh. Anticipation was building as I climbed the observation tower. My first sighting of the day was of fellow birdathoner, Ben Jesup, on the Hike-bike Trail platform. Had he heard the Sora too? The sun was rising and the competition was about to begin! It was time to get down to business and start birding.

So what were the highlights? For me, it was probably the Turkey and beautiful views of a Veery, but there were lots of great birds seen. Shorebirds were scarce due to recent rain which flooded the mudflats. Two Least, five Solitary and one Spotted were the sandpipers present. Among the eighteen warbler species found were Blue-winged, Worm-eating, Prairie, Palm, and some Yellow-breasted Chats, which will hopefully be nesting in the meadow. Notable sightings included Bald Eagle, Swainson's and Hermit Thrush, American Coot, American Bittern and three flyover Common Loons seen by an eagle-eyed Larry Cartwright.

The most numerous species were Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (102), Red-eyed Vireos (85), Red-winged Blackbirds (84) and Yellow-rumped Warblers (67). Eighteen other species were spotted only once, some of which were rather surprising in their scarcity. These included Rock Pigeon, Red-shouldered Hawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rusty Blackbird, Brown Thrasher, Hairy Woodpecker and Black Vulture. Believe me, we were happy for each bird we found. When we were finished, the four teams of staff and volunteers had tallied 95 species, thirteen shy of the record set in 2004.

Of course, this is not just another "big-day" count. The Birdathon provides us with the opportunity to remember Ken Howard and Ed Weigel, two volunteers who enriched the Huntley Meadows experience for so many people. The donations this event raises will fund a Natural Resource Management Internship, helping to insure that Ken and Ed's good work will continue with the next generation of naturalists.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their time, skills, and donations to this annual event. It's really very much appreciated. *If you haven't yet sent in a donation, please do.* We are still short of our goal of \$2,700. Thank you.

Andy Higgs

Many thanks to the following people who donated to the 2009 Birdathon:

Susan Allen	Dexter Hinckley	Anders Price
Connie Carpender	Su Kim	Dorothy Raduazo
Larry Cartwright	Fred and Suzanne Lepple	Mike Ready
Susan Crawford	Anna McKenna	Paula Sullivan
Douglas and Kathryn Cochrane	Joe Sasfy and Marianne Mooney	Fred Siskind
Nancy Roeper Dale	Tom Nardone	Warren Smith
Arthur Dealy	Cathy Pardee	Dixie Sommers
Robert Fina	Barry Pearson	Barbara Stewart
Andy Higgs	Barbara Perry	Dana White

2009 Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Mail this form and check to:
Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon
3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306

Donation Amount: _____ Make checks payable to **FOHMP** and write donations-birdathon on the memo line.

***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: _____

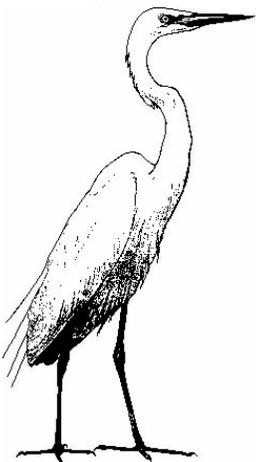
Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____



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



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***



Please check your mailing label for accuracy and notify us of any changes. Your membership expiration date is in the upper left corner.