

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

September 2009

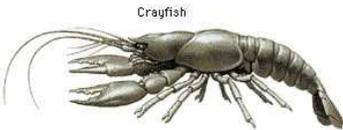
Email: info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
Website: www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org



Park Authority Director John Dargle to Visit Huntley Meadows And he wants to hear from you! Thursday, September 17, 7 p.m.

You are invited to this informal meeting to share your comments, concerns, and ideas about the Park Authority. Your input on how the Park Authority can best meet the community's needs is welcome at this event. Bring concerns and suggestions related to recreation, preservation of natural and cultural resources and ideas for the future. This is also an excellent opportunity to let the Park Authority know about the importance of Huntley Meadows to you, whether it be as a place of respite, education, or simply preservation of an important habitat. With more budget cuts on the horizon, this is a great opportunity to support your park! Please come.

Return of the Crayfish (Watch your Fingers!)



This summer was going to be the same as every other summer in Huntley Meadows Park. Volunteers would be doing projects like "calling surveys" of frogs and turtle trapping. The resource management intern would be collecting macroinvertebrates to study water quality. However, resource management personnel Tatiana Galitzin, Emily Osborn, Alice Millikin and Dave Lawlor found themselves pulling something very different out of their water

quality nets and turtle traps. Two little pinchers ready to fight long, intimidating fingers were in almost every trap and net. They were small and spunky with a strong will to live.

It was not coincidence or random luck that crayfish were being caught. They were all throughout the wetland! The turtle traps were only set for three days at the large beaver dam just downstream of the confluence of East and West Barnyard Run, yet Emily and Tatiana pulled 41 crayfish out of those 10 traps in three days. Turtle traps were set in the Northern Marsh for the remaining three weeks of the study. The Northern Marsh produced 55 crayfish during 12 days of trapping, bringing the total crayfish caught by the turtle traps to 96.

While netting for water quality collecting, Dave and Alice found a total of 28 crayfish in the central wetland as well as in the central wetland inflow and lower wetland. ***That is more crayfish than water quality folks have collected in the past five years put together at these sites.*** Overall the turtle traps caught larger adult crayfish, as the babies would be able to escape. However, water quality caught almost exclusively baby crayfish, which showed that the crayfish were reproducing successfully in the central wetland. 24 baby crayfish were caught by water quality at the inflow alone. Altogether, traps and nets caught 124 crayfish from the Park's wetlands.

While walking through the park, you can often spot a few crayfish chimneys. Their little mud holes in the ground are used for protection. Crayfish act as a food source for so many creatures in the wetland that a healthy population can make all the difference to an ecosystem. This resurgence in crayfish population is very good news for Huntley Meadows Park.

Alice Millikin

Resource Management Intern

Crayfish chimney





Park Manager's Message

A Walk on Huntley's Wild Side



Crayfish, Spotted Turtles and... King Rails!

This has been a truly exciting summer in Huntley's central wetland. The consistently high water levels through June stimulated a great deal of dam engineering and cattail clearing by both beavers and muskrats, including a new beaver lodge built up against the boardwalk loop! These mammals created a mosaic of small pools, canals and openings in the cattail stands perfect for use by other wetland wildlife. In addition, lush vegetation sparked by the perfect storm of droughty summers and rainy autumns of the last two years combined into a rich habitat that brought with it an impressive collage of wildlife.

Those high water levels increased crayfish populations across the park, in streams, vernal pools, wet meadows and the central wetland. They also afforded us an unusually high level of Spotted Turtle sightings (including several pairs mating right along the boardwalk loop!) as the turtles utilized the pools and canals created by beaver and muskrat. This rare turtle is one of the park's special treasures and a target species for the wetland restoration project.

Back to the increased crayfish population brought on, we believe, by the high water levels. In many ways this was the real story of the year and just what several species needed to be drawn back into our wetland. **For the first time since 1999, King Rails were observed breeding in the wetland!** A parent with four or five chicks was seen on at least three separate occasions between July 19 and July 27. This bird has become a symbol for the park, and its absence as a breeder for the last ten years has been an issue of great concern. The higher water levels, increased crayfish population, and habitat mosaic created by beaver and muskrat may have created just what the rails needed to raise a family. In addition, we had at least one family of Virginia Rails in the wetland for only the second time

Other species that may have been enticed by this year's conditions were an immature White Ibis that showed up in mid-July, otters feeding on crayfish along the boardwalk, larger numbers of Great Egrets than we've seen for years, and several sightings of Least Bitterns.

The key is to learn from all this so that we can duplicate it with the wetland restoration project. High water levels in spring and early summer are important to encouraging beaver and muskrat activity, which is essential in maintaining a vital habitat mosaic. More water also increases crayfish populations, a vital building block in the wetland foodweb. With all this talk of higher water levels, it's easy to forget the importance of periodic summer drawdowns. This releases nutrients and dormant seed banks, thus creating lush vegetation for the next year. *For a wetland to stay healthy, it must occasionally go dry.* Exposed mud flats and low water levels are an essential part of the wetland's life cycle. Mother Nature knows best, so let's learn from her and

match our upcoming management regime to a healthy wetland's rhythms.

Kevin Munroe



Beaver-cleared cattail area

Park Manager Walk & Talk and Project Update:

September 26 and October 24, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Free, no reservations required

Meet at the Visitor Center

Birth of a Wetland Walk

Saturday October 3, 10 a.m. to noon

Explore the seeps, springs and streams of Huntley's woodlands with Kevin to trace the source of the wetland's water from it's beginning to the boardwalk.

Prepare for a fascinating off-trail adventure. \$6

Call 703 768 2525 to reserve.

Huntley News

Wetland Restoration Project – A dam breach analysis has just been completed. It shows what would happen if the proposed dam allowed water through and where that water would flow. This is standard and required practice any-time structures holding back water are built. We will use these results to move forward with the permitting process. Our hope is that the analysis will indicate that this structure qualifies as a low-hazard dam, therefore getting us closer to a project that fits the site. The earliest construction would begin in fall of 2010, but summer of 2011 is more likely. Frustrating, I know, to wait that long, but we're committed to spending as long as it takes to get this right and not rushing anything. Please attend one of our monthly Park Manager Walk and Talks to learn more. We hope to have a public meeting with project updates some time next year.

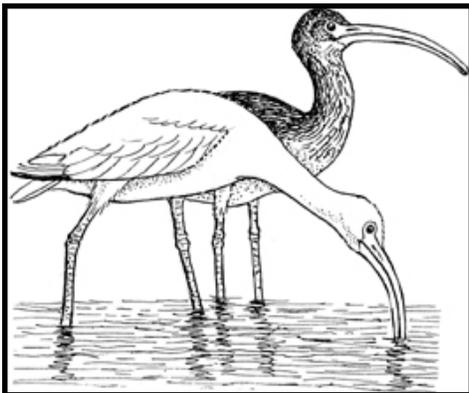
Barnyard Run Restoration – A large-scale planting project will take place this fall along the tributaries of east Barnyard Run that flow into the central wetland. Paid for by a \$50,000 grant from the state, the goal is to stabilize the stream banks, thereby reducing the amount of silt that flows into our marsh.

Boardwalk Replacement – Sometime between the summers of 2010 and 2011, we will be replacing all the surface and toe boards along our wetland boardwalk. There are no plans to replace or alter the structure itself, just replace the surface boards. This project will be funded by the 2008 Park Bond Referendum. We plan to use recycled plastic lumber, which will not only last longer and require less maintenance, but will send a strong environmental message.

Visitor Center Plantings and Outdoor Classroom – After a great deal of help from volunteers, including Friends members, all the invasive exotic barberry shrubs have been removed from the berm that surrounds the Visitor Center. The shrubs will be gradually replaced over the next few years by native shrubs, wildflowers, ferns and groundcovers. This will be part of a larger Outdoor Classroom project that includes a gazebo-like structure, several native plant gardens and features such as bee boxes, rain barrels and frog ponds. The project is sponsored by a generous donation from the Hunting Creek Garden Club and by funds left to Huntley Meadows by Willa Howard, a long-time Friends member and beloved advocate of the park.

THANK YOU to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park for helping us through these difficult budget years. This summer, FOHMP donated over \$10,000 to the park to help sponsor internships, resource management, wildlife surveys, staff training, programs and a new batch of Huntley Meadows Park patches. This park would be a lesser place without your support. With every tick of the clock here in the park, something takes place that you helped support, sponsor or create. *Thank you*, from a very grateful (and lucky!) staff.

Join the Huntley Meadows Park Listserve. This email list is for the purpose of quickly getting information on breaking news, upcoming programs, volunteer notices and other important park related information to the patrons of Huntley Meadows Park. This is a ONE-WAY list. You will not be able to send an email to the rest of the members on this email list and will not be bombarded with emails from the rest of the members on the email list. To join, go to the "Friends" website at www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org. From the index on the left side, click on email list. You will only be asked for your email address, name and a password. Thanks for staying in touch with your park!



White ibis: adult and immature

Many thanks to these additional people who donated to the 2009 Birdathon:

*Dale Azaria
Wendell Cox
Karen Grechanik
Brenda Greene
Helen Halpin*

*Claire Kluskens
Gerald Fill
Carol Wilson
Janise Zygmunt
James and Ann Van Deusen*

We have raised over \$2,500 with your help. Thanks again to all of you who have donated to the Birdathon. Your support helped fund this year's resource management intern, Alice Millikin.

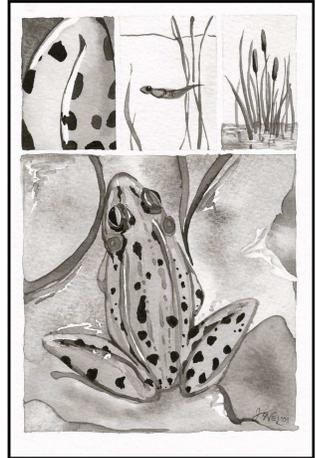
Fall Art News

A Natural Perspective Artwork by Jenna Fournel Show closes September 30

This multi-media show explores the way nature can shape our view of the world. Jenna attempts to capture the whimsy, beauty and wonder of the wild things she loves. Most of the images featured in this colorful show were inspired by the plants and animals of Huntley Meadows. Jenna also has a companion coloring book for children which she created for Huntley Meadows. You can purchase it at the Visitor Center.

Multi-media Art Show Sculptor and painter James Strohmeyer October 10 to November 15 Artist reception, October 18, 2 to 4 p.m.

James Michael Strohmeyer was born and raised in Mesa Arizona and divides his time between there and this area. He is 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.



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 2009 Photography Contest Give Us Your Best Shot!

Awards reception December 13, 2 to 4 p.m.

The FOHMP Photo Contest is a nature-themed photography contest and a Friends of Huntley Meadows Park fundraiser. We invite all to submit your favorite photos taken at the park. Contestants must submit photos between **November 1-15, 2009**. No late entries will be accepted. A panel of judges will select photos from the pool of contest entries. Selected photos will be exhibited at the HMP Visitor Center from December 13, 2009 to February 28, 2010. All photos exhibited may be used by the Park for promotional or fundraising purposes. All proceeds from the sale of exhibited photographs and entry fees will be used to support Huntley Meadows Park.

Contest Rules

1. An entry fee of \$5.00 must accompany each photo, maximum submission is 6. The fee is waived for those 18 and younger.
2. All photographs must have been taken at Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax County, VA.
3. Photographs taken with both film and digital cameras are acceptable.
4. Only photographs of a nature theme will be considered (plants or animals.) Photos may contain images of people as long as the provisions in the Copyrights and Permissions section are followed. Please contact the Park for this information.
5. Photographs must be matted. Mounts should be standard sizes and should not exceed 18"x24".
6. Name, address, and telephone number should be entered clearly on the **BACK** of the mounted photograph. No identifying marks should appear on the front of the photographs, to preserve anonymity.
7. The decisions of the judges are final.
8. Photographers will be notified before December 1 if their photos will be included in the exhibit. Photographs that are not included in the show may be picked up at the opening reception on December 13.

Award Categories

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners and Honorable Mentions will receive ribbons and certificates, and will be mentioned in a press release for the photography show, as well as on the FOHMP website.

Entry Forms are available at the Visitor's Center along with a list of eligibility requirements.

Huntley Meadows Happenings

Fall Birds and Bagels Saturday, September 26

8-11 a.m. Enjoy an early morning walk in search of resident and migrating birds, then relax and recap the sightings during a continental breakfast at the Visitor Center. Binoculars and field guides are recommended. \$6. Reservations: 703-768-2525



Birding for Beginners Saturday, October 3

8-11 a.m. Interested in birding? We can get you started! Learn about the birds in the park and tryout different optics. Catch the fall birding excitement! \$6 Reservations: 703-768-2525

Night Walk Saturday, October 10

New!

6:30-8:30 p.m. Walk through the woods to the wetland with naturalist PJ Dunn, looking for hunting bats and working beavers. \$6 Reservations: 703-768-2525

Teen Night Hike Friday, October 16

(12-16 yrs.), 6:30-8:30 p.m. Hike the park after dark with a naturalist. Look for hunting bats, gnawing beavers, and listen for owls. \$5 Reservations required.



Adopt-a-Highway Clean-up Saturday, October 17

9-11:30 a.m. Help clean litter near the park along Lockheed and Harrison Lane. Meet at Visitor Center to sign-in and pick up trash bags. Bring gloves. Call the park to register. Questions? Call Suzanne Lepple at 703-768-0462



Birding for Beginners Sunday, November 22

8-11 a.m. Observe the transition of our bird community as the summer breeding population moves south and winter residents arrive. A park naturalist helps you sharpen your bird identification skills. \$6 Call for reservations.



New!

Wild Side Wagon Ride!

Sunday: September 20, October 4 and October 18
Rides depart at 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 4:15 p.m.
(For Families with children ages 6 and up)

Take an exciting 90-minute interpretive ride in a custom-built wagon pulled by a tractor. Travel with a park naturalist to parts of the park that are difficult to reach on foot. Look for and learn about songbirds, wildflowers, butterflies, and waterfowl. Stop for a snack at the observation platform, then ride to the junction of Barnyard Run and Dogue Creek. Reservations and prepayment



Café Cattail Friday, September 25

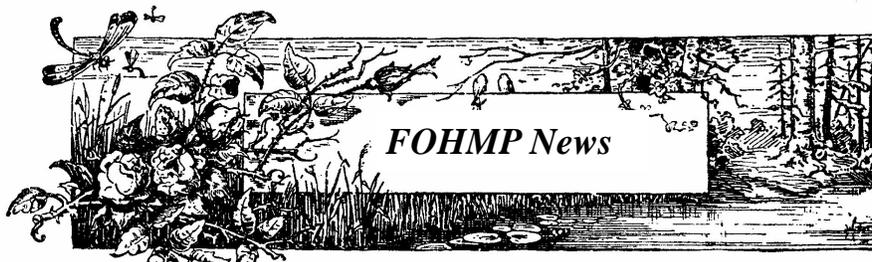
7-9:30 pm. End your busy week with relaxing, nature-inspired music, poetry, and dance at this popular open-mike coffeehouse. Reservations required for performers only. FREE

Historic Huntley Fall Open House Sunday, October 18

2-4 p.m. Tour our rarely-seen, Federal-period villa and learn about original owner Thomson Mason. Sponsored by Friends of Historic Huntley. Free.



Historic Huntley



President's Message

After a long, wet and beautiful spring, we are now in the hot and humid summer! It's great for my garden (as long as I water it!) and the butterflies are loving it! Thanks to all of you that attended the Annual Meeting in June. Mr. Todd Brown, Site Operations Manager for RMD and Mr. John Dargle, Director of the Park Authority, were present for part of the meeting and those of you who were there had a chance to speak to them. We had cake and punch, a short election and business meeting, recognized the new Lifetime Members, and then had a wonderful walk in the wetland led by Board members Andy Higgs and P.J. Dunn. I believe the stars of the evening were the Green Tree Frogs! They were vocal in numbers and we actually got to see one! This is a relatively new species to the central wetland.

We are anticipating another year of budget cuts in planning for the FY2011 budget year and therefore I will be calling you all to action over the next 6 months. Members of the FOHMP Board are meeting with Supervisor Jeff McKay on August 19. We hope to share our concerns and find out what we can do to protect resource management and environmental education in the Park Authority. On **September 17 at 7p.m.**, Mr. Dargle will be hosting a Listening Forum at Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center. This is open to the public. **Please put this date on your calendar!** Come with your questions and concerns and let Mr. Dargle know how you feel about the Resource Management Division, its parks, resources, educational programs, and Huntley Meadows Park.

I'm planning to remain active with the Federation of Friends Group in hopes that a collective voice will be heard. We will meet in September with Park Authority staff and work out what part we can effectively play in protecting our parks from budget cuts. Please share your concerns with the Park Authority, your Board of Supervisor Representative and Park Authority Board Representative. They really are swayed by a "squeaky wheel." If you have any ideas for how they can increase their revenue, let them know!

As always, thank you for your continued support of FOHMP, Huntley Meadows Park and its staff, and resource management and education in Fairfax County. I appreciate it!

Kathi McNeil

FOHMP membership fees will rise this fall. Individual memberships will be \$15, family memberships \$20 and students and seniors will be \$10. We would like to increase our financial support of the park and appreciate your help and understanding.

Thanks to Board member Charles Studholme, who donated the following books to the Visitor Center: Red-tails in Love, The Backyard Bird Watcher, National Geographic Birder's Journal, and The View from Hawk Mountain.

Charles is the owner of **One Good Tern**, a wonderful birding and nature store in Alexandria. We appreciate the many donations that Charles has made to Huntley Meadows over the years.

One Good Tern
1710 Fern Street
Alexandria, VA. 22302
Phone: 703-820-8376

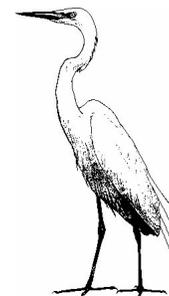
The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park would like to thank the following new Lifetime members:

- Katharine Landfield**
- Permelia (Mina) Eggerton**
- P. J. Dunn**
- Ann Klunder**
- Connie Badger**
- Janet Meisenhelder**

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



Purple Milkweed Spectacle



One of the joys of visiting Huntley Meadows Park is discovery. I've had the pleasure of coming to the park for some 30 years and have been rewarded with many wonderful sightings: king rails and their young walking on the boardwalk; yellow-crowned night herons, oblivious to the park's human element, catching huge Crayfish; snapping turtles mating; osprey diving for fish; 90+ great egrets feeding as the water level dropped in the marsh one summer; snakes sunning themselves; and the bounty of tickseed sunflowers every September on the back side of the park coinciding with the monarch migration. The list goes on and on.

Add a new chapter to the Huntley saga. This past June in the small meadow behind the observation tower, purple milkweed bloomed in numbers unseen in all my years of coming to the park. Perhaps the rainy spring generated this outburst, but whatever the

Painted lady

cause, it was a beautiful sight missed by many visitors who walked by with their eyes and binoculars focused on the marsh. As a wildlife photographer with a special interest in insects, I have regularly found subjects in this small area, and always take at least a quick look before continuing to the tower and beyond. This year's profusion of milkweed proved particularly irresistible to butterflies, attracting both large numbers, and a nice variety of species. Bright orange great spangled fritillaries were numerous. Silver-spotted skippers also were plentiful and battled each other for prime spots. Other species visiting while I was there included tiger, pipevine and spicebush swallowtails as well as American painted lady, red admiral, buckeye, Eastern-tailed blue, and monarchs were present along with several species of skippers.

The milkweed also attracted a host of nectaring bees. I found dragonflies perched on flowers for the first time: white-tail, Eastern pondhawk and blue dasher waiting for prey to come by. Spangled skimmers and slaty skimmers were also plentiful. Green darners and a swamp darter cruised the area, but once aloft, they didn't come back down. A surprising bonus was spotting a green tree frog on a milkweed plant, and scaring up a fawn hidden in the milkweed patch awaiting its mother's return.

The purple milkweed spectacle has passed, but as you read this in September, tickseed sunflowers, thistle and other flowers should be in bloom, attracting butterflies and other insects. So next time you go to the tower, take a look in the other direction and see what other marvels await (with apologies to Voltaire) in this best of all possible parks.

Fred Siskind

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Board

Kathi McNeil, President
 Sarah Stromayer, Vice-president
 Sally Cureton, Treasurer
 Glenn Curtis, Secretary
 Connie Carpender, Membership
 P.J. Dunn, Webmaster
 Marianne Mooney, Newsletter Editor
 At-large board members:
 Harry Glasgow
 Andy Higgs
 Norma Hoffman
 Ben Jesup
 Suzanne Lepple
 Charles Studholme

Send newsletter submissions to:
m.mooney@comcast.net



***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. Your dues will help fund new initiatives and programs and your support will help us to be 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: _____

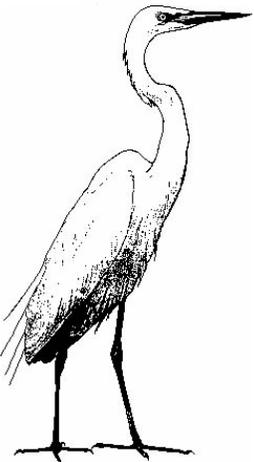
Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd
Alexandria, VA 22306
703-768-2525



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