



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

June 2010

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



Looking Up!

Today was Wetlands Awareness Day! Suzanne Lepple and I spent the afternoon in waders alongside the boardwalk demonstrating to visitors how there is a lot of clay under the silt in the wetland. We used a soil auger to pull up columns of clay which then were handed out to kids of all ages, who learned how clay holds water and therefore is a great base for our fresh-water wetland. You can imagine that as we stood in the muck, we spent a lot of time looking up at our audience. It was a "hands on" experience for many- one they will not likely forget!

At the moment I'm feeling a bit optimistic about the survival of the natural areas in Fairfax County like Huntley Meadows Park. It has been an interesting and challenging year that has found us with a County budget for FY11 that did not cut the staffing at our nature centers and has maintained much of the funds for maintenance of these sites. I've heard that the Federation of Friends, which includes Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, was listened to by the Park Authority Board and the County Board of Supervisors. We were also able to get the citizens of Fairfax County to voice their support for parks and natural areas. We should

all pat ourselves on the back, relax, enjoy the parks and refresh ourselves for next year as I think there will be many of the same issues.

The FOHMP Annual Meeting on April 24 was a great success! We recognized new lifetime members, shared our successes for the past year, including the support of two internships and park seasonal positions and our very successful Appeal in December. We also had our annual election of Board members. Please join me in welcoming Karla Jamir as our newest Board member. Karla has been actively involved in the identification, collection and preservation of the plant species at HMP since 1994. Once the business meeting was finished, we went for a walk and were treated to an

In my "HMP world" things are looking up! This spring I've been able to teach school groups on a regular basis and participate in some outreach programs in the community. I'm checking my bluebird nest boxes (only tree swallows so far) and am looking forward to leading Hayrides in May and an early morning walk (see below) in June. I look forward to seeing you here in the park and sharing the peace, delight, and excitement in the wonders of the natural world!

Kathi McNeil
FOHMP President



*Kathi McNeil and Suzanne Lepple on
Wetlands Awareness Day*

Celebrate Solstice

Sunday June 20, 5:30-7 a.m.

Welcome summer by greeting the sun with a walk to the observation tower. Share breakfast treats and juice on the tower as the wetland comes awake. Canceled if rain. \$6 (Adults)



Park Manager's Message

A Walk on Huntley's Wild Side



Well, we survived a crazy, record breaking (often back-breaking) winter, and spring sure sprung with a purpose! That ninety-degree weather in April brought

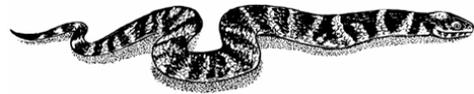
out plant blooms about ten days early. Huntley's woodlands had one of the most impressive displays of Spring Beauties (small, pink, ephemeral wildflowers) seen for years. Staff was also pleased to see a patch of Sessile, or Toadshade, Trillium reappear along the forest trail. Spotted Turtles, Black Racers and Wood Frogs, three herps that emerge in early spring, were all out in force this March as well. Perhaps the most exciting natural visitor to the park this spring was a flock of around 30 Rusty Blackbirds that stayed for at least a month. These birds nest in the northern boreal forests of New England and Canada, only gracing Northern Virginia with their presence during winter and in spring migration. Tragically, their populations have *dropped by almost 90% in the last decade*, due primarily to habitat destruction of their northern breeding grounds. To know that a traveling band of 30 found a safe haven with food and shelter here at Huntley for several weeks made this a special March for me and other bird lovers in the park.

Thanks to a generous donation by the Hunting Creek Garden Club, many hours of planting by our volunteers and help from both Earth Sangha and the Virginia Native Plant Society, the berm around the visitor center now has an impressive new array of native plants. Mehan's Mint, Purple Giant Hyssop, Shrubby St Johnswort and New Jersey Tea are just a few of the wildlife-attracting natives we've added. The berm is a demonstration garden to show good plants for folks wanting to use natives to attract birds and butterflies. Thank you also to the park's maintenance crew chief, Brian Moore for his tireless efforts to install extensive soaker hoses to quench the plants' thirst this summer.

This June it looks like the impossible will occur! Groundbreaking for the restoration of Historic Huntley is scheduled to take place this summer and most of the work will be done by end of fall. Over 20 years of waiting, working, meeting and raising funds has finally paid off. A huge thank you is due to Friends of Historic Huntley, and to the park's Site Manager, Carolyn Gamble. We'll be sure to keep you informed of the project's progress.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank all of you for your support during these trying Fairfax County budget cycles. Kathi McNeil and I have been informing our membership about potential budget cuts to parks. Due in large part to the advocacy of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and other Friends groups, the Resource Management Division was largely spared from having more than 15% of our budget cut. Our budgets are still down over 20% from just 3 years ago and we appear to have several more tough years ahead. But this year, we escaped the large cuts that had us so worried – again, largely because of your support. So **THANK YOU**. And enjoy the rest of your spring and summer in the park!

Kevin Munroe



The graph on the opposite page illustrates water level fluctuations in Huntley's central wetland over a one year period. We are tracking levels so that when the dam is built, we will know more about the natural fluctuation of water levels in the wetland and can more accurately replicate it. Water level fluctuations are an important part of a dynamic wetland, from high water to exposed mudflat periods.

This graph represents a real team effort: Dave Lawlor and Brian Moore installed the water gauge. Harry Glasgow and park staff take weekly water level readings. Marianne Mooney records the data, along with information on wetland bird species seen weekly. Suzanne Malone used the data to create this great graph. Kevin Munroe added photos and text.

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

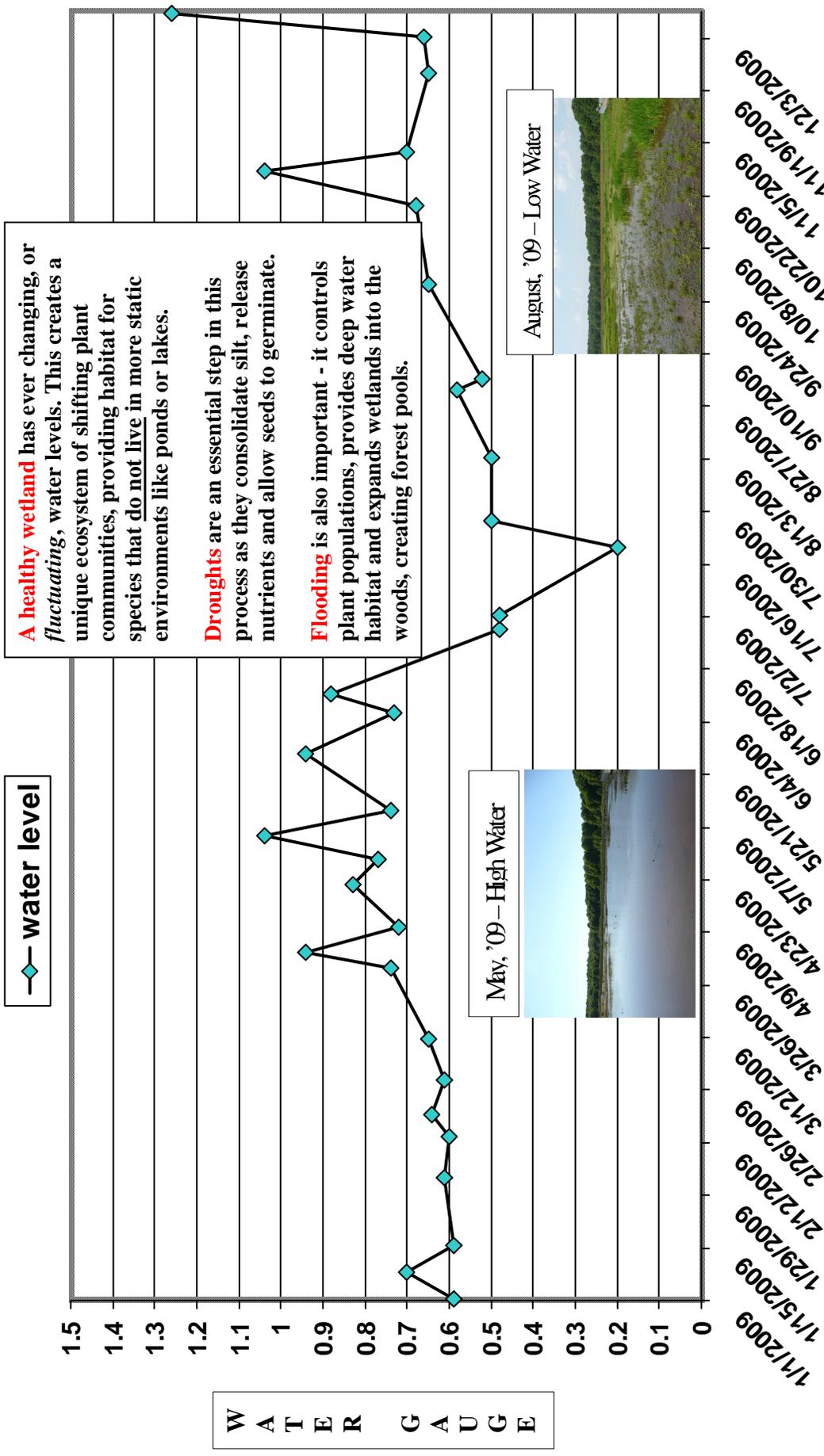
June 19, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

July 10, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

August 14, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

FREE - Reservations required

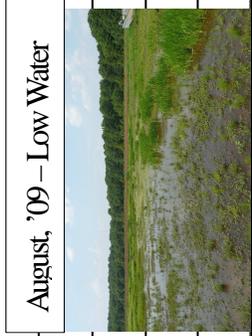
- Water Level Fluctuations - Huntley Meadows Central Wetland, 2009



A healthy wetland has ever changing, or *fluctuating*, water levels. This creates a unique ecosystem of shifting habitat for species that do not live in more static environments like ponds or lakes.

Droughts are an essential step in this process as they consolidate silt, release nutrients and allow seeds to germinate.

Flooding is also important - it controls plant populations, provides deep water habitat and expands wetlands into the woods, creating forest pools.



August, '09 – Low Water



May, '09 – High Water

Huntley Meadows Happenings



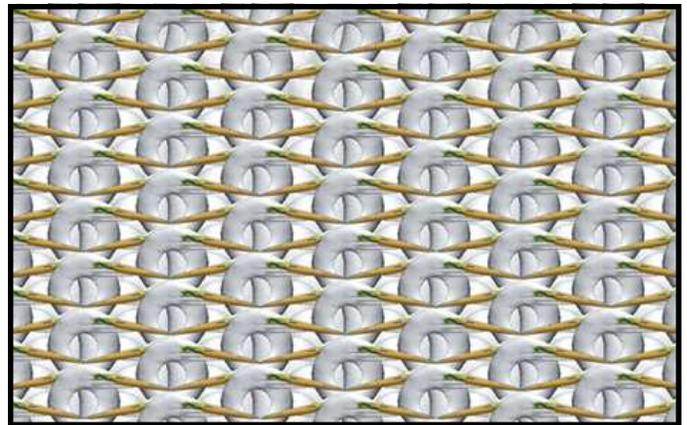
Pileated woodpecker by B.J. Opfer

Wildlife in Watercolors ***Paintings by B.J. Opfer*** ***Show continues until June 30th***

B.J. Opfer is an accomplished wildlife artist who has been painting local wildlife for 25 years. His paintings have been exhibited at art shows in Northern Virginia and at nationally recognized juried shows. Using watercolors to emphasize the softness of feathers, his paintings are sensitive and realistic portraits. Birds from his backyard are often his subjects as well as waterfowl and shorebirds of the coastal region. His portfolio also includes small mammal paintings and commissions of pets and other animals. Original paintings will be on sale as well as prints. A portion of the proceeds supports Huntley Meadows Park.

Kaleidimals ***Photo-collage by Marilyn Gaizband*** ***Artist's reception on July 11th*** ***2:00 to 4:00 p.m.***

Marilyn Gaizband is an award-winning and accomplished nature and wildlife photo artist. She has traveled the world taking photos and experimenting with different photo techniques. Her latest work, and the focus of this art show, features kaleidoscope designs made from photographs of animals. Parts, or sometimes the entire photograph of these animals, are arranged repetitively by the artist to create an artistic pattern or image. The images, along with facts about the animals and their habitats, were compiled in book form as an educational tool for readers of all ages. The public is invited to the opening reception.



Great egret by Marilyn Gaizband



Buglover's Paradise Saturday July 24 and Sunday July 25 10:00 a.m. to noon

The park is buzzing with insect activity, grasshoppers, butterflies, ladybugs and leafhoppers. Stop by our classroom for self-guided activities, a craft and videos. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Sponsored by FOHMP. \$4/child (Families with children 4 yrs. and up)



Evening Wagon Rides

Saturday August 7 and 21
4:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m.

Cool your heels on a warm summer evening by breezing along on a 90-minute tractor ride to the wetland and back. A naturalist will help you look for hunting bats and calling owls. Get off for a snack at the observation platform. Rides leave from the South King's Highway entrance. \$6 (Families, children 6 yrs. and up)



Huntley Meadows Happenings

Introduction to Fly Tying

Sunday June 13
12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

If woolly buggers and hare's nymphs pique your interest, you may want to try your hand at the intricate art of fly tying. Equipment and materials provided. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. \$10



Wetland in Bloom

Saturday June 19
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

Café Cattail – 'What's Perkin'

Friday June 18
7:00 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. Sponsored by FOHMP.



Summer Stroll

Saturday June 26
8:00 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



Dragonflies

Sunday June 27
9:00 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

Summer Birds and Bagels

Saturday July 10
8:00 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

Birding for Beginners

Sunday July 11
8:00 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

Bat Watching

Saturday July 17
8:00 to 9:30 p.m. The only mammals with true flight can find insect prey in complete darkness. Learn about the diversity and adaptations of these fascinating animals at a slide illustrated lecture. Then search twilight skies for bats on the wing. \$6

Participate in park programs!

Support your park, learn something new and enjoy a visit to Huntley.

To make program reservations, please call the Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center at 703-768-2525.

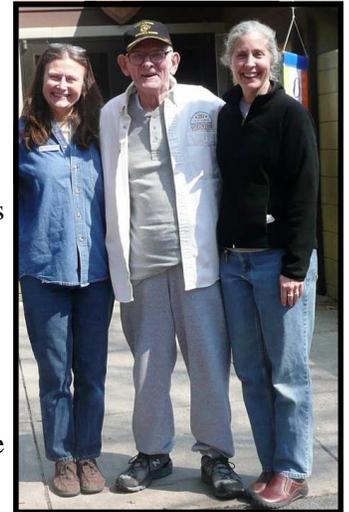
If you'd like to be a park volunteer, please call Ann Stat, volunteer coordinator.

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park News

In Memoriam, Jack Moore

The Park has lost a dear friend, Jack Moore, who passed away on Saturday, April 24th. Jack was 90 years old and spent almost 35 years volunteering at Huntley Meadows since starting in 1975. Some of his notable projects were the creation of the first orienteering course, assistance with construction of the Pond Trail, and helping start the park's nest box program. For many years he assisted staff with the annual birdseed sale, hoisting heavy bags of seed to car trunks. He taught programs, too, and was well known for his off-trail programs, *In Search of Deer* and *Huntley's Back Forty*. He brought families together to build bluebird nest boxes at his *Build a Nestbox* program for which he prepared all the pre-drilled nest box kits. Jack wrote wonderful articles for the park's volunteer newsletter about his outdoor adventures, and he had many of them. He was the first person ever to report river otter in the park.

At every park volunteer event he attended, Jack spoke graciously of what this park and the people who work here meant to him. He was a wonderful man who was dearly loved by the staff, volunteers and visitors to HMP.



Carolyn, Jack Moore and Annie

2010 Naturalist Intern

Brooke-Marie Lewis is our 2010 Naturalist Intern. Brooke and her family are long-time volunteers and supporters of the park. She brings with her seven years of experience teaching Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Science to children with special needs. Brooke is a weekend naturalist at Huntley Meadows Park. She aspires to work full-time at a park as an environmental educator. Many thanks to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park for making this internship possible. This is the 19th year of the FOHMP-supported internship program at Huntley.

2010 Resource Management Intern

We had an excellent applicant pool for the 2010 Resource Management Internship this year. The selected candidate, Amy O'Donnell, has a B.S. in Biology from George Mason University and is considering a graduate degree in Environmental Policy. Amy was selected to work for a semester at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Va. in 2008, assisting with research projects ranging from animal tracking to her project on the Great Barrier Reef. She currently works at George Mason University's child development center as a teacher's assistant. Amy lives just off the George Washington Parkway and has traveled the trails of Huntley Meadows Park for many years. She is smart, very friendly and personable and I think she will fit in very well with the staff and volunteers. She will be starting on May 31st so please welcome her. Thank you all for the Birdathon and all you do for the park.

I would also like to thank the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park for their generosity. Thanks to you the Park has three new pairs of chest waders and a new digital Infrared camera to capture nighttime wildlife photos. We are also grateful for funding for staff training. Many thanks to all of you!!

Dave Lawlor

Resource Manager

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

Jim Baney

Adam Bucher

Roberta E. Bucher

Joyce Connolly

Patricia Donovan

Andy and Judy Higgs

John Kristy and Suzanne Sheridan

David Ledwith



Support from our members 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, become a life member. Send a donation of \$150 to:

Treasurer, FOHMP

3701 Lockheed Blvd,
Alexandria, VA 22306

Thank you,

Connie Carpender, Membership Chair



Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon 2010



“Black-Throated Green Warbler!” said Marianne Mooney, as she spun around in the parking lot, looking for the bird that she heard calling behind her. Chris French and I were also looking, when the I-phone in her hip pocket went off with a warbler call again. It was pretty funny, though unfortunately we never found that species during the May 4th Birdathon. But when we were finished, the four teams of staff and volunteers had tallied 98 species, ten shy of the record set in 2004.

So what were the highlights? For me, aside from the excellent company, it was probably a pre-dawn Virginia Rail calling in the wetland, surrounded by a chorus of frogs that was nearly drowning out everything else. For Marianne, it might have been the American Bittern that flew over her head; for Ann Stat it might have been recognizing the call of the Least Bittern that she heard. But those were just a few of the great birds found during the day. Among the sixteen warbler species found were Yellow, Blackburnian, Hooded, Magnolia, Black-throated blue, Northern parula, Chestnut-sided, American redstart, Northern waterthrush and Yellow-breasted chat. Some of the other more notable finds included Swainson’s thrush, Veery, Sora, Common nighthawk, Brown thrasher, Cedar wax-wing, Red-headed woodpecker, Common loons, and a Summer tanager.

The most numerous species were 56 Blue-gray gnatcatcher, 55 Common yellowthroat, 54 Common grackle, and 50 Red-winged blackbird. Nineteen other species were seen only once each, suggesting how hard it is to build up a really big count. These included Double-crested cormorant, Coopers hawk, Great horned owl, Eastern wood-pewee, House wren, Orchard oriole, and Blue grosbeak. Birds that we might have expected but never found included Osprey, Bald eagle, Ring-billed gull, and House finch.

But of course, this is not just another “big-day” count. It provides us with the opportunity to remember Ed Weigel and Ken Howard, two volunteers who enriched the Huntley Meadows experience for so many people. The donations this event inspires go towards funding an internship at the Park.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their time, skills, and donations to this annual event. It is especially appreciated during these challenging economic times. It’s not too late to send in a donation if you haven’t yet.

Andy Higgs

FOHMP board member

Many thanks to the following people who donated to the 2010 Birdathon:

David Andreen	Fred and Norma Hoffman	Warren and Becky Smith
Alan Matson and Dale Azaria	Su Kim	Lee Stang
Connie and Pete Badger	Harvey Leifert	James and Barbara Stewart
Larry and Ann Cartwright	Suzanne and Fred Lepple	Judith Uehlein
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Duffy	BJ Opfer	Rocky Ventrella
Leslie Finister	Barry Pearson	Ann and James Van Deusen
Marya Fitzgerald	John and Barbara Perry	Mary White
Curtis Gibbens	Dorothy and Ed Raduazo	Brett and Margaret Wohler
Larison Helm	Marianne Mooney and Joe Sasfy	Ana Arguelles and Jeff Wneck
Andy Higgs	Paul and Deborah Seymour	Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
Colette Hodes	Fred Siskind	

2010 Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Make your check out to FCPA-HMP and write *donation-birdathon* on memo line.

Mail to:

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

***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: _____

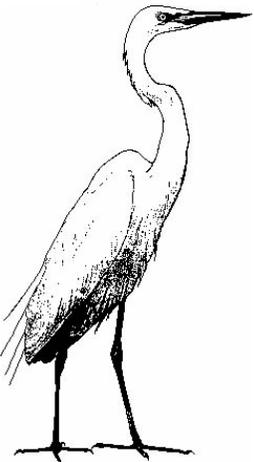
Address: _____

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.