

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Summer 2020

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

2020 FOHMP Annual Meeting

By: Cathy Ledec, FOHMP President

Here I share with our members a summary of the June 20, 2020 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Annual Meeting. This virtual meeting was held using Zoom as the safest way for us to gather our members together during the pandemic. It was great to see everyone on Zoom, and thanks to all of you who attended. After a warm welcome, we started the meeting with a presentation from FOHMP's Treasurer Katie Baker. Details on Katie's presentation can be found on page four of this newsletter. We then confirmed that we had a quorum of present members (including both proxy votes and those on Zoom) for our annual election of the FOHMP Board of Directors. FOHMP Board Member Harry Glasgow led the business of electing next year's



For the safety of all FOHMP members, the June 2020 Annual Meeting was held via Zoom.

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Park Manager's Message

By: Karen Sheffield

During the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) annual meeting, I had the chance to reflect on how much of a positive impact you make on the Park by being a member of the FOHMP. Huntley's mission is to inspire community engagement through mindful management and meaningful encounters. In other words, we hope you and your neighbors enjoy your visits to the Park and you feel that Huntley contributes greatly to your quality of life. We strive to achieve this mission through scientifically supported and thoughtful care of the Park's natural and cultural resources. We endeavor to share the relevance of these resources through our professional naturalist-led programs, exhibits and media. FOHMP make significant contributions toward the Park's mission and goals by supporting quality programming, your Park experience and resource management. In the past year alone, you as a Friend have supported meaningful programs and projects. Just a few are listed below.

Last fall, students from two neighboring elementary schools visited the Park weekly for a naturalist-led after school program. FOHMP financial support and grants made this program possible, including financial support for student transportation.

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Park Programs Adapt with the Times

By: Kylie Starck, Program Manager

Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) program offerings have shifted to a new and exciting form of community engagement. In March and May, when the entire interpretive program schedule was cancelled through the summer, there was plenty of uncertainty in the air. However, one thing was always clear - HMP staff were determined to find a new way to connect and share the interpretive messages about the importance of Huntley, nature, and local history through virtual programs and small group outdoor programs.

Park interpretive staff participated in educational opportunities to learn how to make the transition to virtual programming, which included a new style of program outline and new technology. HMP staff are deeply grateful to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) for supporting this new transition. FOHMP donations were used to purchase equipment

to produce new dynamic virtual program experiences. The first type of new program offerings are online virtual summer camps with topics including Nature Drawing, Wildlife Zoology and Native American History. These virtual camps are led, produced, and supported by Interpretive Staffers Margaret Wohler, Malcolm McNeil, Kat Ochs, Melodie Stehling, Cheryl Repetti, and Brooke LaPorta as well as Customer Service Specialist Tami Entabi, and myself. Each virtual camp comes with an activity kit to complement the online educational experience. The kits are picked up by parents at the Park prior to start of camp. Park staff team work, creativity and collaboration have proved to be



Malcolm McNeil teaches campers via Zoom set up while Cheryl Repetti keeps things running behind the scenes.

successful as reflected in a survey response from a parent following the very first virtual camp - Nature Drawing. The parent wrote, "This was amazing! You totally killed it. The difference between this camp and our experience with other virtual learning in the spring was night and day. The teacher was engaged, prepared, and kept my kids focused so I could work. I know there was a team behind the scenes too. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!" We look forward to reaching more people as we continue to develop this new HMP experience.

Huntley is also excited to offer small group outdoor natural and cultural history interpretive programs. The first in-person small group program offered at HMP was Firefly Walks led by Interpreter PJ Dunn. PJ was assisted by a second staff member to ensure the group enjoyed the splendor of firefly displays. The first outdoor evening Park programs were very popular and filled quickly. The interpretive calendar through the summer has more small group natural and cultural history programs led by PJ, Margaret, Cheryl, Malcolm, and Melodie, each assisted by a second staff member. We have received positive feedback from program participants who are excited that they can connect to the Park and staff again through these programs.

Keep an eye out for more virtual and in-person interpretive programs. Check the Park's website <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows/classes-camps> for the most up-to-date program offerings. Thank you to FOHMP, Park staff, and visitors for supporting HMP programs.

Get Ready for the 2020 Photo Contest

By: Katie Baker, Board Treasurer

Start planning your 2020 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest submissions! We were impressed with the variety and beauty of the animal photos submitted last year, but this year we're challenging our photographers to submit more landscape and flora submissions. If we receive enough entries, we'll judge a separate category. Though we are hopeful we can display entries in the Norma Hoffman Visitor's Center, we are also anticipating collecting and displaying the photographs through a virtual platform due to COVID-19. We'll have full details in September.

Parents, need a summer/fall project? Kids are welcome to enter the Photo Contest! We have a youth category for those in high school or younger, and there is no entry fee. Work with your grade school kids to find the angles, light, and subject matter that appeal to them. For older children, researching photography principals, practicing, assessing the outcome, and then honing techniques through additional practice could be a wonderful educational opportunity.

As in years past, each contestant will be limited to three submissions, and all pictures must have been taken at Huntley Meadows Park in 2019 or 2020. When photographing, remember to stay physically distant from other park visitors and follow any rules posted at the Park. We look forward to seeing your submissions in the fall!



2019 winning photo, Whatcha Lookin' At by Beth Howell.

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Visitors, virtual and live, received an enhanced experience from items purchased by Friends that support naturalist-led programs.



School children observing exciting animals in the wetland.

As a Friend, you provided fall school field trip financial assistance to schools in need. These naturalist-led school programs reinforce essential learning elements for each corresponding grade level, and the students get to experience first-hand what they are learning about!

The ability to survey wildlife was bolstered this year with a grant FOHMP received from Wildlife Acoustics to purchase software for analyzing wildlife tracking data. This technology provides the ability to scientifically analyze data and makes it possible to collect a greater amount of data. These survey results help to inform resource management decisions to achieve the Park's goals.

Your FOHMP membership makes a difference, and I thank you. I also thank you for the advocacy, volunteerism and other financial support you provide to help keep Huntley a great place to visit!

How Is Your Money Being Spent?

By: Katie Baker, FOHMP Board Treasurer

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) was overwhelmed by the number of generous donations as well as new and renewed memberships during the 2020 fiscal year. With the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center still closed and the entire Park closed for parts of the spring, we expected substantial financial shortfalls; however, your generosity kept us on track. In the 2020 fiscal year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020) FOHMP received:

\$16,084.34 in unrestricted donations
 \$3,480 in restricted donations
 \$3,410.00 in membership dues
 \$6,144.26 awarded through grants
 \$7,773.36 earned through sale of FOHMP logo merchandise at the visitor center gift shop
 \$580.40 earned through Amazon smile and the photography show

This year we approved spending \$27,848.10 of the money we received. The accompanying chart shows how each dollar was spent. Money received from grants, restricted donations, or interest are not included in this tabulation. Here are highlights of what your generous donations and membership dues supported in FY2020:

- This year, due to COVID-19, we were unable to move forward with several expected expenditures, so we did put more money into our rainy - day fund (savings) than is typical, but we were still able to provide many critical supplies and funds to the Park.
- Three naturalist interns who run summer educational camps and assist with wetland maintenance and monitoring. They provide essential support to the staff and bring funds into the Park through the camps they facilitate. This expense was split between last summer's interns and the two who are able to provide research/monitoring support this summer.
- Education encompasses supplies to assist with classes, community outreach, and staff training. We supported two staff members to attend a critical conference where they could learn new trends for engaging Park visitors through a variety of methods and networking with peers.
- Equipment purchased this year included herbicide sprayer parts to repair the Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) sprayer, needed for combating invasive plants; a PH meter for monitoring the wetland and vernal pools; and sound equipment to help enhance summer camps and environmental education programs (purchased before COVID-19).



A renewed native plant berm around the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center.

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- HMP has dedicated volunteer staff who help the Park run smoothly. We support them by purchasing supplies for and recognizing their contributions at an annual party.
- Natural resource management encompasses a broad range of purchases that help maintain the Park and help staff members do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Last year we assisted with purchase of the bird seed for feeders and supported a spruce up of the native plant berm, both at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center.
- Quarterly newsletters keep our nearly 500 FOHMP members up to date on what is going on at the Park. FOHMP provides printing and postage costs for hard copies. Costs are kept low through utilization of an e-newsletter where possible.
- The FOHMP Board has a few necessary expenses such as filing fees, insurance, supplies, and hosting an Annual Meeting. We work hard to keep these annual expenses minimal, so the majority of your monetary support goes directly to HMP.

Thank you for supporting the FOHMP through your membership dues and/or donations. Your generosity preserves Huntley’s natural resources, supports Park staff and volunteers, engages the community, and allows FOHMP to work to protect this beautiful natural area.

FY 20 Where Did My Dollar Go?

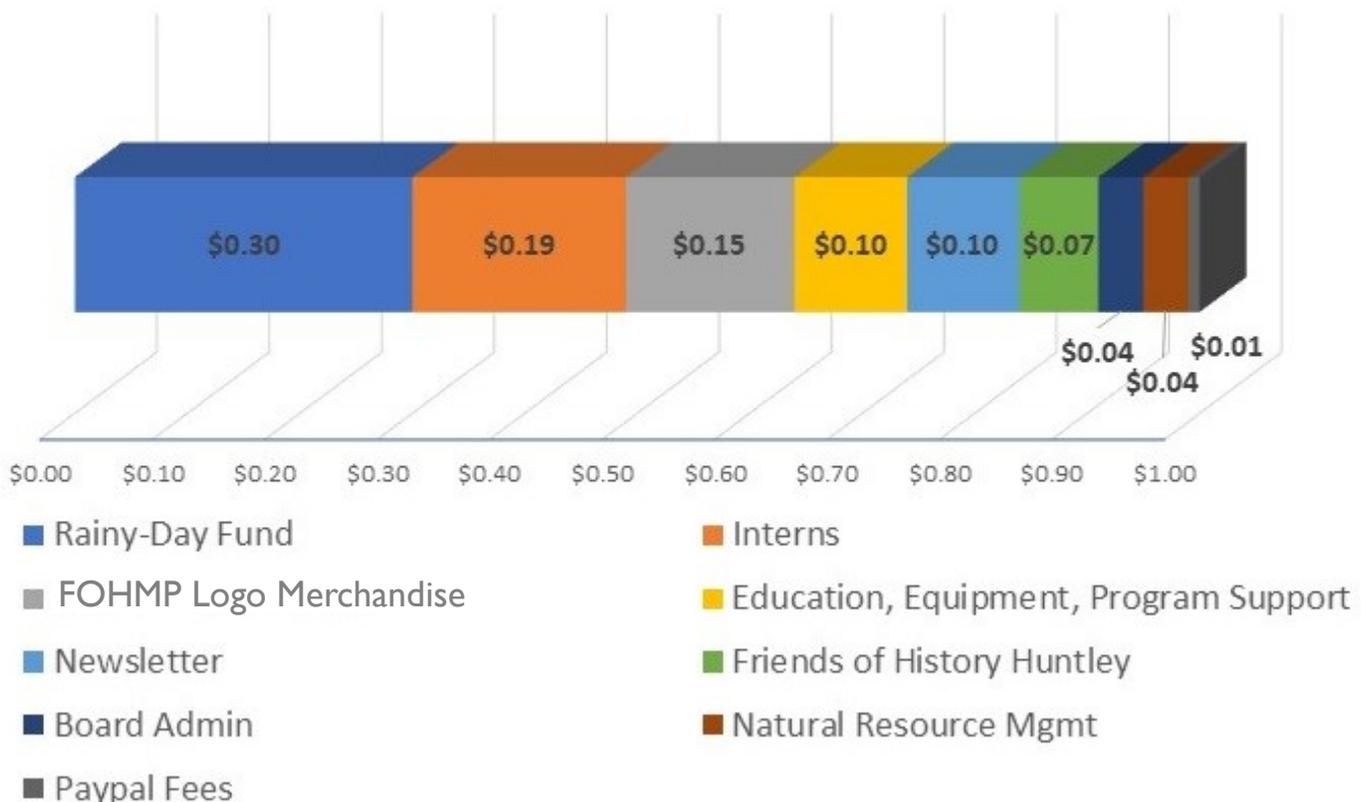


Chart showing where each part of every \$1 received is spent.

Bird-a-thon Beyond! Was a Success!

By: Ben Jesup, FOHMP Board Member

Because of COVID, we could not have our traditional official bird-a-thon. However, with the help of at least 22 members of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP), we made some lemonade out of the shut-down lemons. We opened up the bird-a-thon to all the FOHMP members wherever they are. Participants spent over 90 hours recording 123 species of birds, including in Oregon! At the Park itself, several of us covered as much as we could (without accessing the boardwalk, which was closed at the time). We managed to see or hear 102 bird species, including some real rarities for the count (Golden-winged Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, flyover Bobolink, Least Flycatcher, flyover Loon, and Raven).

Thanks to all of those who contributed financially as part of Bird-a-thon Beyond! You helped us fund our 2020 Natural Resource Management Intern.



Bird-a-thon Beyond! participants practiced social distancing at HMP while observing various bird species. Photo by Ben Jesup.

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Board of Directors. Congratulations to the newly elected Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) FOHMP Board of Directors. You can click here to see the FY2021 list of new Board members: <http://fohmp.org/about.html>.

Following the vote, we heard an exceptional presentation from Huntley Meadows Park’s (HMP’s) Natural Resource Manager Dave Lawlor. His topic was the 2019 Acoustic Breeding Marsh Bird Survey. This survey was conducted using acoustic monitoring equipment received by way of a grant to FOHMP from Wildlife Acoustics, Inc. A huge thanks to Wildlife Acoustics for this equipment grant. The new equipment will facilitate completion of wildlife surveys that inform management decisions at HMP. The 2019 Breeding Marsh Bird Survey required Dave to quickly come up to speed on the supporting software. This is technically very complex, and Dave’s work on it went above and beyond just using the software; he worked with Wildlife Acoustics to customize the application for HMP’s survey.

Dave’s technical skills with the software that supports the acoustic monitoring equipment are now exemplary. He was able to sort through more than 365 hours of recordings to separate the specific marsh bird calls he was seeking from many other bird calls and additional sounds included on each recording. This was a daunting task with more than 241 GB of data to sift through. Dave focused the monitoring project on trying to confirm calls from the Virginia Rail, King Rail, American Bittern, and Least Bittern. While none of these bird species were reported by HMP birders in 2019, Dave’s survey documented 31 probable rail and bittern calls. Surveys for marsh breeding birds will be continued at Huntley indefinitely. Other surveys could include Wood Frog (calls were heard in 2019), Chorus Frog, and bat surveys.

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Earn Money for Huntley by Shopping!

Did you know you can earn money for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) while you shop? FOHMP is one of the non-profits that participates in the AmazonSmile program. It's a simple and automatic way for you to support FOHMP every time you shop at Amazon, at no cost to you.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping experience as at Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your designated charitable organization. To set or change your charity to FOHMP, use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/54-1338505>, and thank you for choosing FOHMP as your charity of choice through AmazonSmile.

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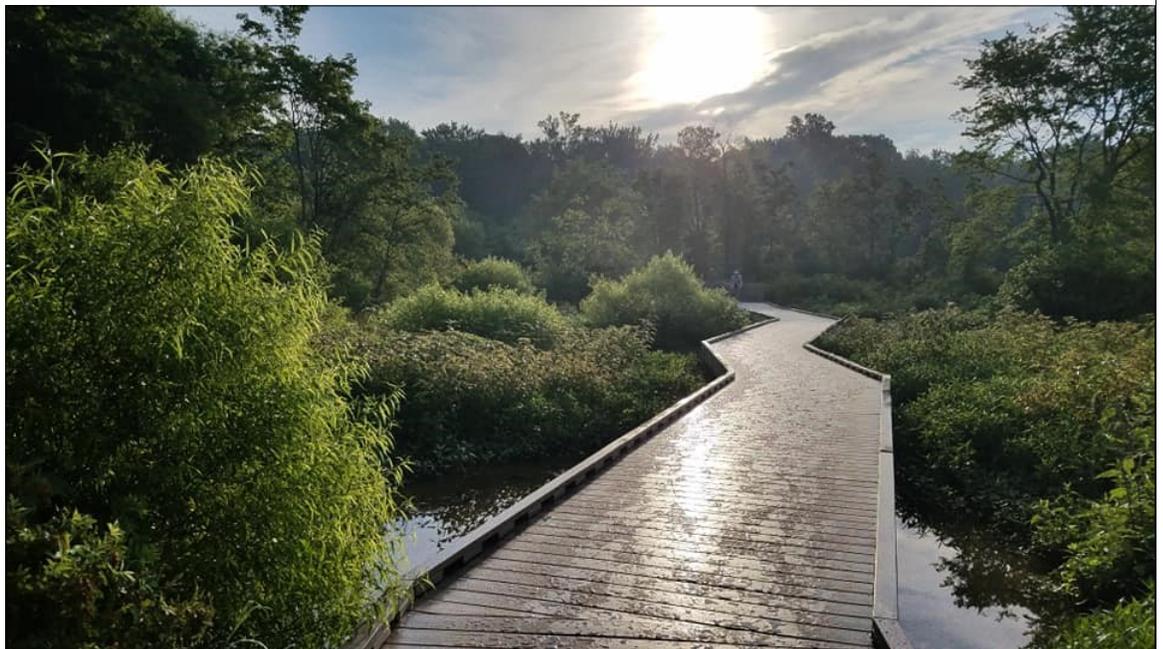
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FOHMP is grateful to Dave for this work. It serves as a great example of seeking out innovative methods that use technology to effectively monitor for the return of certain species to HMP's wetlands following the 2014 completion of the Wetland Restoration Project (<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows/wetland-restoration>).

During the Annual Meeting, we also shared thanks to our members for their continued support of FOHMP, especially during the challenging pandemic. In addition, we thanked the HMP Staff who have continued to work and support HMP through these unexpected and difficult times.

These last few months have presented all of us with unforeseen challenges. Please keep working hard to stay safe and healthy (wearing masks and employing physical distancing). We all need to recognize that these demanding times also present us with opportunities. This may mean spending more time with our families; connecting with nearby nature in our own yards, neighborhoods and local parks; or attending a few on-line workshops to pick up or refine knowledge of a topic of interest. Despite the challenges we humans are facing, nature remains a constant and soothing force around us; it is ever-present. Let's take the time to observe its beauty and recognize its importance in bringing better balance to our lives.

The Park's trails and parking lots have re-opened as of this writing. I look forward to seeing more of you (at a safe physical distance) on the trails at Huntley Meadows Park!



A recent July morning on HMP's boardwalk provides a lovely, soothing environment for Park visitors. Photo by Nancy Vehrs



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Membership **EXPIRATION DATES** expiring soon are printed to the right of your last name.

Donation and Membership Form

Please help Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) support the Park by joining our Friends group. Dues and donations contribute toward funding new initiatives and programs, and your membership support will help us to be stronger advocates for Huntley Meadows Park.

To become a FOHMP member or to make a donation to FOHMP, please complete this form and mail it to: Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Email: _____
 Telephone: _____

Dues information:

- _____ \$15 Individual, Annual
- _____ \$20 Family, Annual
- _____ \$10 Student/Senior, Annual
- _____ \$150 Lifetime Membership

Donation information (please insert donation amount here):

- _____ General Donation
- _____ Donation in the name of _____
- _____ Donation to be applied to _____ fund



For ease of processing at our end, please use our **PayPal** feature on the Membership page of our website <http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html> to make your contribution. If you prefer, you may include a check or money order made out to FOHMP with your completed form.