

Winter 2022

Newsletter

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



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Co-sponsorship for Eagle Program

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park are pleased to announce we will be a co-sponsor for the Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) Eagle Program to be held via Zoom on March 2, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Bald and Golden Eagles will be the focus of the March 2nd presentation given by Jeff Cooper, a Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Wildlife Biologist. Cooper will explore eagle biology, recent research, the Bald Eagles' recovery, and the importance of the Chesapeake Bay region to Bald Eagles.

Cooper has worked with many bird species for over 30 years, such as raptors, vultures, passerines and marsh birds. He has performed extensive work in Virginia on Bald and Golden Eagles, including the delisting of the Bald Eagle from the federal threatened and endangered species list. He has investigated winter ranging behavior of Golden Eagles and worked to minimize wind energy risks to birds, among many other projects.

FODM requests that you Register in advance for the Zoom program at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUdeyprD0tGd3X0qQP1pJ3j6XxqziP2btn>.

You will receive a reply email to confirm your registration.

Do You Need a Receipt?

The 2021 tax season is here, and your membership dues or donation 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 2021 in accordance with IRS requirements.

If you donated less than \$250 and would like an official receipt, please send your request to treasurer.fohmp@gmail.com, and we will be happy to provide one.

Help Friends of Huntley Meadows Park streamline our administrative work; use our PayPal link to renew your membership or donate! Go to <http://fohmp.org/membership.html>, and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Volunteering at Huntley Meadows Park

By: Cathy Ledec, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) President

Dear Friends,

In this newsletter, I would like to salute all of the volunteers at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). Just about every day of the year, volunteers at HMP are contributing their time and energy to all aspects of managing the Park's needs. The work volunteers do is important, and the 6,500 volunteer hours contributed during the last fiscal year are equivalent to more than three full time staff. Wowser! A huge thank you to all the HMP volunteers for this remarkable achievement!

You'll find volunteers throughout the Park actively engaged in public outreach and education, support for scientific research, assistance with natural resources management, and advocacy. You can find volunteers on the trails day and evening, at the observation tower, in the forest and meadows, monitoring the flora and fauna, teaching the next generation of environmental stewards, at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, by the side of the road picking up trash, in the wetland (that's right: wearing our waders), meeting with local and state officials, at neighborhood and community meetings, delivering public testimony, and more. On a personal note, this volunteer work is enormously gratifying and always interesting. Every day at Huntley, there is something different to observe. Being at HMP on the trails or in the Visitor Center, gives Park volunteers the opportunity to experience natural resource phenomenon firsthand. For me, in particular, the natural world gives me a feeling of awe and wonder when I take the time to observe what's happening in it.

More volunteers are needed at HMP; may I invite you to join us? There are various volunteer opportunities open at the Park. You can find one that fits your interests. Are you a person who likes to interact with the public? Assisting with educating and helping inform visitors at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center front desk might be for you. Do you like the rewards of contributing citizen science data that helps inform management decisions at the Park? Do you like being out on the trails? From time to time to time opportunities to assist with trail or Park habitat monitoring of flora and fauna become available. Do you enjoy history and sharing knowledge about past human inhabitants of the land? You might enjoy being a docent at Historic Huntley (HH). There is diversity in the volunteer activities that you can participate in. Find out what help is currently needed at HMP, HH, and other Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) sites and how to apply for open positions. Visit the FCPA volunteer website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/volunteer>. New opportunities become available throughout the year, so if you don't find something that interests you, check back.

HMP general and activity specific training is provided for all volunteers. I've learned so much about our natural world by honing my observation skills at HMP. Every volunteer project that I've engaged in has been fun; some more challenging than others, but all have been interesting and rewarding. It is fun to volunteer alone or on a team. It is such a joy for me, and I know it could be for you too. Volunteering is also a way for me to "escape" into the HMP wilderness for a few hours here and there; this helps keep me better balanced in this stressful, gadget-filled world.

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) group extends its deepest thanks to all HMP and HH volunteers. I am especially grateful for the volunteer Board of Directors for FOHMP. The FOHMP Board is an enthusiastic, high-energy group of committed HMP volunteers.

It is a joy and inspiration to volunteer to protect HMP so that future generations will have this Park and its wonderful natural resources available to enjoy sustainably.

See you soon, perhaps while volunteering!



Student volunteers gather following an HMP stream trash pickup, spring 2019.



HMP Natural Resources Manager Chris King.

Meet the Park's Newest Hire

My name is Chris King, and I am extremely excited to start my new career with Fairfax County Park Authority as the Natural Resources Manager at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). I recently completed my Master's Degree from Clemson University where I majored in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology. My new position at HMP will give me the opportunity to utilize the skills I have accrued while in college, as well as from my past work experience. I have worked in a wide variety of scientific fields, including zookeeping, laboratory work, and environmental monitoring. When I saw the Resources Manager position open up at Huntley, I jumped at the chance. HMP is truly a special place, and I look forward to helping it thrive. If you see me in the Park, feel free to stop and chat!

Keeping Huntley Wild

By: Karen Sheffield, Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) Manager

Enjoying up close encounters with wildlife in an urban environment is unusual, and when these encounters do occur, they're true treasured moments. HMP is a place where you may enjoy such moments. Many rare and unusual wetland bird species visited Huntley's wetland in 2021. Many stayed for an extended time, including the Virginia Rails still active in the wetland. I hope you get a glimpse of one of these elusive and secretive birds on your next visit to HMP. The wildlife successes in the wetland are, in part, thanks to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park members and other Park visitors. You play a critical role in creating suitable habitat for wildlife.

Visitors who stay on Park trails help wildlife define their comfort zone in relation to people. With predictable visitor behaviors, wildlife will come as close to the boardwalk and trails as they feel suitable.

Off trail visitor activity can deter a wildlife presence, including nesting site selection. Scientific studies have shown that human presence, ranging from occasional to regular, changes wildlife behavior and can cause wildlife to turn away from otherwise optimal habitat. Many birds and other wildlife need lots of space: places to hide, areas to forage for food, and safe nesting spots. It may appear that some parts of the Park are unused by wildlife; however, many species are secretive, and each utilizes Park habitats in different ways.

Quality wildlife viewing at HMP also depends on visitors talking at normal volumes, refraining from using amplified sound, and not riding scooters, hover boards, or bikes on trails where prohibited. On the boardwalk, we ask that visitors avoid running or making other movements that would cause the water to vibrate and pose a perceived threat to animal safety. Pets can provide another potential threat to wildlife both real and perceived, so pets are not permitted on the Heron Trail (boardwalk trail) or the Restoration Trail (gravel trail on South Kings Highway side of Park).



Sora foraging in Huntley Meadows wetland, February 2021.

Thank you for helping to keep Huntley Meadows a treasured wildlife sanctuary with great wildlife viewing. I hope you enjoy your next visit to the Park!

Recap: 2021 Photo Show and Fundraiser

By: Katie Baker, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Treasurer

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) annual photography show and fundraiser, back in person after being virtual in 2020, drew over 70 entries this year. From a photo of a snowy landscape to one of a white mallow flower, the judges thought the entries were some of the strongest yet. We want to extend our thanks to all who submitted their photographs to the show and fundraiser.

A panel of three judges – Laura Marshall, Chris Dyer, and Tyler Reber - scored photos in seven categories (impact, technique, composition, lighting, subject/center of interest, originality, story/mood) and awarded ribbons to ten photographs.

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 the Park.

You can see the video announcing the winners and the judges discussing the top three overall choices on FOHMP's YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/QXZa8eDREkM>. All the photo contest entries are viewable at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center through February 26, 2022. The Center is open Wednesday - Monday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Visitors are required to wear masks while inside.

1st Place Overall and 1st Place High School Entry

"King of his domain"

James Fatemi

2nd Place Overall

"Summer Moon Silhouette"

Luis Fernando Pinzon

3rd Place Overall

"Is this my good side?"

Tibor Molnar



"Summer Moon Silhouette," Luis Fernando Pinzon



"King of his domain," James Fatemi



"Is this my good side?," Tibor Molnar


Annual Bird-a-thon and Beyond!

It's Bird-a-thon time again! Since 1996, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) has hosted this fundraiser to support the Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) summer Resource Management (RM) Intern. Every year, Board members and staff look forward to this annual event, enjoying each other's company, the birds, the Park, and the knowledge that with the funds raised, one individual will have a wonderful summer opportunity. The 2021 intern Emery Poulsen explains that she, "had a wide variety of experiences and played a number of different roles." As an intern, "I participated as a resource manager, was part of the maintenance crew, a birder, a rare plant advocate, and an ecologist. I played the role of a visitor, was a student, and collaborated with other Fairfax County Park Authority interns." Read more about what Emery accomplished as the 2021 RM Intern in our Fall 2021 newsletter, <http://www.fohmp.org/newsletter%20archives.html>.

In 2020, Bird-a-thon and Beyond! was introduced. As in 2020 and 2021, the FOHMP Board again invites everyone to join us to count the birds in their back yards, local parks, or other locations for a week in early May. The Board of FOHMP has so much fun seeing the results come in from those who bird with us, some from as far away as Oregon! Please do your count anytime between May 1-8, 2022. The Board's Bird-a-thon count will take place in the Park during this same week, while following all guidelines in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For our supporters who bird with us from their own locations, please email a list of where you watched, how much time you spent counting birds at that location, the bird species you saw and number of each to friendsofhmp@gmail.com. The deadline to enter your data is May 8th. We will create a full tally of the bird species sighted and post it on our website: <http://fohmp.org/>.

If you don't count any birds, there is another important way that you may contribute - you can make a donation. As always, the Bird-A-Thon is also a fundraiser that supports HMP's RM Intern. The Board of FOHMP believes these interns have helped the Park tremendously through assistance with land stewardship and conservation. Additionally, the RM internship provides a young person with needed hands-on experience as he or she begins a career in conservation.

Your generous donation will help us reach our goal of \$3,000 to fund the 2022 RM Intern. You can donate a set amount, an amount for every bird counted, or an amount for each species counted. For ease of processing, we prefer donations be made through our Paypal account. Go to the dedicated page for Bird-a-thon on our website www.fohmp.org/birdathon2022.html, and look for the  button! Alternatively, you can use the form below to pay by check.

2022 BIRD-A-THON DONATION FORM*

Please submit form by May 31, 2022

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Please make checks payable to FOHMP, and mail this form with your check to:

Huntley Meadows Park - Bird-a-thon
3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306

*For ease of processing, we prefer donations be made via credit card through our Paypal account on our website at www.fohmp.org/birdathon2022.

Terraces

The cool, clear weather of fall showcased Historic Huntley's recently trimmed terraces (pictured at right). Some newly sprouted grass shoots from volunteer seeding efforts were in evidence as were bare patches needing seeding and "undesirable" vegetation requiring removal. Spring and summer 2022 will bring more planting opportunities. If you would like to join volunteers for future seeding and terrace restoration efforts, please contact the Friends of Historic Huntley at info@historichuntley.org.



Huntley Meadows Park Programs

Program subjects at Huntley Meadows Park and Historic Huntley provide a unique look at the diverse history and nature of the Park and associated historic site. Topics offer scouts, families, individuals of all ages, and groups a chance to experience nature, photography, art, and history with experts of this special natural area and historic home.

Learn more about available programs, and sign up on the Park's website at:
https://fairfax.usdirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place_id=7891.

Donation and Membership Form

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP)

To renew a membership, become a FOHMP member or 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



Alternatively, you can use our membership specific PayPal link on our website at

Website: www.fohmp.org

Renew or Donate: <http://fohmp.org/membership.html>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark

Phone: 571-336-2674