

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



June 2012

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

President's Message May 2012

As I write this I am thinking about the FOHMP Annual Meeting on May 19, 2012 and the accomplishments of FOHMP over the past year. May 19 is a big day! Not only did we have our annual meeting but the official opening of the newly restored Historic Huntley House took place just up the hill! The House and its surrounding buildings and acreage are now a part of HMP. FOHMP and FOHH have both voted to designate money to support programming at the House. I hope that you will all take the time to check out this new addition to the Park!

The Parking Donation Program has been a great success! Kevin Munroe and I shared the results of this program with the Park Authority Board in April. In the first year (we began collecting in April 2011) we collected \$9,954.04. Every \$2.00 counts! The program has been well received by the public and the FOHMP Board voted to continue it for another year and will be designating these funds to projects and programs at the Board Meeting in May.

Construction of the Outdoor Classroom is under way. They have begun clearing the area, the design has been approved, and we are getting all the permits lined up. Hopefully it will be in place ready to use by the Fall season. Our annual appeal completed the funding that was required.

The 2011 FOHMP Photography Contest was a successful event, with 32 participants and many beautiful pictures!

The summer internship program for 2 interns, one in the programming dept. and the other in the resource management dept. continues with FOHMP support

and your support of the Birdathon.

FOHMP has provided financial support for the seasonal naturalists who keep the visitor center open on weekends and the new year-long Resource Apprentice.

Three of our Board Members, Adam Bucher, Karla Jamir and Melina Tye along with FOHMP member, Steve Linblom, have created and coordinated a crew of Resource Management volunteers who help remove invasives, clear trails, and keep the park looking good!

This summer look for a new and wonderful Guide to Dragonflies at HMP. This 100 page guide is an update of the old guide that PJ Dunn and I put together years ago. It has Margaret Wohler's wonderful drawings, great photos donated by HMP volunteer and staff photographers, and lots of great info about the dragonfly species that have been seen in the park. All the proceeds from the sale of the guide will go the FOHMP.

We continue to support Wetlands Awareness Day, visitor center operations, the purchase of equipment for park staff, exhibit repair, and keep our fingers on the pulse of the decisions that are being made in Fairfax County.

Thanks for your support, don't forget to pay your dues, and come out and play in the Park!

Kathi McNeil, FOHMP president





Park Manager's Message

A Walk on Huntley Meadows' Wild Side



Updates, News and Wildflowers from Huntley Meadows

The Milk and Honey of the Wildflower World – Milkweed and Goldenrod

Our native Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) and Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) have the distinction of being both much-maligned and highly beneficial. The truth behind both these plants is that they may be two of the most important components of our meadow foodwebs, AND they make excellent additions to any yard trying to attract pollinators, provide multi-season color and resist hungry deer. Huntley Meadows has numerous kinds from both groups, including several state-rare species. So what makes them special?

Let's start with some myth-busting for the golden "honey" of this dynamic duo – Goldenrods don't cause hay-fever, I promise. That's ragweed, which blooms around the same time, but with tiny, greenish flowers that no one sees; we instead blame the showy, brilliant yellow blooms of the goldenrod, a purely innocent by-stander. Goldenrod is insect pollinated, so it has heavy, sticky pollen that won't get into your nose unless you put it there. Ragweed has light, wind-dispersed pollen, and often ends up in our nasal passages and eyes August-October, just when goldenrod is innocently in full bloom. Goldenrods start blooming in July, some species go strong until early November, they're drought tolerant, can hold their own with many invasive exotic plants and deer don't like them! Add the fact that they are one of the most important nectar sources for fall-migrating monarchs, as well as food for hundreds of other butterflies, native bees, flower beetles, insect-eating wasps, multi-colored crab and jumping spiders, and praying mantids, and you've got a flower that no meadow or wildlife garden should be without.

Now for the unfairly named *weed*; the "milk" of this wildflower couple. Milkweeds, with their exquisitely-shaped, horn and cup-like flowers, come in neon-orange, magenta-pink, purple, soft-rose and a few rarer species even have bright white and lime-green blooms. Deer won't usually eat them because of their bitter, milky sap and depending on the species, they can grow in marshy, saturated muck, or sandy, bone-dry soil, as well as everything in-between. Milkweeds are the only food-source for monarch caterpillars (whose populations are in decline across the US), but it doesn't stop there. There's a long list of brilliant red and black-spotted beetles, true bugs and moths that have evolved to digest the bitter milkweed sap, thriving on these beautiful, productive wildflowers. Weeds? Hardly – more like brilliant-colored, soil-adaptive, deer-proof, monarch nurseries. An exotic-looking native jewel; perfect for almost any meadow or wildlife garden.

Wetland Restoration – Look for survey markers and attend a free program

As explained in the spring newsletter, *Wetland Studies and Solutions Institute (WSSI)* was recently hired to create a restoration design, management plan, acquire permits and over-see restoration construction. As a leading wetland design firm for the D.C. area, we're excited to be working with them and are already impressed with their ecological knowledge, engineering expertise and professionalism. You may notice ribbons and other markers around the park as WSSI conducts extensive surveys to gather data on the park's plants, soils, topography and hydrology. By winter we hope to have a final design and be well into the permitting process, with a goal of breaking ground in summer/fall of 2013. Please join me at one of my free monthly *Park Manager Walk and Talks* for updates, and keep an eye on newsletters and websites for info as well. Always feel free to contact me directly, 703-768-2525.

Karen Sheffield – Welcome to Huntley Meadows!

Please welcome the park's newest addition to our staff, Karen Sheffield, who will be filling Carolyn Gamble's position. Karen hails from Riverbend Park in Great Falls, another Park Authority site, where she was their Program Manager for eight years. Before Riverbend she worked at Great Falls National Park and the Audubon Naturalist Society. As our Operations and Visitor Services Manager, Karen will be focusing her considerable skills, knowledge and experience to help manage the park through these exciting times of growth and change. Historic Huntley, the Outdoor Classroom and the Wetland Restoration Project, just to name a few expansions, will all be more productive and on-track because of her talent with park operations, programs, visitor services, finances and the natural world. And incidentally, Karen brings a level of expertise in dragonfly identification (she can ID their larval cast skins down to species!) that impresses even the dragonfly geeks of Huntley Meadows, myself included ☺

Kevin Munroe, Park Manager



Natural Resource News



Feel like getting outdoors, spending more time in the woods and wetlands, and contributing to the physical welfare of Huntley Meadows Park?

Exciting new volunteer opportunities at Huntley Meadows Park are now available through the Resource Management Volunteer (RMV) Program.

The RMV Program focuses on activities that directly assist with the substantial upkeep and resource management directives of our 1554 acre park by assisting the park staff with activities like stream cleanup, support of restoration projects in ecologically important areas, invasive plant removal (outside of the current IMA Program site), plant surveys, trail monitoring, and park maintenance.

Events take place on both weekdays and weekends.

Activities include:

- Planting of Native Plants
- Bird Nest Box Installation & Maintenance
- Stream Clean-Up
- Restoration Projects
- Assisting with On-Going Park Research Projects
- Invasive Plant Removal
- Trail Monitoring

If you are interested in volunteering and would like to be informed of upcoming events, please send an email to: HuntleyRMV@gmail.com and let us know you would like to help!

The Monday Morning Birdwalk

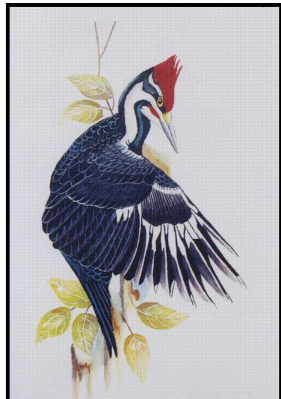
The Monday Morning walk adopted its summer start time on April 2; from April through October the walk will begin at 7AM. Starting in November, we will go to an 8AM start time. We have been averaging between 40 and 45 species each week, with a pretty good distribution of ducks, raptors, and blackbirds. This quarter, the highlights of the walk have been ducks, Bald Eagles, Virginia Rails, Winter Wrens, and an American Bittern. The standard array of Huntley Meadows winter migrants was present as well. Hermit Thrushes, White-throated Sparrows, and American Robins were plentiful, but Dark-eyed Juncos and Brown Creepers were not, although the Creeper count seemed to grow near the end of the season. Some of our regulars helped out in the annual Huntley Meadows' Birdathon in May, as well as the Christmas Bird Count in the Ft Belvoir circle.

As for the regular walkers, there were some long term absences. Our group is made up of some very chronic travelers. Long trips to Egypt (even in the midst of much political turmoil), New Zealand, Costa Rica, Arizona, and England occasionally decimated our ranks, but upon return, great stories and pictures passed around the breakfast table at Denny's during the "tally rally" after the walk made up for the absences.

The Monday Morning Birdwalk has been a Huntley tradition for over 25 years, and has hosted many birding legends such as Sibley, Kauffmann, and Dunn (Pete and PJ both). You never know who is going to show up. How about you?

Harry Glasgow

Huntley Meadows Art News



B.J. Opfer

Wildlife in Watercolors Paintings by B.J. Opfer

Show Running Through the End Of June

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. Original paintings will be on sale as well as prints. A portion of the proceeds supports Huntley Meadows Park.

Zoya DiCaprio Nature Photography

Opening Reception Sunday, July 1, 2-4 p.m.

This July and August, the auditorium will be filled with the close-up photographs of flowers and insects taken by Zoya Dicaprio. Through her camera lens, art comes alive as she explores the difference of fact vs. art. A flower in a factual format can be portrait as art, both are nice but a photographer can exaggerate that innate beauty to convey it even better.

The public is invited to meet Zoya at the opening reception.

www.zoyaphoto.com

Please donate your used nature books to our Friends of Huntley Meadows Park book sale. Drop off books at the Visitor Center desk. Books should be in good condition, not too old.



All funds from the book sale support Huntley Meadows' education and conservation mission.

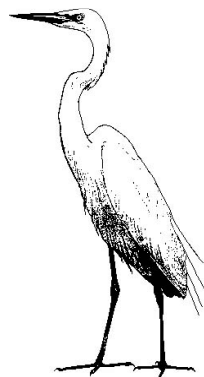
The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park would like to thank the following new Lifetime members:

*John Dargle
Terry Foreman
George C. Ledec*

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



Outdoor Classroom Update – It's Coming

Our Outdoor Classroom Teaching Pavilion (along the pathway between the parking lot and visitor center) will be built and completed this summer, in time for fall school programs and maybe even a few summer camps. The majority of funding came from donations and grants (including large amounts from Friends of Huntley Meadows Park – thank you!). This structure will be primarily for education programs, but also available for group rentals and birthday parties.

Huntley Meadows Happenings

Wetland in Bloom

Saturday June 9, 11a.m. - 1:00 p.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. Cancelled if rain. (Adults) \$6 per person



Café Cattail

Friday June 15, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Welcome to Huntley Meadows' very own coffeehouse! Enjoy a relaxing evening applauding our community's talents. Musicians, dancers and poets are encouraged to share their arts with a nature theme. Sponsored by Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. *Free*

Evening Stroll

Saturday, June 23, 8:00 - 9:30pm

Take this rare opportunity to visit the wetland after dark. Learn the curious habits of fireflies, listen for owls, and watch bats hunt. You might even see resident beavers at work! Cancelled if rain. (6 yrs. and older) \$6 per person



Dragonflies

Sunday June 24, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

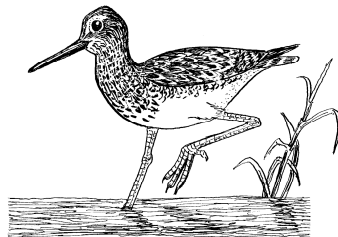
Learn about the life cycle, behavior and identification of Huntley's many dragonflies and damselflies. Venture to the wetland to observe these acrobatic fliers in action. Cancelled if rain. (Adults) \$6 per person

Birding for Beginners

Sunday July 8, 8:00 - 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 an indoor discussion.

(Children ages 12 to 16 must be accompanied by a registered adult) \$6 per person



Wild Side Wagon Rides

Thursdays, August 2, 16 and 30, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Cool your heels on a bright summer morning or warm twilight by breezing along on a 90-minute tractor ride to the wetland and back. A naturalist will help you look for nectaring butterflies or hunting bats. Get off for a snack at the observation platform. Rides leave from the South King's Highway entrance. (Families, children 4 yrs. and up) \$6 per rider

Just for Kids

Tiny Tots - The Busy World of Bees

Tuesday July 10, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. **or**

Wednesday July 11, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

With songs, crafts and stories, parents work with their children to explore nature. (24-42 mos.) \$10 per child

Tiny Tots - Worms

Tuesday July 24, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. **or**

Wednesday July 25, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

With songs, crafts and stories, parents work with their children to explore nature. (24-42 mos.) \$10 per child



Tiny Tots - Hummingbirds

Tuesday August 7, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. **or**

Wednesday August 8, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

With songs, crafts and stories, parents work with their children to explore nature. (24-42 mos.) \$10 per child

Nature Detectives - Turtles, Crayfish and Clams

Wednesday July 11, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. **or**

Thursday July 12, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Through stories, crafts, and activities, learn all about animals that have a shell. (3-5 yrs.) \$8 per child

Nature Detectives - Animals That Live Underground

Wednesday July 25 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. **or**

Thursday July 26, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Through story, activity and craft learn about these important natural wonders. (3-5 yrs.) \$8 per child

Nature Detectives - Hummingbirds

Wednesday August 8, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. **or**

Thursday August 9, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Through story, activity and craft, explore hummingbirds, living jewels, with their brilliant colors and amazing flight. (3-5 yrs.) \$8 per child

Park Manager Walk and Talks Monthly on Saturday afternoons

June 16, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

July 21, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Join Park Manager Kevin Munroe on these monthly walks. Find out about the wetland restoration project and learn about the wildlife for which the Park is known. Cancelled if rain. **FREE!**

For online information and registration go to:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>
and search on "Huntley Events"



Huntley Meadows Park News



Historic Huntley opens!

The historic structures and cultural resource site just up the hill at 6918 Harrison Lane was purchased by the Park Authority in 1989. Now, 23 years later, after extensive research, planning, fundraising and restoration work, the site will be open to the public as of May 19th! This early 19th century site (circa 1825), with strong ties to George Mason's family (built by one his grandsons, Thomson Francis Mason) is full of fascinating stories, endless mysteries and impressive architecture. Please join park staff, the Friends of Historic Huntley (historichuntley.org) and a long list of local VIPs and dignitaries on May 19th from 2PM-4PM for an opening ceremony and behind the scene tours. After the 19th, grounds will open March-November dawn to dusk, but buildings will only be open for scheduled programs. **The exception will be public tours on Saturdays, 10AM-3PM, starting in mid-June (call Huntley Meadows for exact dates) and going through November.** The site needs volunteers to help with programs, tours and site-care. Please contact the park and ask to speak with our new History Interpreter and Site Coordinator, Geoff Cohrs, scheduled to join our staff team this May.

Dragonflies and Damselflies of Huntley Meadows Park

A Project Noah Local Mission

There are 34 species of dragonflies and 14 species of damselflies that have been spotted at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP), according to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park" species list, "Dragonflies and Damselflies of Huntley Meadows Park." Our long-range goal is to build a database of adult flight periods for all species of dragonflies and damselflies at HMP. Please upload spottings of dragonflies and damselflies seen at Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax County, Virginia USA to the following Web address:

<http://www.projectnoah.org/missions/7993421>

"Project Noah" is a tool to explore and document wildlife and a platform to harness the power of citizen scientists everywhere. Project Noah is supported by National Geographic. <http://www.projectnoah.org/> Upload new spottings using either the Project Noah Web interface or mobile apps for the Apple iOS and Android operating systems. <http://www.projectnoah.org/faq>

Nesting Prothonotary Warblers

This spring brought the arrival of some wee, yellow birds that have not nested at Huntley Meadows Park in a number of years... Prothonotary Warblers aka *Protonotaria citrea* aka "swamp canaries". Prothonotary Warblers are one of the only two North American warblers that nest in cavities (the other is Lucy's Warbler, a bird found in the southwestern United States and Mexico) and we've been trying to entice them back to Huntley Meadows Park for a few years by putting up some nest boxes for them.

At the end of last May, there were two nests started, one in a nest box at the inflow to the main wetland and another in a nest box in the north wetland, but the male birds' efforts were in vain since they were unable to find any interested females so late in the year. However, a pair of Prothonotaries showed up much earlier this year and appear to be well on their way to a successful nesting. The spot they've chosen is not one of the nest boxes, but a natural cavity near the start of the boardwalk. This is noteworthy because is it not the typical low location over water, but fifteen feet high and in the woods a good distance away from the wetland!

It is wonderful to see them back nesting at Huntley Meadows Park regardless of their choice in real estate. So as you approach the boardwalk, before you get to the bench, keep an eye out toward your right for a flash of brilliant yellow and bid them "Welcome!"

Melina Tye



Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon 2012



With the southerly winds that preceded this year's Birdathon, a lot of the birds that had been present over the weekend had left to continue their migration. So while we were happy to find a nice variety of birds, the total number of birds seemed low as the morning progressed. But when the four teams of staff and volunteers tallied the species at lunch, we were all surprised by how well we had done (except for Ben Jesup, who correctly predicted 93 before we added them up). Ben then went out again and found a Great Horned Owl to raise the final tally to 94 species. A pretty good day, though not quite as good as the record of 108 set in 2004.

As always, there were plenty of highlights. Ben Jesup's team found a pair of American Woodcock in flight, two Common Nighthawk and several families of Wood Duck and Hooded Mergansers. Larry Cartwright's gang located a calling Least Flycatcher and a pair of Yellow-breasted Chat. Margaret Wohler discovered a male Belted Kingfisher and a Semipalmated Plover. Among the fourteen warbler species were Nashville, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Prothonotary (near a possible nesting site), American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush and Ovenbird. Some of the other more notable finds included Little Blue Heron, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Turkey, Solitary Sandpiper, Blue Grosbeak and American Black Duck.

The most numerous species were the 82 Red-winged Blackbird, 78 Common Grackle, 74 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 57 Common Yellowthroat and 45 Northern Cardinal. Eighteen other species were seen only once each, again showing how hard it is to build up a really big count. These included Barred Owl, House Finch, Bald Eagle, Chipping Sparrow and American Crow. Birds that we might have expected but never found included the two Oriole species, Osprey, Rock Pigeon, Ring-billed Gull, and House Sparrow.

Besides the birds, there was plenty of other wildlife to enjoy. Beaver and Muskrat were both being active, turtles were sunning throughout the wetland, and a Grey Tree Frog was heard calling in the woods beyond the tower.

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, in memory of those two fine men.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed their time, skills, and donations to this annual event. It is, as always, very much appreciated.

Andy Higgs
FOHMP board member



Many thanks to the following people who donated to the 2012 Birdathon:

Ana Arguelles and Jeff Wneck	Tom Nardone	Margaret Wohler	Paula Sullivan
Connie Carpender	B.J. Opfer	Paul Wyman	Melina Tye
Larry Cartwright	Barry Pearson		Margaret Wohler
Michael Duffy	Barbara Perry	Birdathon Volunteers	
Curtis Gibbens	Dorothy Raduazo	Larry Cartwright	Staff
Gerald and Helen Halpin	Michael Ready	P.J. Dunn	Melissa Gaulding
Andy Higgs	Nancy Roeper	Carolyn Gamble	Dave Lawlor
Michael and Claire Kluskens	Becky and Warren Smith	Andy Higgs	Karen Sheffield
Marianne Mooney & Joe Sasfy	Lee Stang	Ben Jesup	Ann Stat
	Barbara Stewart	Georgia Pourchot	Owen Williams

2012 Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Please 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 help to protect and preserve the park. Dues fund park conservation initiatives and educational programs. Your membership also enables us to be strong advocates for the park. Mail the application below to:

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

Dues information:

- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$10 Student/Senior
- \$150 Lifetime membership

Name: _____

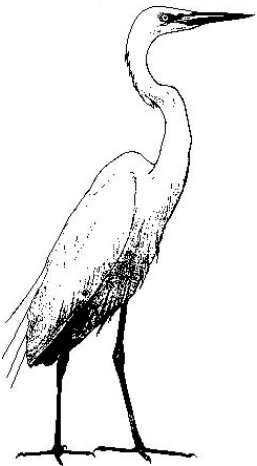
Address: _____

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.