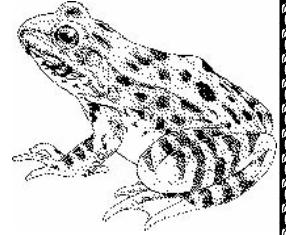


Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



September 2008

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

Budget Cuts Threaten County Parks

Everyone in the Northern Virginia area has surely felt the financial squeeze from high gas and food prices, declining house values and a glum economic outlook. In Fairfax County, lower home assessments mean less tax revenue, which equals a smaller county budget. In anticipation of major budget cuts, all county agencies have been asked to prepare a plan for reducing operating budgets by 15%. Budget reduction proposals would hit Fairfax County Park Authority nature centers and cultural and horticultural sites particularly hard. In draft budget reduction proposals for the Resource Management Division, educational programs and services could be cut by 40% at nine sites including

Huntley Meadows, and twenty people could be let go. This translates directly to a potential loss of two staff members and two hundred programs a year at Huntley alone.

The importance of educational programs to Huntley's mission cannot be overstated. Everyday, visitors to the park learn about our amazing wetland, plants and animals. Through daily phone and personal contacts, people learn about wildlife issues, invasive plants, water quality and many other conservation issues. This fosters awareness of the environment and our need to protect it as well as fulfilling the mission of the Park Authority *"to set aside spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both the present and future generations."*

County parks are important to the quality of life in Fairfax County. In a recent survey conducted by FCPA, nature trails were the *number one* Park Authority feature enjoyed by respondents. Staff at county parks enhance the nature trail experience through their educational mission of providing quality interpretive services.

We ask for your support at this crucial time to keep Huntley and other county parks in the business of educating the next generation of environmental stewards. Important public budget meetings will be held this fall and we urge your attendance. We will keep you posted on dates for the spring budget hearings where you can also speak up for parks and park personnel.

"Community Dialogue" meetings will be held this fall to gain public input on serious county budgetary issues. This is your opportunity to voice your support for the nine parks, including Huntley Meadows, in the Fairfax County Park Authority system that are threatened by budget cuts. With a projected 40% reduction in programs and services, this is the time to let the county know that parks and educational programs are important to citizens. ***Please make it a***

For meeting info, call HMP or the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors clerk at 703-324-3151

Saturday September 20th, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Sherwood Regional Library, Alexandria
George Mason Regional Library, Annandale
Reston Regional Library
Chantilly Regional Library

Tuesday October 14th, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center

Thursday October 16th, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

South County Government Center, Alexandria

Saturday October 25th, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Centreville Regional Library
Fairfax Regional Library
Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, Falls Church
Pohick Regional Library, Burke

Saturday November 8th, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Dolley Madison Library, McLean
Woodrow Wilson Library, Falls Church
John Marshall Library, Alexandria
Burke Center Library

Thursday November 13th, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Mason Governmental Center, Annandale



Park Manager's Message

A Walk on Huntley's Wild Side



This was an exceptional summer for both plant and animal sightings here at Huntley. Flora and fauna that haven't bred or flowered for over a decade were observed in the park during the months of June and July. It was a record year for Bluebirds, Wood ducks and Hooded Mergansers using our nest boxes and at least one pair of Virginia Rails raised several chicks in the wetland. Three adults and six chicks were seen at once, so we may have actually had two families. This was the *first ever* record of Virginia Rails breeding in the park.

Two Least Bitterns were seen by a few birders, and heard by others uttering their strange cooing call in June and July. Least bitterns last bred in Huntley's wetland fifteen years ago so we are heartened by their return. My favorite wildlife happening of the summer was a Black Duck mother displaying her purple-feathered speculum as she led her long-faced ducklings to forage in the thick stands of lime-green spike rush. It's been years since this species has raised young here. Typically, marsh ducks turn up their olive-tinted bills at Northern Virginia ponds. These ducklings are proof that we have a true marsh – a unique and valuable habitat.

Lastly, we had two very exciting plant sightings in the park. Green Milkweed, last seen ten years ago, was spotted in the Bluebird Trail meadow on the Hike-Bike trail and...drum roll.... Bladderwort, seen in full bloom from the boardwalk. This was the first time in *18 years* that we've seen this carnivorous marsh plant at Huntley, and it was flourishing in many healthy clumps.

The obvious question is why have these species re-appeared at Huntley? Additionally, we need to ask what this means in regard to the wetland restoration project. We think the answer to the first question is relatively simple.

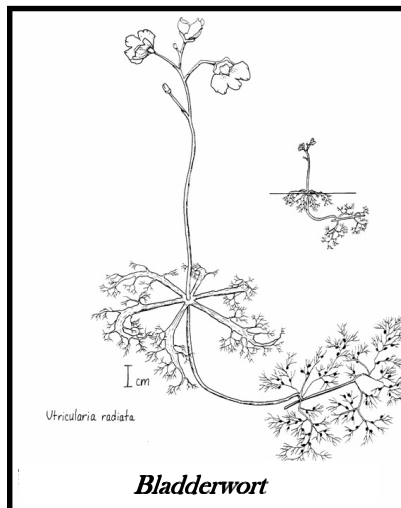
The intense drought of last summer and the extensive rains of fall, winter and spring combined to create a "perfect storm" in terms of fostering healthy marsh habitat. The drought completely dried out the wetland, exposing soil and plant seeds to oxygen and sunlight. This allowed years of stagnant nutrients to be broken down by bacteria and microbes, while releasing long-dormant seeds. The result was a wetland covered in thick annual grasses and perennials. Then the rains came. Abundant and diverse plant communities plus high water levels equals a thriving marsh.



Virginia rail and chicks, Photo by Jerry McHale, May 2008

The implications for the restoration project are straightforward. This last year has given us concrete evidence of how fluctuating water levels, periodic drawdowns, and high water in winter and spring can create impressive biodiversity. We now have water level gauges in the wetland and have kept track of water levels in relation to rare plant and animal events. We've spent the year getting schooled by Mother Nature on how to manage the wetland, and we intend to apply our learning. With a July '09 start date, we have a whole year to build a management plan from our direct observation of a perfect year in Huntley's wetland.

Kevin Munroe



Bladderwort

Birth of a Wetland Walk

Saturday October 11, 10 a.m.

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. Adults and families welcome. Call HMP for reservations.

Environmental News

In May 2008 Fairfax County Water Authority repaired a water main on Vantage Drive near Flintstone Rd in the Vantage Development. Rather than haul away the spoils from the repair in the road, the technicians hosed approximately 3 to 5 cubic yards of soil into the storm sewer that leads directly into Huntley Meadows Park and the central wetland. Park Manager Kevin Munroe discovered a large silt plume in the wetland causing the water to look like milky coffee. He traced the plume back to its source and brought the Water Authority employees to the boardwalk to see the damage done to the park. The Water Authority paid for “terra-tubes”, 12-foot long silt catching socks, which park staff installed in Barnyard Run where it enters the park to catch any remaining silt flowing into the park. In addition, the Water Authority removed the remainder of the excavated soil from Vantage Drive and installed 6 more Terra Tubes in the silt-filled culvert closer to the road and off park property.

Although Huntley staff was pleased with the Water Authority’s admission of fault and cooperative conduct after the incident, the fact remains that it should never have happened in the first place. It only occurred because they tried to cut corners to save money and time with no regard for watershed health or for following their own protocol. Huntley Meadows visitors have noticed a greater amount of oil on the surface of the water this spring and summer, as well as several dead crayfish, and it is not clear whether or not this is due to the influx of road dirt. It is also worth mentioning that this took place at the same time and exact location where the park’s first ever recorded breeding Virginia Rails were feeding their young on aquatic invertebrates. We have no data on whether or not this affected the young’s survival.

Wetland Restoration Update

Despite the delayed construction start date of the wetland restoration project, there have been several new, positive developments. The state gave the project “Allowed Use” status which means, from the state’s point of view, the project makes sense, fits the site and is an appropriate way to manage the land and water in Huntley’s wetland. This was a very important step and makes requesting waivers from the county an option. Another exciting development regards the proposed bond to be voted on this November. It includes over \$2 million for the wetland restoration project. This money would allow us to complete all phases of the design, including the wetland pools, essential refuges for aquatic species during droughts and purposeful drawdowns.

The lynch pin involves getting the necessary permits from the county for the groundbreaking design of this project. We are asking for several waivers regarding the size of the spillway, pipes, and dam. We’re taking the extra time to do this because we don’t want something easy to permit but inappropriate for the park. Because of the application process for the waivers, the project will have a tentative start date of July 2009.

Please join me at one of the free monthly Park Manager Walk and Talks for a full update on the project. This is also a great opportunity to see some of the evening wildlife that visits the wetland.

Kevin Munroe

Park Manager Walks

Saturday September 13, 4 to 6 p.m.

Saturday October 25, 4 to 6 p.m.

Saturday November 15, 4 to 6 p.m.

Call for reservations: 703 768 2525

Park Capital Improvement Bond

On Election Day this November, Fairfax County voters will be asked to approve a bond referendum that will include a \$65 million capital improvement bond for the Park Authority. (The total Bond will be \$77M, with \$12M for the Regional Park Authority.) Issuing general obligation bonds is a common way for local governments to fund large capital projects. Huntley Meadows is a major recipient among the park projects being considered for this bond.

The emphasis on this year’s bond is stewardship. 18% or \$11.6 M is to be set aside for stewardship efforts. A great focus is being applied to renovating, building and caring for facilities and programs of the Resource Management Division, which administers the Nature Centers, Historic Sites, and Horticultural attractions of the Park Authority. Additionally, 22% of the bond will be used for land acquisition. The Park Authority is the largest single landowner in the County. We own nearly 24,000 acres of Fairfax County real estate, which represents about 9.6% of the total land-mass of the County. Our goal is to reach a full 10%. The remaining 60% of the bond money will be used for other capital projects throughout the system.

The Huntley projects slated for inclusion are the boardwalk plank replacement, and Phase II of the wetland restoration project at Huntley Meadows. Additionally, the bond calls for completion of the restoration of the Historic Huntley mansion. Nearly \$5.3 M in the bond will be used at Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley. The breakdown follows:

Boardwalk Plank Replacement	\$ 665,000
Wetlands Restoration Phase II	\$2,660,000
Historic Huntley Restoration	<u>\$1,945,000</u>
Total:	\$5,270,00

If you are a Fairfax County resident, we earnestly request that you vote for this bond in November.

Harry Glasgow

Fall Art News

“Connections”

Etchings by Lyndia Terre

Opening Reception, Sunday, October 5th

2 to 4:00 p.m.

Lyndia Terre was artist-in-residence at Huntley Meadows Park from 1988 to 1995. She created many etchings that captured the intricacies and designs of the wetland during its years of peak diversity. Her studio at the Torpedo Factory was nicknamed “Huntley Annex” because she was so successful promoting the park through her art. The first art show ever at Huntley Meadows featured her hand-painted etchings of the wetlands. Lyndia’s work can be found in many public collections in the United States and in private collections all over the world.

Lyndia now lives on Vancouver Island, Canada. We are pleased to have this retrospective show of her Huntley Meadows work. The sale of the art will benefit not only the park, but also “Becca’s Ark” an organization created by Pat and Mike Young in memory of Becca, their daughter. Becca’s Ark supports the care of abandoned and feral pets.



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 2008 Photography Contest

Give Us Your Best Shot!

Awards reception December 14, 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, 2008**. 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 14, 2008 to February 28, 2009. 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 your entry (maximum of 3 photos per entry). 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 14.

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.

Volunteers Needed

Do you like to interact with visitors, learn something new and make a difference? Help the park by assisting at the Visitor Center front desk or by teaching school groups.

Front desk volunteers (VODs) greet and orient the public, answer phones and register people for programs and usually work one of two shifts a month.

Program Leaders work with school-ages children, guiding them on the trails and boardwalk, teaching about the values of wetlands.

Join a community of active and interesting individuals.

For more information call Ann Stat at Huntley Meadows Park at 703-768-2525.

Volunteer Toasted

Marianne Mooney, long-time site volunteer and a FOMHP board member, is having quite a year. In June, she was recognized for her many contributions by receiving Huntley Meadows Park's 2008 Ken Howard Volunteer of the Year. In November, she will be presented with a 2008 Elly Doyle Park Service Award for Fairfax County. Marianne "get-r-done" Mooney volunteers at the front desk, teaches bird and plant programs for the public, initiated and coordinates the used book sale and assists with sales desk. She is the editor for the FOHMP newsletter. She also has been volunteering at Green Spring Gardens Park.

Marianne is passionate, energetic and a dedicated conservationist who is an advocate for green space and our parks.

Birding for Beginners

Sunday, September 21

8-11 a.m. Interested in birding? We can get you started! Learn about the birds in the park and some basic identification skills. Program begins in the Visitor Center parking lot. Reservations required.

Fall Birds and Bagels

Saturday, September 27

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. Reservations required. \$6.



Dragonfly Walk

Saturday, September 6

1-3 p.m. Walk the boardwalk with dragonfly expert Kevin Munroe to learn about these colorful wetland acrobats.

Cancelled if rain. Reservations required. \$6



Sunday, October 19

Historic Huntley Fall Open House

2-4 p.m. Learn about the history of the house through a tour and a puppet show, during this twice-a-year open house. Sponsored by Friends of Historic Huntley. FREE

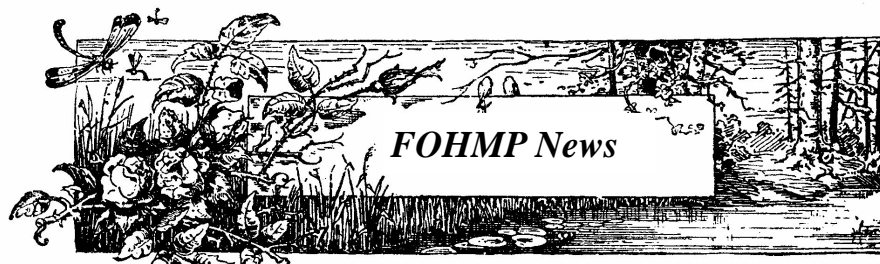


Historic Huntley

Café Cattail

September 26 at 7 p.m.

Has Huntley Meadows or another wild place ever inspired you to write, sing, dance or play an instrument? We invite you to share your nature inspired creations at our quarterly community coffee house. Host and long-time park volunteer Karen Nyere always guides the evening into a unique and heartfelt event. All ages are welcome to perform, or if you prefer, just sit back and enjoy the coffee, brownies and entertainment.

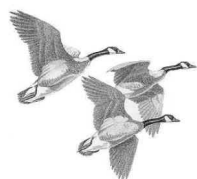


The Other Side of the Park

This is what many of us, especially those who work in the Visitor Center, call the South Kings Highway entrance to the Park. During the spring and summer months I visit this area once a week while monitoring bluebird nest boxes. It's like visiting a whole different park over there – meadows and forest, with a wetland at the end of the trail. I also get to ride my bike down to where the Bluebird Trail meets the Hike Bike trail. I see plants such as milkweed, butterflyweed and pussytoes. Almost every week I am greeted in the first meadow by an indigo bunting. I've also seen blue grosbeaks and last week I saw a wild turkey! Dragonflies and butterflies are bountiful. I often pass quite a few dog walkers, some joggers, and twice ran into a group of scientists looking for ticks. This year has been a good one for the birds. I have watched two bluebird, two house wren, and three tree swallow families fledge. Thanks to Warren Smith who lovingly crafted the nest boxes and the Resource Management folks who have mowed the meadows around my boxes twice. Thanks also to Larry Cartwright, who spends time on the "Other Side" all year round and has seen, heard and documented the bird species present there. I hope that you are able to take a walk or a ride down the Hike Bike Trail sometime soon. In early September there are still many meadow flowers in bloom and lots of beautiful and interesting pollinators. Fall migration happens over the course of September and October. It's worth a trip!

Kathi McNeil

FOHMP President



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

Amy Katharine Johnson

Martha Orling

Mike Walker

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



Treasurer's Yearly Report

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park had a good year. Our income was boosted by individual contributions and by those who opted for a lifetime membership.

Dues	\$5,050.
Donations	4,979.
Photo Contest	125.
Sales	2,320.

We spent almost \$2,000 in grants for various needs within the park.

Birdathon	\$405.
Facility Equip.	400.
Photo Contest	125.
Resource Mgmt. Equip	744.
Wetland Awareness Day	200.
Misc.	50.

In addition we sponsored a summer intern for \$2,600. \$1,036 was spent on our newsletter and \$240 on our website.

Sally Cureton, Treasurer

Please remember the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park in your year-end giving. Your donations help support educational programs, resource management needs and park staff. Your help is important in preserving our beloved park.



A Walk Along the Hike-Bike Trail: Huntley Meadow's "Other" Side



Page

When people think of Huntley Meadows, most envision the boardwalk in the Central Wetlands. When I think of Huntley, I think of the Hike-Bike Trail on the 'other' side with its meadows, wetlands, and wooded areas. Here, from March through August, I monitor nestboxes and take a weekly census of the bird population. Imagine a walk with me as I do a weekend morning census.

By late April, as soon as I leave the South King's Highway parking lot at about 6:00 AM, I hear Acadian Flycatchers and Red-eyed Vireos. These are probably the two most numerous migrant songbird species in the park during the breeding season. The canopy-loving Red-eyed Vireo can be difficult to see as it sings its almost melancholy song from the treetops, but the Acadian prefers a low perch and generally I get good views of several of these birds.

After a short walk I come to the maintenance building. Here in early spring, I find two or three territorial Pine Warblers in the Virginia pines surrounding the building and, if I'm lucky, I might be treated to a wintering Red-breasted Nuthatch that has not departed for its northern breeding location. Eastern Phoebe's are generally present, and sometimes construct a nest under the roof of the building. Along the wooded edge, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers prepare by mid-April to raise their own young. It is from this location that I generally hear or see my first Yellow-billed Cuckoo of the day.

Leaving the maintenance building grounds, I traverse through a small wooded area that opens into the first of a series of meadows. By May, the first thing I notice is the Tree Swallows carrying nesting material to the nest boxes provided for them and Eastern Bluebirds. A chorus of Common Yellowthroats, Indigo Buntings, and possibly Blue Grosbeaks serenade them in their labor.

Now I enter another wooded area, the Pond Trail. Here new species of birds greet me, Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes. I love these songs, and the song of the Wood Thrush especially enchants me. Even the occasional encounter with mosquitoes fails to dampen my spirits. Sometimes I come across a Barred Owl and may flush a Mallard or two from the small pond if it contains water.

After exiting the pond trail, I proceed to the North Wetlands. I generally find Red-shouldered Hawks soaring over the wetlands while Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Yellowthroats tend to nesting duties below. Yellow-billed Cuckoos are particularly fond of this spot. I firmly believe that Eastern Bluebirds find suitable natural cavities among the numerous snags in this wetland, because they are present throughout the summer and no nest boxes have been provided for them in this area. The North Wetlands used to be the most reliable spot on the 'other' side for Eastern Wood Pewees, but in recent years they have become harder to find.

The next spot is the Main Meadow. Here you find Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows occupying the boxes and the same species that you find in the first meadow. Only more of them. More Common Yellowthroats, more Indigo Buntings, and definitely more Blue Grosbeaks. And American Goldfinches, too. Oh, and Yellow-breasted Chats! After an almost ten year absence, Yellow-breasted Chats began showing up in the Main Meadow a few years ago. And now there are more of them and they are beginning to occupy territories along the Central Wetlands as well. If only my beloved Field Sparrow would return. But we will be working on that. I assure you!

As I leave the Main Meadow, I enter into another wooded area which soon opens up into more meadows and the Central Wetland. Here I notice a White-eyed Vireo. Not my first of the day, but generally here is where I get my best views. I pay scant attention to the Central Wetland. After all, that is on the 'front' side and I belong to the 'other' side. That is where my duty lies. Just kidding, of course. I always scan the wetlands, but rarely get good views without a scope, and then finish monitoring my boxes. I have just spent a wonderful morning on the 'other' side of Huntley Meadows and walk back to the parking lot relaxed and content.

Larry Cartwright



Sunday, September 13

Off-trail Birding at South King's Highway

(Adults), 7-10am. At this time of year the last wave of neotropical migrants are moving through and the first wintering visitors are arriving. Binoculars and field guides are recommended. Meet at the park's South King's Highway and Telegraph Road entrance. Reservations required., call 703 768 2525. Cancelled if rain. *Free*

**Sponsored by FOHMP and
led by Larry Cartwright.**

Many thanks to the following people who donated to the 2008 Birdathon:

*Ana Arguelles
Sy Fishbein
Harry Glasgow
Karen Grechanik
Paula Sullivan
Carolyn Williams*

*A very special thank you to Ben Jesup
and Jim Matthews for their hard work in
collecting Birdathon pledges!*

Thanks to our Birder's Exchange Collection

*Drive Donors
Dorothy Raduazo
Ralph Wahl*

***Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
Membership and Renewal Form***

*Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining the Friends group.
Become a member today and help to protect and preserve the park. Your annual dues will keep you
informed and help to fund the nature center's programs. Fill out and mail the application to this
address:*

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

Dues information:

- ☐ \$10 Individual
- ☐ \$15 Family
- ☐ \$5 Student/Senior
- ☐ \$150 Lifetime membership

Name: _____

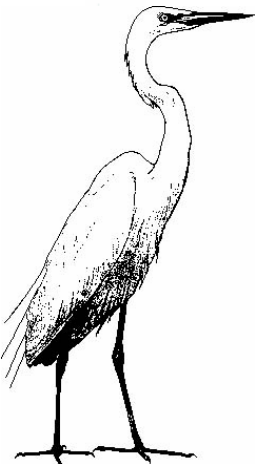
Address: _____

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 expirations date is in the upper left corner.