

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

March 2014

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



President's Message

Dear Friends,

Did you notice? It is almost here! I'm talking about spring-time. Are you ready? This is a very special time of year for us to tune up our observation skills. New plants are peeking out from under the leaf litter, buds are slowly starting to show themselves on tree branches, resident birds are singing as they claim their nesting territories. Watching the waves of color appear when looking at trees from a distance, is an early indicator that spring is just around the corner. If you are lucky



enough to be flying in an airplane going southward, the colors of the buds on trees from the air are really very pretty. Given all of the snow and chilly weather we've had recently, I can't help but feel a bit cooped up inside. With warmer weather coming, there are lots of reasons for you, your family and friends to come visit Huntley Meadows. For me it's that breath of fresh air, it's that special time of year when everything in the park starts to wake up. When I walk the trails I can't wait to see which tree, plant or critter is out just waiting for us to come and see. Especially when the trees start to bloom, it almost seems like they are calling to us, "Come look at me!" I always get a great feeling of peace when I walk through the forest; I hope you do too.

Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) is a tree-filled oasis surrounded by dense development. On display in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center is an aerial view of HMP. Every time I look at this map, I realize how lucky we are to have this tree-filled, protected area right in the middle of a heavily developed community with homes, apartment buildings, roads, shopping areas, concrete-covered parking lots and other development. It's only from looking at this aerial map that we can get a sense of how important this tree-filled area is. Trees are an important part of the landscape here at Huntley Meadows. They provide shade from the hot summer sun. Trees filter the air giving us fresh air to breathe. They absorb stormwater and excess nutrients from the soil and filter our drinking water. Trees also provide

'continued on page 2'

Winter in Virginia

I am one of those people who love winter – it is in many respects my favorite season. My roots are in the 'Deep North,' and I always looked forward to snow and cold. Winter demands a ruggedness and endurance that strengthens us. Everything takes longer, is more difficult, and less comfortable. Someone once said that every mile is two in winter. In Virginia, however, winter can very often be disappointing. We certainly get all the annoyances of winter, but few of the pleasures.

What are those pleasures, you ask? There are many – just look around: A walk in a forest during a snowfall brings a particularly unique kind of silence that is absent in a summertime walk. The snow muffles your footsteps, and the only sounds are birds and the soft rustle of the snowflakes passing through pine boughs and the remaining oak leaves. Whatever your views of Christmas might be, our traditions say that it must come in winter. I have seen Christmas in tropical climates, and it simply doesn't work. I once watched kids in Panama stare curiously at Christmas decorations featuring snowmen.

There is an old Maine expression about winter (actually, there are many old Maine expressions about winter:) "If you can't take winter, you don't deserve summer". We from New England take pride in our ability to withstand the rigors of the season. We like to point out that while:

- Virginians are struggling to start their cars ('Kahs' in Boston) when it's 35°, New Englanders drive with the windows down.
- When it's 15°, New York landlords turn on the heat while Vermonters have the last cookout of the year.
- When it's 0° F: All the people in Miami die. New Englanders close the windows.
- When it is 40° below zero: Washington DC runs out of hot air. People in Massachusetts let the dogs sleep indoors.

Brrrrrr,

Harry Glasgow

President's Message - cont'd.

nesting habitat for birds, branches for climbing, and lots of cracks and crevices for bugs to live in. Trees really do a lot of things for us. Have you planted a tree lately? Maybe you have room in your yard for a tree or two or three? For those of us who have the space for planting a tree, if we all did this we might be able to replace some of the trees that have been cut down due to the extensive development in our area. If you don't have the space to plant a tree in the ground, perhaps you can have one in a pot on your deck or balcony? The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Annual native seedling sale is going on now. This is a great place to pick up some native trees and shrubs for your landscape. (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/seedlingsale.htm>).

Since these are native trees and shrubs, they are better adapted to local weather conditions in our area and can handle the natural swings in temperature and precipitation here.

A neat challenge to undertake this time of year is to figure out how to identify the trees before they leaf out. This is not easy, but with some practice we can all learn to do this, as we get



outside for a bit of fresh, early spring air. Once the leaves come out, identifying the trees is easier. A fun thing to do is to walk the trails and observe the differences in the tree bark from one tree to another. This is an important identifying feature in the winter. Some trees have smooth gray bark, others have rough bark that's deeply creviced, and even others have bark that seems to peel away. Which trees can you name when walking the trails at Huntley Meadows? Do you have any of these around your house? Or in your community? Stop by Huntley Meadows to see our trees. I hope to see you on the trails soon checking out our trees!

We invite you to join Park Manager, Kevin Munroe at an upcoming Park Manager Walk and Talk. All are from 4:00-6:00 pm, are free, and no registration is needed. The designated meeting place is the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center. The schedule for these includes:

March 15, 2014,
April 12, 2014,
May 17, 2014,
June 21, 2014,

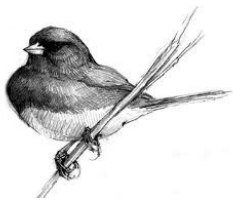
I hope to see you in the park studying the trees or at one of Kevin's upcoming walks!

Three cheers for spring!

Cathy Ledec

The Huntley Meadows Monday Morning Birdwalk

Every fall and spring, birders witness the phenomenon of migration. And every fall and spring, we wonder about this event and try to figure it out. Much scientific investigation has been undertaken to gain insight into migration; a great many books have been written about it; and theories abound. As we take our walk every Monday morning, the regulars on the Huntley Meadows Monday Morning Birdwalk watch the changing seasons as declared by the changes in bird populations. In autumn we watch for the first White-throated Sparrow, or the first Junco. In spring we mark the song of the first Acadian Flycatcher, the passage of Warblers, the arrival of Swallows and Green Herons, or the unremitting singing of the first Red-eyed Vireo. These are among the hallmarks of the seasonal rhythms of nature. But what causes many animals (not just birds) to make these grueling voyages of sometimes thousands of miles? Most ornithologists generally agree that, in the case of birds, it is not done to escape the cold. Birds are covered in feathers, the most effective insulation known in nature, and can endure bitterly cold nights. The most generally accepted theories center around food availability. The ornithologist Paul Kerlinger writes that while the evolution of migration has never been satisfactorily explained, it is generally agreed that the foundation of all bird migration is food. Most ornithologists evaluate the potential for migration as a simple cost-benefit relationship: if the benefits of migration (availability of food) outweigh the costs (in terms of energy, safety, and risk) then migration will continue.



So, we watch the seasons come and go using as our barometer the presence or absence of Huntley birds, and continue to marvel at the adaptation of these creatures to their changing world. Come join us on Monday mornings and begin your own quest into the whys and wherefores of the wonderful world of birds.

Harry Glasgow



A Message from the Park Manager



Wetlands viewed from above during construction.

A Year of Growth and Recovery

These next few seasons will be all about allowing the wetland, and helping it when necessary, to heal, grow and recover from the construction associated with the restoration project. Construction was completed in fall of 2013 – it was successful and faithful to the excellent design created by Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. – but it will take a year or two for soils to settle, newly installed plants to grow, wildlife brush shelters to settle and naturalize, and staff to master the new management, maintenance and monitoring regime. As Friends members you can help the park hugely by being leaders and educators for the public regarding this growth and recovery process. Please encourage park visitors to be PATIENT with the funny-looking brush shelters, assure them that plants will grow quickly and fill in the raw/disturbed areas, explain that the beavers are super active and haven't "left the park", and encourage them to observe the trail closures and re-routing we're doing to insure plant growth and wildlife protection.

You can be AMBASSADORS and PARK INTERPRETERS, but you can also simply guide visitors with questions to call the park, explore our website, visit the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center to speak with staff, or attend any of my free, monthly Park Manager Walk and Talks: March 15, April 12, May 17, June 21 – all 4pm-6pm. And of course everyone should join us on May 10th for the Grand Opening of the Wetland Restoration Project!

Trails – how do they fit into Huntley Meadows?

Speaking of allowing the wetland to grow and recov-

er.... now is a good time to talk about trails at Huntley Meadows Park. Walking trails are one of the most popular aspects of parks in Northern Virginia, and possibly the number one reason why people visit and enjoy the out-of-doors. However, trails can also be one of the biggest threats to a park's health, especially its natural resources such as plants, wildlife and soils.

Trails create miles of new edge and habitat fragmentation, which are magnets for invasive exotic pest plants, the nest-parasitizing Cowbird, soil erosion, access for dogs and cats, increased bird-predation opportunities for the county's enormous raccoon population, and easy access for illegal activity such as poaching of rare plants and wildlife. Even absent all these issues, it simply brings people, even the best-intentioned environmentalists, into secluded areas necessary for Huntley's more reclusive wildlife. To balance the needs of a park's public with the protection of its resources is perhaps the biggest challenge for park management. Huntley has tried to achieve this balance over its 40 year history in groundbreaking and unparalleled ways.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent to create the only Americans with Disabilities Act accessible wetland boardwalk in Northern VA, several ob-



Wetlands viewed from above after construction. servation platforms and a tower have been built to create unique viewing opportunities. Tens of thousands of dollars are being spent this spring to re-pave the entire 1 ½ mile Hike-Bike Trail. I do not believe any public, forested park in Northern
'continued on page 5'

Please Support the Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon

Huntley Meadows Birdathon 2014 - Tuesday, May 6, 2014



Andy Higgs remembers his first encounter with Ken Howard one day in the late 1980's on the boardwalk at Huntley Meadows. A fellow birder called to him, "Hey, would you like to see a baby American Bittern?" The encounter exemplifies Ken's personality, enthusiasm, generosity and easy smile. His pure joy in sharing a good sighting was something repeated many times on the trails of Huntley Meadows during his time as a volunteer. Ken often suggested enthusiastic new birders join him on the Monday Morning Birdwalk, where they would meet Ed Weigel. Ed exemplified the scientific approach to observing and recording data. He had an amazing repository of birding knowledge, few could match. Together, Ken and Ed comprised a remarkable pair. They imparted an amazing amount of knowledge to volunteers, staff, and the public, along with the sheer joy of birding, during their time at the park. It is with Ken and Ed in mind that we will be conducting the annual Huntley Meadows Birdathon on Tuesday, May 6th.

Every year, park staff and volunteers set out very early in the morning to count bird species in the park. In 1997 this event began to evolved from an annual survey into an opportunity to remember and honor two exceptional men. Ken Howard and Ed Weigel were both volunteers who for years inspired a love of nature within the park visitors they met. Their work continues to this day through the park's Natural Resource Internship that is funded by the Birdathon. This internship provides a young person with the opportunity to begin a career in conservation and to get hands-on experience in this wonderful park.

As always, we have two goals for the event.

1. In the field, our target is to record 100 species for the day. We've done it five times so far, with 108 species in 2004 as our top record.
2. Supports the Resource Management Intern position.

The FOHMP Board encourages donations to support this annual event. While most folks make a straight donation, the donation can be based on the number of species found. If you were to donate fifty cents per species seen, 100 species would produce a donation of \$50. That would go a long way towards helping us reach our annual goal of \$2,800. We have always appreciated the generosity of park supporters in helping us to meet our goal, and hope we can count on you again this year.

We believe this is a great cause. Many visitors and volunteers knew Ken and Ed and were fortunate enough to have learned so much about the natural world from them. We hope to see their good work continue, and hope you feel the same way.

Thank you very much!

The Board of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

2014 BIRDATHON AT HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

DONATION AMOUNT: _____

Please make checks payable to FCPA-HMP

Mail this form and check to:

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

Results will be posted by June 1 on the FOHMP website: www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org



Huntley Meadows Park Classes



Sign up for **engaging and educational** multi week kids programs!

Nature for Tiny Tots (Ages 2 – 3 1/2)

Children and their parent(s) learn about plants, animals, and their habitats through songs, crafts, and activities. Supply fee of \$5 is payable to instructor at first class. Children must be accompanied by a parent. 6 week series, 10:00-11:00am beginning Monday, March 31, Tuesday, April 1 or Wednesday, April 2. \$51. Registration code: 3402672001, 3402672002, or 3402672003

Storytime in the Forest (Ages 3-5)

Join us for a nature story followed by songs, crafts, outdoor exploration and other activities. \$8/child/session Tuesdays 10:00am- 11am or 1:30-2:30pm, April 8 or May 13. Registration code: 3402865001, 3402865002, 3402865003, 3402865004

Nature Detectives (Ages 3-5)

During this naturalist-led class, children and parents have the opportunity to explore the past and present natural world. Children discover the wonders of nature through hikes, hands-on activities, songs, puppet shows, stories and crafts. Additional supply fee of \$5 payable to instructor at first class. The class will meet on Wednesdays from 1:30 – 2:30 pm or on Thursdays from 10-11:00am for 6 weeks beginning April 2 or 3. \$51 Registration code: 3402663301 or 3402663302

Nature Buddies (Ages 3-5)

Parent and child will take a walk to the wetland, read a story and play games to look at real world examples of seasonal happenings. \$8. (No charge for accompanying adults.) Saturdays: April 5, May 10 or June 14 from 11am-12:30pm. Registration code: 3402826101, 3402826102, 3402826103

Young Explorers (Ages 6-12)

Through activities, crafts and trail walks, children learn about animals in winter and how nature is preparing for spring. Students also learn about the park, and improve their observation and interaction skills. Students should dress for the weather. Call site for additional information. Five week sessions from 3:30-5pm starting Monday March 31. \$84. Registration code: 3402702601

Science for Homeschoolers

Students explore marsh, meadow, and forest to learn about patterns of cycle and change, plant parts and characteristics, animal life needs, observation and the five senses, and how objects are classified. Students must have basic reading and writing skills and be comfortable working in a group. 8 week series from 4-6pm. \$116. (Ages 6-9) Wed. starting April 2 Registration Code: 3402703201 (Ages 9-12) Thurs. starting April 3 Registration Code: 3402723201

Homeschoolers at Huntley (Ages 6-9)

Students will see the past laid out before their eyes and discover the history of Huntley, Northern Virginia, and the wider Chesapeake region. Each week students will learn about a different aspect of American history by participating in hands-on activities and hikes. Students must have basic reading and writing skills and be comfortable working in a group. 8 week series from 2:30-4pm beginning Tuesday, April 1. \$101 Registration code: 3402866701

A Message from the Park Manager - cont'd.

VA has invested so much in making their park accessible to its visitors. However, to protect the park's natural resources so it can continue to serve as a wildlife sanctuary, we have to ask the public to now do their part to cooperate with the park's very carefully designed trail system. This means observing Trail Closed signs, refraining from walking across the new berm, and accepting that this is not a circuit-trail hiking park. Wildlife observation, possibly the best in the DC area, is what this park offers, not miles of hiking trails. For visitors looking primarily for hours and miles of cardio circuit-hikes, I suggest exploring the following excellent local parks, all of which have many miles of well-marked hiking trails in beautiful settings:

- Mason Neck State Park (Lorton), http://www.fws.gov/refuge/mason_neck/
- Prince William Forest Park (Dumfries/Triangle), <http://www.nps.gov/prwi/index.htm>
- Burke Lake/South Run/Lake Mercer (Fairfax Station/Burke), <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/>

See you in the park!

Kevin Munroe



News & Announcements



Upcoming Art Shows:

April
Friends of Historic Huntley will be showcasing Plein Air artwork.

May
See another side of park staff in this showing of art submitted by staff.

Call the park for more details 703-768-2525.



Volunteer

Opportunities available for all interests and all abilities.

Some of the many benefits include:

- Meeting like minded people
- Fun volunteer recognition parties
- Chocolate

Speak with Volunteer Coordinator
Kathleen Lowe for details!

Lifetime Members

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

- Kathleen Burger and Glen Gerada
- Gary Johnston and Mona Enquist-Johnston
- Kent and Marjorie Halstead

If you would like to give a "lifetime" of support to Huntley Meadows Park by becoming a life member, please send a donation of \$150 to:

Treasurer, FOHMP, 3701 Lockheed Blvd.,
Alexandria, VA 22306

Available 2014 Summer Internships

There are several exciting internships being offered at Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley this summer, sponsored directly by Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and Friends of Historic Huntley:



Intern Allyson leads a summer camp on a walk through the wetlands.

- ⇒ **Naturalist/Educator Intern**
- ⇒ **Resource Management Intern**
- ⇒ **Historic Huntley Cultural Resource Intern**

All three can start as early as May or June, and continue through August or early September. These are excellent opportunities for real-world, hands-on, experiential learning, and of course great resume-building. Participants will be working directly with the public, in the field, in Fairfax County's largest park, interacting with trained, dedicated professionals in one of the area's richest centers for both natural and cultural resources. To learn more about all the details and how to apply, please visit www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org and www.historichuntley.org, or call the park at 703-768-2525.

Programs at Huntley Meadows Park

MARCH

1 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk

(Adults) 5:30-7 pm. Take an evening stroll through the forest to one of the park's largest meadows. Listen for the call of the male woodcock and hopefully see his amazing courtship dance. Bring a flashlight. Canceled if rain. Reservations required. \$6. Registration code: 3401834001

8 Saturday - Family Woodcock Walk

(Ages 8+) 5:30-7 pm. See 3/1. Registration code: 3401011901

9 Sunday - Birding for Beginners-Waterfowl

(Adult) 8-11 am. Sharpen your waterfowl identification skills while birding with a park naturalist. Reservations required. \$6. Registration code: 3401881501

14 Friday - Local Lore

(Families) 6-7:30 pm. Travel with your family back in time. Explore the rich history of the Chesapeake region and the many cultures that have helped create this diverse community of local legend through activities, crafts and walks. Topics are seasonal, please call park for more information. \$7. Reservations required. Registration code: 3401012002

15 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk

(Adults) 6:30-8 pm. See 3/1. Registration code: 3401834002

15 Saturday - Park Manager Walk and Talk

(Adults) 3-5 pm. Join Park Manager Kevin Munroe on these monthly walks. Learn about the wetland restoration project and the wildlife for which the park is known. No reservations needed. FREE.

22 Saturday - Family Woodcock Walk

(Ages 8+) 6:45-8:15 pm. See 3/1. Registration code: 3401011902

27 Thursday - Curator's Choice Tour

(Adults) 7-8:30 pm. Historic sites are rich with histories, mysteries, and stories. Docents and guides can only share a small fraction of these on regular tours. Join the curator, park manager, or special guest for a rare opportunity revealing a different side of the site. **Meets at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center.** Reservations required. \$7. Registration Code: 3401833801

28 Friday - Family Nature Night

(Families) 6-7:30pm. Come discover your natural neighborhood and reconnect your family with nature. Seasonal topics will explore the many habitats and diverse wildlife of the park through activities, crafts, games and walks. Please call park for topic. Reservations required. \$7. Registration Code: 3401012103

29 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy

(Ages 12 and up) 7:30-9pm. What's new in the night sky? Join park naturalists as they take you on a tour of constellations, comets and other current events happening in the heavens above. \$6. Registration Code: 3402865101

APRIL

5 Saturday - The Civil War Returns to Historic Huntley

(All ages) 1:00-4:00pm. Union soldiers encamped at Huntley from 1861-1862 and secured the surrounding area as part the defensive bulwark protecting the Union's capital. Come learn about that time through exhibits and interactive family-

oriented activities at Civil War Huntley. Free.

12 Saturday - Sketches in Nature

(15-Adult) 10-11:30am. Drawing can be an important part of keeping a nature journal. Join a park naturalist in our outdoor classroom to learn tips and techniques for adding sketches to your observations. Supply list will be emailed to registrants. \$6. Reservations required. Registration code: 3402850401

12 Saturday - Park Manager Walk and Talk

(Adults) 3-5pm. See 3/15.

12 Saturday - Campfire with Stories and Songs

(Families) 7:30-8:30pm. Cozy up to the campfire and join the naturalist for a traditional sing-a-long plus listen to American Indian stories of how some animals came to be. Enjoy s'mores. Canceled in case of inclement weather. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. \$6. Reservations required. Registration code: 3402859301

25 Friday - Family Nature Night

(Families) 6:30-8pm. See 3/28. Registration Code: 3402012101

26 Saturday - Backyard Conservation

(15-Adults) 3:30-5pm. Join a park naturalist to learn simple steps on how to improve your backyard's impact on the environment. Topics will vary seasonally, please call the park for details. Reservations required. \$6. Registration code: 3402015001

27 Sunday - Birding for Beginners-Optics

(Ages 12+) 8-11am. Interested in birding? We can get you started! Learn about the birds in the park and try out different optics. A park naturalist helps you sharpen your bird identification skills. Seasonal topics will be emphasized. Program begins in the parking lot. Reservations required. \$6 Registration code: 3402865501

MAY

3 Saturday - Sketches in Nature

(Ages 9-13) 10-11:30am. See 4/12. Registration code: 3402822501

4 Sunday - Wetlands Awareness Day

(All ages) 12-4pm. Enjoy an active, colorful afternoon with live animal presentations, nature activities and family fun in this 1,500 acre park with its wetland boardwalk and wildlife observation tower. Bring friends and family to learn all about wetland ecology, local natural history and the importance of our wetlands. There is a small fee for some activities. No reservations required.

9 Friday - Local Lore

(Families) 6-7:30pm. See 3/14. Registration code: 3402012001

17 Saturday - Park Manager Walk and Talk

(Adults) 3-5pm. See 3/15.

23 Friday - Twilight Hilltop Tour

(Adult) 7:00-8:30pm. Historic Huntley sits high upon a hill overlooking Hybla Valley and Huntley Meadows Park. It's a dramatic setting made all the more stunning by the setting sun. Join us after hours for a special tour and see the house in a different light. Light refreshments served afterward. Dress for the weather. \$8. Reservations required. Registration code: 5782833901

30 Friday - Family Nature Night

(Families) 6:30-8pm. See 4/25. Registration code: 3402012102

All programs require reservations, unless free. Sign-ups can be done online using Parktakes, search "Huntley" at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes. Or call 703-222-4664. For help, call Huntley Meadows Park at 703-768-2525.

***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: _____

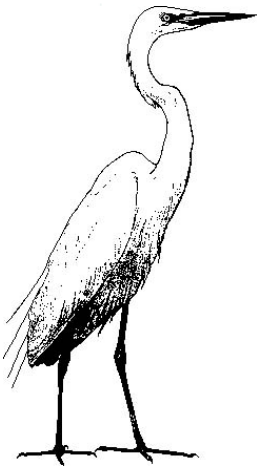
Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd
Alexandria, VA 22306
703-768-2525



Please check your mailing label for accuracy and notify us of any changes.
Your membership expiration date is in the upper left corner.