

# Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



March 2015

Website: [www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark)

## President's Message

Inspiration:

Surround yourself with things that inspire you. All things nature are high on my list for what inspires me. While I am writing this, spring is starting to show hints of the splendor that is coming. I find myself looking out the windows each morning to see what nature shows me as my daily inspiration. Our lives are full of technology, traffic, noise, schedules, stress, and other craziness. Every day the outdoors makes me feel grounded, happy and inspired. Let's all pledge to make room for nature.

Some changes in nature seem to happen all at once though really they happen over time, mostly hidden from our view. We notice these changes when the first plants peek out from under the leaf litter or when a carpet of native Spring Beauty flowers shows us its face. Other signs of spring arrive a bit later like the turtles warming themselves in the sun; seeing this always makes me smile. This is nature's voice. We only have to open our senses to experience events that can help us stay grounded and inspired.

I always look forward to the forests and trails at Huntley Meadows coming alive with the sounds of spring. The chorus of spring peepers is another event that has the forest singing to us in the spring. When taking a walk on the trails, stop for a minute and listen to the sounds of nature around you. It is different each time I stop and listen. Don't forget to stop and look around and remember, look up too. Take a deep breath, and 'hear' the voice of nature at Huntley Meadows. There is nothing like it to inspire me every day. Like the words of a popular song that we have heard lately, "Because I'm happy" (Pharrell Williams, "Happy," 2014). If you feel inspired, consider sharing with all of your Friends of Huntley Meadows Park on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark>.

'President's Message' - cont'd on page 9

## Park Manager's Message

### **Spring Pilgrims – Be the First to Welcome Them!**

Sometimes it's hard to get excited about a "spring" walk in March, even early April, when it feels like winter is still in charge, or at least very reluctant about leaving. This is when being a naturalist or nature geek pays off in spades! It may feel like winter, but even late February can give spring gifts if you know what to look for. Be the first one to welcome the following vernal pilgrims back to Huntley Meadows!

**Dragonflies:** Yes, there are a few brave dragonflies that start zipping around in April, even in late March some years. The very first to keep an eye out for is the Common Green Darner (CGD). Our local CGDs don't start appearing until summer, but CGDs from points south (maybe the Carolinas or Virginia's Dismal Swamp) emerge in March and April in those warm southern waters, and migrate north. Their parents may very well have been born here at Huntley Meadows, then flown south in the fall to lay eggs – a multi-generational migration similar to Monarch butterflies. Other vernal Zygopterans to look for are the uncommon Blue Corporal (often perched flat on the boardwalk where it first comes out of the woods), Painted Skimmers (most common in the meadows off the Hike-Bike Trail), Common Whitetails (perched flat on any sunny section of trail),



Springtime Darner

### **Do you need a receipt?**

The 2014 tax season is here! If you paid membership dues or made a monetary donation to FOHMP in 2014, these contributions may be tax deductible. If you would like a letter of receipt, please send your request to [friendsofhmp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofhmp@gmail.com), and we'll be happy to provide one.

and a new spring species we're hoping you can help us find - the Springtime Darner. Not yet seen in the Park, but almost certainly here, this beautiful Ode appears along sunny forest streams in April and May. Try searching along Dogue Creek and tell us if you discover one!

'Park Manager's Message' - cont'd on page 9

## Meet the Part-Time Staff

Part time staff means a staff member who works less than 40 hours per week. However, these staff members are neither part time enthusiastic about Huntley Meadows Park, nor is there anything half about their contributions.



Brooke LaPorta

Hello, my name is Brooke LaPorta. I have been coming to Huntley Meadows since I was a child and began volunteering as a teenager many years ago. Huntley has played, and continues to play, a key role in my love for nature and science. Sharing that love with the community and individuals around me both in my personal and professional life is also key. I truly believe that nature is a universal teacher and that any individual from 1 to 100, no matter what their background and where they are in life, can experience growth by immersing themselves in nature. I now am a part time naturalist who runs after school programs and summer camps here at Huntley Meadows. As a full time Biology and Geosystems teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools, I often bring my students here and have accompanied my fellow teachers on Park explorations as well! Stop by the Park and say Hi. I would love to talk and walk with you!

My name is Kylie Stark, and I graduated from George Mason University in 2011 with a degree in Conservation Biology. I thought the Naturalist internship offered at Huntley Meadows would be a great way to put my degree to work. I hadn't given much thought to teaching as an outlet for my environmental passion, but as I started to immerse myself in programming and working with children, I realized what an excellent fit it was for me. I was hired as a Naturalist and Programmer for Huntley Meadows Park in

March of 2013. I primarily run a Nature for Tiny Tots class for 2 – 3.5 y/o, a Nature Detectives class for 3 – 5 y/o, and during the summer I run nature camps for 4 – 6 y/o. I work with older children as well, through school groups, outreach, family nature nights and working with Brooke for her series classes. I love working at Huntley Meadows!



Kylie Stark



Kat Ochs

My name is Kat Ochs. I am a Naturalist who leads school tours through the wetlands and runs summer camps. I have a background in Biology but was inspired to do this work after becoming a Program Leader volunteer at the Park in 2008. I was hired as a Roving Naturalist for Fairfax County in 2013 and was able to visit all of the wonderful parks in the County, as well as meet many of the staff who work at the various parks. When a position opened up at Huntley Meadows in late 2013, I jumped at the chance to work where my program journey had started. I have a great

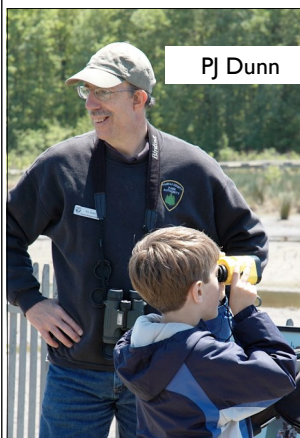
love for Huntley Meadows and the people I interact with every time I come to the Park.

Hello all! My name is Anna Finch, and I am the Customer Service Specialist at Huntley Meadows Park. I work part time at Huntley Meadows and volunteer here as well! Some of my tasks include helping with the waitlist for programs, inputting the sales and monthly visitation statistics and entering volunteer hours. I currently volunteer as a Vernal Pool surveyor and just started with the Herbarium group. I learn something new every day at Huntley Meadows and love



Anna Finch

the wonderful staff, volunteers, and visitors who come here. Hope to see you at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center or out in the Park!



PJ Dunn

My name is PJ Dunn. I have been participating as a co-leader or leader of programs at Huntley Meadows Park since 1992. Starting with "View from the Tower," I branched out to "Birding for Beginners" and "Dragonflies." I have since expanded my horizons with the addition of "The Woodcock Walk," "Boardwalk Astronomy," "Owl Outing" and "Evening Stroll." I thoroughly enjoy sharing my passion and knowledge of the Park with visitors. Please consider joining me for one of the 25+ programs I participate in every year.

## Week Long Camps at Huntley Meadows Park

*All programs **require reservations**, unless free. Sign-ups can be done online using Parktakes. Search "Huntley" at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes), or call 703-222-4664. For help, call Huntley Meadows Park at 703-768-2525.*

### SPRING BREAK!

#### **Native American Survival Skills**      Ages 6-11      \$295

Discover what daily life was like for the Eastern Woodland American Indians. From animal tracking to shelter building, children learn survival skills through outdoor activities, games, crafts & stories. Bring lunch & drink. Download camp forms from website.

9am-4pm, March 30-April 3, Registration Code: 3402230601

#### **Discover Nature's Treasures**      Ages 4-6      \$190

Don't wait until summer to play outside & enjoy nature! Come discover hidden places & habitats of woodland & stream creatures with the guidance of a naturalist.

9:30am-2:30pm, March 30 - April 3,  
Registration Code: 3402225201

### **Wetlands Awareness Day**

May 3rd, 2015 (Sunday), Noon - 4pm

Come celebrate **40 years** of Huntley Meadows Park with live animal and Park history presentations, nature activities and family fun!

### SUMMER

#### **Reptile Rangers**      Ages 4-6      \$190

Explore the world of reptiles & other cold-blooded animals, learn about the cool characteristics of creatures such as snakes, turtles & frogs. Activities include hikes to the wetland, arts & crafts, games, animal encounters & hands-on activities. THREE Sessions offered 9am-12pm:

June 8 - June 12, Registration Code: 3402227101

July 13 - July 17, Registration Code: 3402227102

August 3 - August 7, Registration Code: 3402227104

ONE Session 1-4pm:

July 13 - July 17, Registration Code: 3402227103

#### **Sense-ational Animals!**      Ages 4-6      \$190

Investigate the many ways animals see, hear, feel, & smell the world around them. Each day focuses on a different animal & its super senses!

9am-12pm, June 15 - June 19, Registration Code: 3402957901

1-4pm, June 15 - June 19, Registration Code: 3402957902

#### **Insect Safari**      Ages 4-6      \$190

Come on a bug safari & explore the exciting world of bugs & insects that inhabit our gardens, woods & wetlands. Collect, examine & identify little creatures using magnifiers & microscopes! Learn about their important jobs as pollinators & decomposers through projects & investigations.

2 Sessions offered 9am-12pm

June 22 - June 26, Registration Code: 3402959301

July 6 - July 10, Registration Code: 3402959302

#### **Nature Quest**      \$295

Come explore at Huntley Meadows! Crafts, games, live ani-

mals & field study will be part of this weeklong adventure.

#### **Ages 6-10**, 9am-4pm

Insects - June 22 - June 26, Registration Code: 3402224701

Animal Classification - July 6-10, Reg. Code: 3402224702

Reptiles - July 27 - July 31, Registration Code: 3402224703

#### **Ages 8-14**, 9am-4pm

Birds - July 20 - July 24, Registration Code: 3402237501

Insects - Aug 17 - Aug 21, Registration Code: 3402237502

#### **Scientists & Artists**

Discover nature & art through scientific observation using various mixed media; including pencils, paints, & photography. Activities include experimenting with color & light, games & building a naturalist journal to take home. Campers will explore habitats such as forest, meadows, & the area's largest non-tidal wetland!

#### **Ages 6-9**, \$190

9am - 12pm, July 6 - July 10, Registration Code: 3402239201

#### **Ages 8-12**, \$295

9am - 4pm, June 22 - June 26, Registration Code: 3402235501

#### **Native American Survival Skills**      Ages 6-11      \$295

See Spring Break Camp description, March 30-April 3.

9am - 4pm, July 27 - July 31, Registration Code: 3402229801

#### **Wilderness Survival Camp**      Ages 8-12      \$235

Can you survive in the wild? Through hikes, talks, games & activities campers will learn & practice wilderness survival skills while exploring the Park. No camp July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

9am - 4pm, June 29 - July 2, Registration Code: 3402232201

#### **Extreme Naturalist**      9am-4pm      Ages 8-12      \$295

Spend each day with Park naturalists visiting different habitats, conducting field surveys, recording observations & exploring the Park through lots of hands on activities!

July 13 - July 17, Registration Code: 3402232601

August 3 - August 7, Registration Code: 3402232602

#### **Dig It! Archaeology Adventures**      Ages 9-12      \$295

Discover new treasures & learn how our ancestors lived. We spend 2 days off site helping the County's Cultural Resources Team. We will visit an active dig & the archaeological research lab in Annandale where we will investigate artifacts found in the County.

July 6 - July 10, Registration Code: 3402227901

August 10 - August 14, Registration Code: 3402227902

### Boy Scout Merit Badges (Ages 11-17)

#### **Archeology** - 5/31 - 10am-3pm. \$35

Registration Code: 3402739701

Please visit the Park website for additional Merit Badge offerings this spring.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows-park/calendar.htm>

## **The View from the Tower at Huntley Meadows Park**

A Volunteer Perspective by Curtis Gibbens

If you know me, you know my fascination with Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) from the first time I stepped on the boardwalk over the marsh. I thought I had stepped into the Everglades as I saw a dozen Egrets and heard songs of Red-Winged Blackbirds throughout the marsh. I also saw birds I had never seen or heard before, such as two Yellow-Crowned Night Herons and King Rails. Another fascination was the amount of turtles, oblivious to people, resting on fallen branches beside the boardwalk. It was the first time I recognized a wetland and found it hard to believe an environment like this existed three miles from the beltway.

I quickly became a boardwalk regular and started recognizing other boardwalk regulars. Two of the regulars I encountered and befriended were also volunteers at HMP. My interactions with them helped me realize I also wanted to follow in their footsteps and play a role at the Park.

I contacted the Park to inquire about volunteer opportunities. HMP staff member Ann (Annie) Stat asked if I would be willing to take the Park's spotting scope to the tower. I confirmed and met her one afternoon. Ann provided the scope and walked with me to the boardwalk, setting an example as she socialized with the visitors. She emphasized sharing something that a visitor might not notice.

The requirements for the View from the Tower position were not hard. I had to show up, return on time, and record the number of contacts and bird sightings. I regularly volunteered two Sunday afternoons a month. Volunteering on weekends provided large counts of visitor contacts, especially on nice days. If a scout troop visited, my visitor counts would multiply.

The visitors I encountered most were birders. When I first started, I was very familiar with birds I captured on camera, like wading birds and ducks, but I lacked the knowledge of songbirds. A few birders quizzed my bird-

ing skills, but I had my worn copy of *National Geographic Guide to Birds* with me for assistance.

My birding knowledge grew over the years thanks to many friendly and helpful birders. I learned a lot about different species, migration, what bird(s) you are most likely to see at a certain time, and what comes or leaves when the wetland changes.



Great Blue Heron eating a Sunfish  
by Curtis Gibbens

I also met great photographers (photography has always been a very strong interest of mine). Some photographers were just starting, the way I did when I first came to the Park. I would give them pointers, such as early morning is the best time for pictures, because of the sunlight and activity. I also met photographers who had been shooting for years with lenses that cost as much as a car. They gave me pointers about aperture settings and exposure.

The visitors I enjoyed the most were people who were unfamiliar with wetlands, the way I was

when I first entered the Park. For the most part, they enjoyed their walk on the boardwalk. When I invited them to look through the Park's spotting scope at a Great Blue Heron, their interest peaked, especially that of the young children. If the children had trouble reaching the scope, I had them stand on the bench. They had never noticed a large bird with all its feathers, face, and beak in great detail. I would have to work much harder to impress a hardcore birder.

I enjoyed my time up on the tower. I highly recommend this position to anyone with good birding skills who likes socializing with other birders and people who would like to know more about what they are looking at.

*Note: Curtis will have a photo show at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center March 8- April. One wall in the auditorium will be strictly images taken at HMP.*

## **Volunteer Positions Available**

The park is looking for floating weekend, as well as, the below regular Volunteer On Duty (VOD) shifts:

Every 1st and 3rd Thursday morning  
Every 2nd and 4th Friday morning

Contact Kathleen O'Shea at (703) 768-2525 [Kathleen.O'Shea@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Kathleen.O'Shea@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## Thank You to Potomac Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS)

I would like to thank VNPS president Alan Ford and all the members of VNPS for sponsoring another summer internship at Huntley Meadows Park in 2015. This is the second year VNPS has sponsored an internship at HMP. The VNPS intern will focus on promoting and enhancing native plants and native plant communities in the Park.

David Lawlor  
Natural Resource Manager



Virginia Native Plant Society  
Conserving Wild Flowers and Wild Places

### Monday Morning Bird Walk

I recall that all summer long while the wetland renovation project was underway, the regulars on the Monday Morning Bird Walk were eagerly anticipating the coming of waterfowl in the winter. Since the project has increased the water surface by about 50%, it seemed logical that there would be more ducks - Coots, Grebes, and so forth. So, here it is winter, and where are all these ducks? The populations on the Potomac are as prolific as in the past; waterfowl are haunting other familiar places around the County such as Burke Lake, the Kingstowne stormwater pond, Lake Accotink, etc., but very little activity at Huntley Meadows. In past years, we could routinely count 150 Green-winged Teal, 50 to 60 Northern Pintails, and vast numbers of Hooded Mergansers, Northern Shovelers, and Ruddy Ducks throughout the central wetland. On the walks this winter, it is not unusual to find no Teal, a few Pintails, and only a pair or two of Mergansers.

I asked Huntley naturalist Dave Lawlor about this shortage of waterfowl, and his opinion was that the submerged vegetation that these birds feed on has not yet had a chance to develop since the construction work. If there is nothing to eat, the waterfowl go elsewhere, such as the Potomac River. Our hope is that with lower water levels this summer, plant life will flourish and will attract many more wintering waterfowl to Huntley next year. Cross your fingers.

The winter Huntley Meadows Monday Morning Bird Walks have been tests of our birders' endurance. With cold mornings, more than average precipitation, and what appears to be a general decline in winter birds, our successes have been limited. Some of the standout sightings have been regular visits by one or two Marsh Wrens in the vicinity of the weather station. This is unusual since the records of the Virginia Society of Ornithology point out that these birds are rare winter visitors. We have been watching what we believe is a pair of hybridized Mallard X Black Ducks mingling with the other Mallards most of the winter. Some ornithologists suggest that this cross is becoming more common, and

that it may bespeak the development of a new subspecies. A couple of Greater White Fronted Geese were spotted with all the Canada Geese during some of our January walks. These birds nest in the Arctic and graze in agricultural land, marshes, and prairies. Their appearance on the East Coast of North America is unusual as they are common from the Arctic north of Alaska to their normal wintering grounds in Texas and further into Central America.

So, bundle up and come join us on any Monday morning at 8AM. If nothing else, you can congratulate yourself on how rugged you are!

Harry Glasgow

As we announce at the end of our weekly reports, "The Monday Morning Bird Walk has been a weekly event at Huntley Meadows Park since 1985. It takes place every week, rain or shine (except during electrical storms, strong winds, or icy trails), at 7AM (8AM from November through March), is free of charge, requires no reservation, and is open to all. Birders meet in the parking lot at the Park's entrance at 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA. Questions should be directed to Park staff during normal business hours at (703)768-2525." So, come on out and join us - 7AM in the summer, and 8 AM in the winter.



Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser alibifrons*

# Support the Huntley Meadows Park Birdathon

## Huntley Meadows Birdathon 2015 - Tuesday, May 12th

It is dark and, while it is the beginning of May, there is still a chill in the air. On both sides of the Park, cars pull into the parking lots. The occupants get out and...“Shhhh...who is that singing?...no, not the Cardinals, Chickadees, and Titmice...oh, would that Wren be quiet for a moment...ah, there it is...yes, definitely a Black-Throated Green Warbler.” Only after listening to the dawn chorus of the birds do the people from the cars turn their attention to each other and prepare to set out on the Annual Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) Birdathon.

Every year on a springtime Tuesday morning, Park staff and volunteers spread out across HMP to count the birds. In 1997, an annual survey evolved into an event to remember and honor two exceptional men: Ken Howard and Ed Weigel. Both were volunteers who inspired a love of nature within the Park visitors they met. Their work continues to this day through the Park’s Resource Management Internship funded by the HMP 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. Here is what some of the past years’ interns have said about their experiences:

“A couple of months ago I worked as a bank teller. As a recent graduate from the University of Mary Washington with a B.S. in Earth and Environmental Sciences, I felt I was wasting my potential. I was therefore ecstatic when Dave Lawlor called me in mid-May to offer me the position.”

“I have learned countless forest, meadow, and wetland plant species. I’ve learned how to identify many macroinvertebrates, snails, herps, and even a few birds by song. I’ve learned about invasive plant management and herbicides.”

“From continuing the water quality monitoring program, studying tree survivorship in a meadow that recently underwent a prescribed burn, and learning about the planned wetland restoration project, every aspect of my college major was put to good use.”

“I was interested in learning more about birds and reptiles, but I never expected to learn as much as I have.”

“I was asked what I would like to take away most from this internship if I was selected. I answered that I would love to be more knowledgeable in plant identification. I can say with confidence that not only am I better at that, but I’m better at so much more!”

The FOHMP Board requests donations to support this annual event which, in turn, funds the yearly Resource Management Internship. While most folks make a straight donation, the donation can also be based on the number of species found during the Birdathon. If you donate fifty cents for each species seen, 100 species (the target number for each year’s Birdathon) would produce a donation of \$50. That would go a long way towards helping us reach our annual goal of \$2,800.

Thank you very much!

The Board of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



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**2015 BIRDATHON AT HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to FOHMP**

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](http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)

## **Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC)**

Each November, birders interested in participating in the CBC can sign up and join in through the Audubon website. From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wild-life census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action. - taken from <https://www.audubon.org/content/history-christmas-bird-count>

### **By PJ Dunn**

Cold...wet. Two words that aptly describe the pre-dawn hours of January 4, 2015. A steady, light rain fell on me as I traversed the walkways, riverfront and fields of George Washington's home, the Mt. Vernon Plantation. At 4 AM I was hoping to spot or hear one of the resident owls that hunt the grounds all around the mansion. This morning I witnessed one lone Barred Owl. In previous years I have seen Screech and Great Horned Owls. This morning was unusually lonely.

At 7 AM the rest of the 13 intrepid volunteers and I met at the Roy Rogers on Rt. 1 to break up into five groups that would fan out and cover the entire Mt. Vernon sector of the Fort Belvoir count area. Our sector includes the Mt. Vernon Plantation, Woodlawn Plantation, Jackson Abbott National Wildlife Refuge, Woodlawn Stables and all the parks in between. Sponsored by the Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count has taken place every year since 1900. The data collected is used to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. Tens of thousands of volunteers participate in one of the many "count circles," of which Fort Belvoir is one. Centered in Lorton, the count circle has a 15 mile radius, which covers a lot of ground, even parts of Maryland! This circle is divided into ten sectors of which our sector is included.

By the end of the day of scouring all the fields, wetlands, parks, streams, rivers, historical sites and parking lots, our teams tallied 59 species consisting of over 5,000 individual birds. This is considered average for our sector. While some more common species were no shows, i.e., Bufflehead, Scaup, Common Merganser, Sharp-Shinned Hawk and Brown Creeper, we did have some memorable highlights. One volunteer spotted her first singing Hermit Thrush. How cool is that? There were also the playful Turkeys at Woodlawn Plantation, colorful Wood Ducks at Jackson Abbott, a rattling Kingfisher and flocking Cedar Waxwings at Mt. Vernon and the majestic Bald Eagles soaring over the Potomac River.

Fortunately, the daylight birding weather was much more cooperative than the early morning weather; mostly sunny and modestly cool for the time of year. As the sun was setting on our day, we added our count to

the other sectors and came up with 113 species for the entire circle. Not a bad day - enjoyed by all. We are looking forward to doing it all again next year.

### **By Melina T**

On the 4th of January, ten hardy folks braved the cold, wet and, initially, dark to survey the birds at Huntley Meadows Park for the 2014 CBC. The CBC was started in 1900 as an alternative to the traditional Christmas "Side Hunt" -- a contest to see who could shoot the most game (both feathered and furry). Since then, the CBC has grown into one of the best known and supported citizen science endeavors with tens of thousands of people participating each year across all of North America.

Huntley Meadows Park is part of the Fort Belvoir CBC circle, and four teams were out counting birds across the Park... from Visitor Center and central wetland boardwalk over to the hike/bike trail, up and down the various power easements that crisscross the Park, and south on the informal trail. The teams counted a total of 67 species and over 5,500 individual birds. In addition to the expected high numbers of Canada Geese (835), Mallards (335), American Crows (163), Carolina Chickadees (131), Northern Cardinals (155), White-Throated Sparrows (665) and Song Sparrows (320), there were also Bald Eagles (3), Barred Owls (4), Winter Wrens (6), Tree Sparrows (1), Fox Sparrows (4), Brown Creepers (13), Hermit Thrushes (8), Brown Thrashers (2) and a single Gray Catbird who appears to have plans to spend the winter in the first meadow along the hike/bike path.

In addition to assisting with the study of long-term health and status of North American bird populations, participating in the CBC is just plain fun. Birders of all skill levels and from a variety of backgrounds gather together to look for birds, listen for birds and talk about birds, while walking around the wonderful environment that is Huntley Meadows Park. How can that not be a great time? Come join us next year!

**Norma Hoffman Visitor Center: A Closer Look**

By Carolyn Gamble, Friends of Historic Huntley

How closely have you explored the exhibits in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center? The exhibit panels to the left of the entrance reveal the history of the land that is now Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). In this and future newsletters, the Friends of Historic Huntley will spotlight one of the historical images on display, in hopes that you will investigate further during your next visit. Huntley’s past is well worth learning about as we mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Park.

On one exhibit panel there is a photograph of a young woman in a close fitting, flapper style hat and knee length summer dress. She smiles broadly while standing on a well-worn dirt path lined by trees. She is holding a long stemmed flower, perhaps casually picked on a leisurely Sunday afternoon stroll. Or maybe a young suitor (with a camera) gave it to her in a romantic gesture. So why is this picture in the exhibits? What does this have to do with Huntley’s past?

The picture was taken c. 1920. The well-worn path in the picture ran along a property boundary dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century that now forms the northern edge of the Park. The young woman in the photograph lived on a farm located where Hybla Valley Elementary School is now. Her name was Mary Wease Scheeler. She passed away in 1997 at the age of 92. Park staff interviewed her on several occasions. She told us about possum hunting, walking to Old Town for school, the beautiful view from the upstairs bedroom at Huntley and much more.

Mary called the path in the picture a “country lane.” She said it started out wide like a road, then narrowed to a path as one travelled west. This country lane connected Richmond Highway to South King’s Highway and was mainly used for walking. Mary donated the original picture to us, and it is now in Fairfax County Park Authority Collections. And yes, a young suitor did give her the flower and took her picture when they were out for a stroll along the country lane almost 100 years ago.

Today, Mary’s granddaughter, like you, follows Mary’s footsteps with visits to HMP and the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center. Next time you are at the Center, be sure to locate Mary’s photograph, and discover more about Huntley’s past.



Mary Wease on Huntley “country lane.”

**Treasurer's Report**  
**FOHMP Mid-Year Financial Statement**

<b>Income:</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Memberships	\$4,500.00	\$3,360.00
Donations	6,000.00	2,976.37
Sales	6,000.00	3,210.07
Parking Donations	10,000.00	3,673.57
Grants	3,000.00	1,750.00
Misc. Income	4,500.00	30.05
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$33,500.00</b>	<b>\$15,000.06</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
<i>Park Program Support</i>		
Seasonal Salaries	\$1,200.00	\$800.00
Naturalist Intern	2,800.00	1,800.00
Resource Management	2,800.00	1,800.00
Financial Aid	500.00	0.00
Resource Management	3,000.00	1,961.55
Building Operations/Grounds	8,500.00	2,659.44
Special Projects	3,400.00	1,000.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$22,200.00</i>	<i>\$10,020.99</i>
<i>FOHMP Operating Expenses</i>		
Newsletter	\$1,700.00	\$734.30
Sales	4,500.00	1,517.57
Fundraising	200.00	0.00
40th Anniversary	3,000.00	1,710.47
Website	400.00	0.00
Friends of Historic Huntley	500.00	458.22
Misc. Expenses	1,000.00	200.47
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$11,300.00</i>	<i>\$4,621.03</i>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$33,500.00</b>	<b>\$14,642.02</b>

FOHMP continues to do brisk apparel and used book sales, and we are delighted to be supporting the Park staff throughout the year as we celebrate 40 years of Huntley Meadows Park. Our annual memberships are higher than anticipated

- Thanks to all of you!



**President's Message** - cont'd

Informed decision-making based on good science also inspires me and we all deserve this. Fairfax County Officials are pursuing an insecticide spraying program against the native Fall Cankerworm that is not supported by good science. This is not inspirational, rather it is disappointing. This is an important opportunity for all of us to ask tough questions and insist on getting answers.



Fall Cankerworm - "inch worm"

These are questions that are unanswered:

- 1) What evidence exists that Fall Cankerworm defoliation leads to tree mortality in Fairfax County?
- 2) What evidence is there that this spraying program is improving the health of Fairfax County's forests and woodlands?
- 3) What is the impact of this insecticide spraying program on non-target species in Fairfax County? [Staff are not monitoring or measuring this, they simply assume that the impact on non-target species is unimportant despite scientific evidence to the contrary.]
- 4) When will Fairfax County Officials recognize that our forests and woodlands are more than trees? [Our environment also includes the wildlife and native plants. It is an interdependent system that has co-evolved over many millennia.]
- 5) Why has no Environmental Impact Assessment been completed on this program by Fairfax County? [This is international best practice and should examine closely the impact of all aspects of a program that will affect our environment.]

The Fall Cankerworm Insecticide spraying program is not a smart use of scarce public funds. I understand that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will vote on this program on March 3, 2015. Please express your opposition to the Fall Cankerworm Insecticide spraying program to all members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

Best regards to all!  
Cathy Ledec

**Park Manager's Message** - cont'd

**Snakes:** Yes, snakes! Among Huntley Meadows most exciting and often elusive residents are several species of snakes that show themselves in early spring. Look (with eyes please, not hands) for Black Racers and Northern

Water Snakes near the tower, as they stalk swampy grassy borders for tasty frogs to fill their winter-empty guts. Garter and Ribbon Snakes may also be



Black Racer

out doing the same, but trying hard to elude the Black Racer, which has a taste for smaller snakes. Our Eastern King, Hognose and Rat Snakes will appear a little later in May and June, making Huntley Meadows one of the best places to witness snake diversity in Northern Virginia.

**Birds:** Of course our avian friends are one of the main attractions in the Park, and by late April the place is full and fluttering with them. But being the first one to see our returning insect eaters, floating north from Mexico and Central America, can be a special treat. Look for Eastern Phoebes flicking their tails along the boardwalk as early as late February, and Tree Swallows drifting by, often in March. You may be the first to see Barn Swallows and Purple Martins, usually in April as they dive, tumble and surf through the air across the wetland, hungry for insect snacks. That snack may be a tasty Common Green Darner, flying north in search of mates just like the birds that hunt them.

See you on the Trail!  
Kevin Munroe

Barn Swallow feeding fledgling.  
Photo by Ed Eder

# News & Announcements

## PASSINGS

We regret to announce the deaths of some great friends to the Park, & wish to send our condolences to their families.

**Arleen Richman** - veteran Monday Morning Birder, Volunteer on Duty, and lifetime member of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

**Frank McKenna** - longtime FOHMP supporter and visitor of the Park

**Phil Lewis** - longtime visitor and supporter of the Park

## Upcoming Art Shows

**March - April** - Curtis Gibbens

Former "View from the Tower" Huntley Meadows Park volunteer Curtis Gibbens will be presenting a photography exhibit featuring birds and wildlife. The exhibit will take place at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center during March and April. One wall will be strictly photographs taken at Huntley Meadows Park.



**May - June** - Jenna Fournel

Jenna will have an art show opening on Wetlands Awareness Day, Sunday, May 3 from 2-4pm. Meet Jenna and enjoy her multimedia artwork and activities. The art show will continue through June.

## Lifetime Members

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

Henry S. Brooks	Todi Carnes
Andrew & Julia Newton	John Nolley II
Matt, Elena, & Lorna Ryan	Doug Varley & Christine Freidel
Stephen & Cynthia Wiley	Ann Stat
Bill Lukens	

*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

## WANTED: USED BOOKS

FOHMP is looking for donations for our used book display at the Visitor Center gift shop. We are especially interested in books with the following themes:



- Guides (animals or plants; other parks or natural resource areas)
- Environmental protection and preservation
- Gardening (especially with a focus on native plants)
- Local history (DE, MD, VA area)
- Native American history
- Kid friendly (nature/natural history theme)
- Cooking

Bring books to the front desk at the Visitor Center. Having trouble bringing your books to the Park? Email us at: [friendsofhmp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofhmp@gmail.com) and arrange for a Friend to pick them up for you.

All proceeds from book sales go to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park to support Park activities.

## We Are Throwing A Party to Celebrate Turning 30!

On June 13th, from 5:30-8:30pm join us for a nature walk, cake, exhibits, and fun to celebrate 30 years of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. Our **annual meeting** will be held during the first 15 minutes of the celebrations. Find details closer to the event on our Facebook page and Website. Or call the Park at 703-768-2525.

## Become a Lifetime Member of Both Friends Groups for \$150!

THAT'S TWO LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!

To celebrate 40 years of Huntley Meadows Park, the Friends of Historic Huntley and the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park are jointly offering a special on our lifetime memberships. Hurry! **Offer runs through June 2015.**

Already a member of one of the Friends groups? *Join the other group for only \$50!*

### Benefits

- You become an advocate for preservation of the environment and historic sites
- The membership dues are tax deductible
- You receive a quarterly newsletter from Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and a semi-annual newsletter from Friends of Historic Huntley
- You receive discounts on Friends merchandise sold at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center
- You receive invitations to members-only events
- You may vote for the Groups' board members and officers



Please select one:

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$150)

I would like to become a lifetime member of the Friends of Historic Huntley and the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$50)

I am already a lifetime member of Friends of Historic Huntley; please add me to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$50)

I am already a lifetime member of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park; please add me to the Friends of Historic Huntley

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Check: Please make checks payable to FOHMP

Credit Card: Type (circle one):                      Visa                      Mastercard

Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Drop off at the Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center or mail it along with your payment to:  
Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 3701 Lockheed Blvd Alexandria, VA 22306

Offer applies to lifetime memberships only. Annual memberships are not part of this special offer.



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

### Children's Programs

**Nature for Tiny Tots** (Ages 2-3 1/2)  
 Children & their parents learn about nature through songs, crafts, & activities. Supply fee of \$5 is due at first class. Children must be accompanied by a parent.  
 8 week series, \$92, Mondays or Thursdays 10-11am.  
 Beginning April 6 or April 9.

Registration Codes: 3402672001, 3402672002  
**Storytime in the Forest** (Ages 3-5)  
 Join us for a nature story followed by songs, crafts, outdoor exploration & other activities.  
 \$7/child/session. Mondays 10am-11am or 1:30-2:30pm.  
 April 13, May 4, 18, June 1, 15.

Registration Codes: 3402865001, 3402865002, 3402865003, 3402865004, 3402865005, 3402865006, 3402865007, 3402865008, 3402865009, 3402865010

**Nature Detectives** (Ages 3-5)  
 During this naturalist-led class, children & parents get the opportunity to explore the natural world through hikes, stories, songs, crafts & other hands-on activities.  
 Supply fee of \$5 is due at first class.  
 8 week series, \$101. Wednesdays or Thursdays 1-2:30pm. Beginning April 8 or 9.

Registration Codes: 3402663301 or 3402663302  
**Nature Sleuths** (Ages 5-6)  
 Children explore various habitats through hikes, hands-on investigations, stories & creation of their nature journals. Supply fee of \$5 is due at first class.  
 8 week series, \$101. Wednesdays 4-5:30pm. Beginning April 8. Registration Code: 3402648901

**Homeschoolers at Huntley** (Ages 6-9)  
 Students will see & discover Huntley's history, Northern Virginia, & the Chesapeake region. Students will learn by participating in hands-on activities & hikes. Students must have basic reading & writing skills & be comfortable working in a group.  
 8 week series, \$101. Thursdays 1:30-3pm. Beginning April 9. Registration Code: 5782866701

**Science for Homeschoolers** (Ages 6-12)  
 Students explore marsh, meadow, & forest. This spring

we will be focused on plants. Students must have basic reading & writing skills & be comfortable working in a group.

8 week series, \$101. Wednesdays 1:30-3pm. Beginning April 8. Registration Code: 3402703201

**Wetland Wonders** (Ages 7-12)  
 Come learn about the wonders of wetlands! You learn why wetlands are important for biodiversity, flood prevention, keeping things clean & more!

8 week series, \$101. Wednesdays 4-5:30pm. Beginning April 8. Registration Code: 3402031201

**Songs of Spring** (Ages 7-12)  
 Animals often communicate in song. Learn how to identify the calls & songs of many of the Park's animals through hands-on activities & hikes. Topics: 4/9 Hawk Hymns, 4/23 Owl Orchestra, 4/30 Amphibian Anthems, 5/7 Songbird Symphony, 5/14 Cicada Choruses.

\$8/child/session. Thursdays 4-5:30 pm. Registration Codes: 3402031301, 3402031302, 3402031303, 3402031304, 3402031305

**Young Explorers** (Ages 7-12)  
 Through activities, crafts & trail walks, children learn about animals in winter & how nature is preparing for spring. Students also learn about the Park, & improve their observation & interaction skills. 5 week series, \$84. Mondays 4-5:30pm. Beginning March 23. Registration Code: 3402702601

### Family and Adult Programs

**MARCH**  
**7 Saturday - Family Woodcock Walk**  
 (Ages 8-Adults) 6:00-7:30pm  
 Come for an evening walk through the woods to one of the Park's large meadows. We will listen for the call of the male Woodcock & hopefully see his amazing courtship display/flight. Canceled if rain. Bring a flashlight. \$6.  
 Registration Code: 3401011901

**8 Sunday - 40th Anniversary Birding for Beginners**  
 (Adults) 8:00-11:00am  
 Sharpen your waterfowl ID skills on a birding expedition with a naturalist. Learn about the history of the Park's nest box program for Wood Ducks & Hooded Mergansers. \$6.  
 Registration Code: 3401881501

**MARCH cont'd****14 Saturday - Evening Woodcock Walk**

(Adults) 7:00-8:30pm. See 3/7, 'Family Woodcock Walk'. Canceled if rain. \$6.

Registration Code: 3401834002

**20 Friday - Family Nature Night**

(Families) 6:30-8:00pm. See 5/15. \$7.

Registration Code: 3401012103

**14 March - Managers Walk & Talk**

Park Manager Kevin Munroe leads a Walk takes your questions answered!

**28 Saturday - Backyard Birdfeeding**

(Adults) 2:00-3:30pm.

Join Park Manager Kevin Munroe as he shares his tips & tricks for backyard birdfeeding - the best feeders, bird baths, native plants, landscaping for wildlife & how to deal with squirrels. \$6. Registration Code: 3402821201

**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Spring Symphony Stroll**

(Ages 8-Adults) 7:30-9:30pm

HMP is turning 40! Help celebrate by joining naturalists on the 'wild side' for an evening walk to listen for favorite sounds of spring including woodcocks, frogs, owls & more. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Meet at the South King's Hwy. parking area. \$7.

Registration Code: 3402031101

**APRIL****10 Friday - Family Nature Night**

(Families) 7:00-8:00pm. See 5/15. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402012101

**11 Saturday - Naturalist's Choice 'Behind the Scenes'**

(Ages 10-Adults) 1:00-4:00pm

Celebrate the Park's 40th Anniversary by taking a tour off the beaten path to seldom seen places with a naturalist. Meet at the Visitor Center. \$8.

Registration Code: 3402031401

**18 Saturday - Sketch Hike: Spring Ephemerals**

(Ages 12-Adults) 10:00am-12:00pm

Join naturalist/artist Margaret Wohler for a hike focusing on spring wildflowers & learn sketching techniques. \$8.

Registration Code: 3402031601

**Wetland Watchers**

(Ages 4-7) 10:00-11:30am

Parent & child will take a walk to the wetland including stories & a scavenger hunt to look at real world examples of nature getting ready for the coming season. Accompanying adult does not pay. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402826101

**Evening Walk**

(Adults) 7:30-9:30pm

Join naturalist PJ Dunn to hike the trails after dark, looking & listening for owls & other night animals. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402881801

**25 Saturday - Naturalist's Choice 'Behind the Scenes'**

(Ages 10-Adults) 10:00am-12:00pm. See 4/11. Meet at the South Kings Highway entrance. \$7.

Registration Code: 3402031402

**Sketch Hike: Birds**

(Ages 12-Adults) 10:00am-12:00pm

See 4/18. \$8. Registration Code: 3402031501

**26 Sunday - Birding for Beginners**

(Ages 12-Adults) 8:00-11:00am

Learn about the birds in the Park & some basic identification skills. Program begins with an indoor discussion. Children ages 12-16 must be accompanied by a registered adult. Meet in the parking lot. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402842501

**MAY****9 Saturday - Wetland Watchers**

(Ages 4-7) 10:00-11:30am See 4/18. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402826102

**Wetlands Awareness Day**

May 3rd, 2015 (Sunday), Noon - 4pm

Come celebrate 40 years of Huntley Meadows Park with live animal and Park history presentations, nature activities and family fun!

**Evening Stroll**

(Ages 6-Adults) 7:00-8:30pm

Come for a stroll through the Park at dusk. A naturalist takes you on a tour of the woods & wetlands to watch & listen for owls & other nocturnal residents. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402827901

**15 Friday - Family Nature Night**

(Families) 7:00-8:00pm

Discover your natural neighborhood & reconnect with nature. Seasonal topics will explore nature through activities, crafts, games & walks. Call Park for topic. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402012102

**Twilight Hilltop Tour**

(Adults) 7:00-8:30pm

Historic Huntley sits high upon a hill overlooking Hybla Valley & Huntley Meadows Park. Join us after-hours for a special tour. Light refreshments served. Dress for the weather. \$8. Registration Code: 5782833901

**23 Saturday - Evening Walk**

(Adults) 8:00-10:00pm. See 4/18. \$6.

Registration Code: 3402881802

**29 Friday - Twilight Hilltop Tour**

(Adults) 7:30-9:00pm. See 5/15. \$8.

Registration Code: 5782833902

**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 support will help us to be stronger advocates for the Park.

Fill out this form and mail the application to:

**Dues information (Annual):**

- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$10 Student/Senior
- \$150 Lifetime Membership to FOHMP and FOHH (see pg 11)
- Donation

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

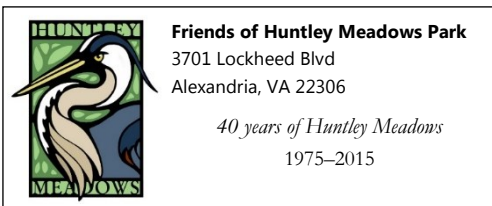


**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_



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