

Winter 2021

Newsletter

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



New Beginnings

By: Karen Sheffield, Park Manager

The new year brings renewed hope and new beginnings. Frogs will soon be calling in the wetland, and the winter migrants will return home to the north. New surprises await us, though what they are we cannot yet say. That's part of the fun of nature. Whether you visit Huntley Meadows Park on your own, request a private program, virtually attend a program, or join a small group program, breathe in and absorb the peace, smell the crisp calming air, listen to the joy of nature, and let the experience wash over you.

Thanks and Happy New Year.

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Reflections on a Challenging Time and Preparing for a New Way

Forward

By: Cathy Ledec, FOHMP President

Given the challenges of this past year, I wish to share some reflections on ways the pandemic has influenced the relationship between humans and the natural world.

The Importance of Nature to Our Well-being: Our natural areas play a vital role in our physical and emotional well-being--this is more evident now than ever. Many of us have been spending more time outdoors enjoying our parks, open areas, and green spaces. We seek out these places as solace for our bodies and minds in these challenging times. We've seen the increased visitation at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) along with our neighborhood parks. Being surrounded by nature is clearly good for us.

"Reflections" continued on page 4

Renew Memberships and Donate Using PayPal

Please help Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) support the Park by joining our Friends group. When sending money to FOHMP, please consider using PayPal to renew your membership or to send a donation. You don't have to have a PayPal account to use their service! We have created the account for FOHMP and provide the link at the end of every newsletter. All you need is a credit or debit card.

You can also find the PayPal links on our Membership Page: <http://fohmp.org/membership.html>.

Website: www.fohmp.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark

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

Phone: 571-336-2674

Award Winning Staff

2020 came to an end for Park staff with Fairfax County Park Authority's (FPCA) annual Trailblazers awards celebration. This event is hosted each December by FPCA to celebrate the achievements of staff during the prior year. Members of Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) staff were nominated for five categories, winning three! The Board of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) congratulates all the nominees. Staff always work very hard to ensure the highest standard of service is provided to visitors and class participants, and to care for the Park's natural resources. This year has been no different, if not harder, for them. They not only maintained high performance standards but excelled while adding new duties and establishing new protocols and programs. FOHMP salutes all the below nominees as winners!

Tami Entabi, Customer Service Specialist - Customer Service Winner!

Tami works tirelessly, often taking on extra tasks to ensure Park visitors receive the highest level of customer service. She works closely with interpretive staff, the program manager, volunteers, and management staff daily to ensure important details don't fall through the cracks. In fact, Tami is often referred to as "the glue of the Park" by staff.



Tami Entabi with resident education box turtle "Barry".

Tami Entabi and Interpreters Margaret Wohler, Malcolm McNeil, Kat Ochs, Melodie Stehling, and Cheryl Repetti - Team of the Year Award

Nominees!

Summer 2020 staff taught six weeks of virtual camps for the first time ever. With little to no background in virtual programming, the interpretative and administrative staff taught themselves a new way to deliver engaging and educational programs to children. FOHMP was glad to help purchase much needed electronic supplies to help bring the Park to the screens of the virtual campers. As always, friendly customer service ensured camp activity kits were distributed, questions were answered, and tech support was provided to participating families. The positive feedback proved this amazing team's hard work paid off!

Margaret Wohler, Kylie Starck - Program Manager - Diversity Award

Winners!

Partnering with FOHMP to secure third party funding, Kylie and Margaret developed A Healthy Living Initiative at Hybla Valley Elementary School for potential at-risk students. This eight week active outdoor environmental and art program at HMP provided education, program supplies, and transportation at no cost to the students or school. Most participants had never visited the Park, and observers could see their excitement during each week's session. Staff report the children's spoken gratification and smiles said it all for them.

Dave Lawlor, HMP Natural Resource Manager - Employee of the Year Award

Nominee!

Dave conducted rare bird surveys by leveraging technology to reduce field hours by 95%. He worked with the FOHMP to secure a grant for this technology. Dave took a lead role in a Huntley/Department of Public Works and Environmental Services stormwater project in Hayfield, Alexandria, Va. The project continued on schedule through COVID, and Dave worked cooperatively to resolve project issues. Dave also completed dissections to support the Fairfax County Police Department deer Chronic Wasting Disease testing. Dave is an outstanding steward for FPCA and HMP!

"Winners" continued on page 5

Annual Bird-a-thon and Beyond!


2021 will see the 25th Bird-a-thon Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) has hosted to raise funds to support the Park's summer Resource Management (RM) Intern. For 23 years, the counting of birds at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) was done solely by a select group of birders on one morning in May. The 2020 Bird-a-thon coincided with the closure of Fairfax County Parks due to the COVID pandemic, causing the FOHMP Board to rethink how to conduct the annual event. The FOHMP Board decided to change the event to Bird-a-thon and Beyond! We invited everyone to join us in counting the birds in their back yards or neighborhoods for a week in early May. The final tally was then posted on our website, <http://fohmp.org/>.

The Board of FOHMP had so much fun seeing the results come in from those who birded with us. We think our friends also had fun joining in the count. So, this year we will again be asking our friends to bird with us in your back yards, local parks, or other locations. After the count is over email friendsofhmp@gmail.com with a list of where you watched, how much time you spent counting birds at that location, the bird species you saw and number of each. We will create a full tally of the bird species sighted.

Please do your count anytime between May 1 and May 7, 2021. The usual group of birders will return to count in the Park during this same week, following all guidelines in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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

Sophia Chapin said of her time as the 2020 RM Intern, "Working at HMP has reminded me of all the reasons I want to work in conservation. I am excited to apply the skills I learned during my time at HMP identifying species, collecting and analyzing data and composing reports into my studies at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Front Royal this fall.

Your generous donation will help us reach our goal of \$3,000 to fund the 2021 RM Intern. You can donate a set amount, an amount for every bird counted, or for every species counted. For ease of processing, we prefer donations to be made through our Paypal account. Go to the dedicated page for Bird-a-thon on our website www.fohmp.org/birdathon%20beyond%202021.html, and look for the  button! Alternatively, you can use the form below.

2021 BIRD-A-THON DONATION FORM

Please submit form by May 31, 2021

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

For ease of processing, we prefer donations to be made through our Paypal account by clicking [HERE](#).

Donation Amount: _____

If you prefer to pay by check, please make checks payable to FOHMP, and mail this form with your check to:
Huntley Meadows Park - Bird-a-thon
3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306

“Reflections” continued from page 1

The Challenges of Increased Park Usage: During the pandemic our local parks have seen large increases in visitation, as more people seek out nature for relaxation and enjoyment. While this reinforces the importance of parks and green spaces to our society, there are management challenges to having more visitors. To avoid degrading our parks and unduly disturbing wildlife, visitors need to follow park rules by staying on the marked trails, not littering, and keeping bikes, scooters, skateboards, strollers, and pets out of the areas where they are prohibited. We, experienced nature-lovers, can help by following the rules at HMP and any other parks we use.

Budgetary Implications: As a result of the pandemic, spending priorities have shifted towards emergency funding areas; other budgets have been slashed, and support services are strained. This shift of resources has unfortunately resulted in less funding for many Fairfax County parks and natural areas, including HMP. The severe disconnect between the importance of natural areas and how they are funded has become even more glaringly obvious during the pandemic. One way to help reduce this disconnect is for more of us to advocate for adequate funding for proper management of our natural resource areas. The next series of budget hearings at which we can advocate for more funding for FCPA parks is coming this spring. Stay tuned for the timing of these hearings. Each of us can take action by providing testimony.



Clapper Rail swimming in HMP central wetland photographed by Ed Eder in late fall 2020.

Project and Policy Decision-making: Some political leaders and decision-makers may use the pandemic as an opportunity to push through policy changes with a reduced public consultation process due to the “emergency situation.” Just because we have a public health emergency, this should not translate to a “free pass” to overlook the environmental impact of development projects and the need for appropriate mitigation actions. Accordingly, our advocacy on behalf of parks and other natural areas is even more important during this pandemic.

Research Projects and Invasive Species Management: Some field-based research and management projects have been deferred due to the pandemic physical distancing requirements and our inability to meet in person. Data collection and monitoring to inform scientific research may have a gap period or gap year with incomplete data. Invasive plant removal projects have restarted in Fairfax County but, with COVID restrictions in place, some volunteers are hesitant to participate. As a result, this could be a banner year for unchecked invasive plant growth. The next few years will require extra volunteer effort to catch up.

These are some of the pandemic’s impacts; there are, of course, many more depending on your perspective. It is especially important to learn from the impacts each of us experiences, so that we can plan a new way forward. With the new federal administration, there will also be changes and opportunities beginning in 2021. Let’s all do what we can to bring about positive changes with the new way forward. I eagerly await timely and successful COVID-19 vaccinations so that all of us can be around our families and friends again, as early as possible in 2021.

I hope to see you on the trails really soon!

“Winners” continued from page 2

Exhibit Team - Stewardship Award

Winners!

The new Norma Hoffman Visitor Center exhibit installed on the left of the entry foyer was a true team effort and included staff from around FCPA (including HMP staff). The HMP interpretative team - HMP Manager Karen Sheffield, Visitor Services Manager Casey Petrizzi, Program Manager Kylie Starck - provided meaningful messaging built upon Huntley's Strategic Interpretative Plan and the FCPA and HMP missions. HMP Natural Resource Manager Dave Lawlor, Maintenance Staff Brian Moore, and Maintenance Volunteer Steve Lindblom provided infrastructure improvements.



From left to right; Karen Sheffield, Casey Petrizzi, Dave Lawlor, Kylie Starck - members of the winning Visitor Center Exhibit Team.

Melodie Stehling as a Part of the FCPA Staff Farmers Market Team - Quality of Life Award

Winners!

The organizers of Fairfax County's Farmers Markets lead the way for safety during unprecedented times to allow local farms to keep selling goods at the markets without missing one day of the season. A group of staff that came together from all over FCPA helped the volunteer Farmers Market Managers team to ensure the safety of customers and vendors at the many County markets. Melodie volunteered to join the team of FCPA staff who helped monitor the Reston Farmers Market. Her efforts and the efforts of all the Farmers Market Team helped keep the markets running smoothly during the challenging 2020 season.

Success at Fundraisers

By: Annie Stat, FOHMP Board Member

A big shout out and heartfelt thanks to the many Park patrons who contributed to the HUGE success of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) merchandise pop-up events. These events have truly been a phenomenal fundraiser and fun raiser. When we first came up with this concept, we had no idea how popular the pop-ups would be, and we were thrilled at the response; the take at each event surpassed the previous donation totals. Every dollar earned at the events goes toward helping FOHMP to support and promote this priceless Park. An added bonus for me and my co-volunteers, besides being in the Park, were the enthusiastic conversations and interactions with the public, many of

them first-time visitors. We were also treated to visits from a Worm Snake and Barred Owl. Again, we appreciate your support. Wear your Huntley swag in good health!

You can check our Facebook page www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark for the next pop-up event date. See you in spring.



Logo on short- and long-sleeved shirts.



Annie Stat behind a pop-up fundraiser table in fall 2020.

2020 Photo Contest Fundraiser Recap

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) annual Photography Contest Fundraiser drew more than 80 entries this year. From the gentle curve of a leaf and delicate dew drops to sweeping landscapes, from a “pants-less” heron and the common robin elevated as art to the windpipe of a snake, the photos were astonishing in their depth and breadth.

A panel of three judges - Leah Boynton, Chris Dyer, and Beth Howell - scored photos in seven categories (impact, technique, composition, lighting, subject/center of interest, originality, and story/mood) and awarded ribbons to thirteen photographs.

Photo contest entries and winners are viewable on the following Flickr pages.

Youth Flickr Group: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fohmp2020photocontestyouth/>

Adult Flickr Group: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fohmp2020photocontest>

Many of the photos will be offered as a premium during our Photo Contest Fundraiser. Watch our Facebook page and website for details coming soon. All proceeds from the show entry fees and donations during the fundraiser are used to support the staff, events, and equipment at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP).

1st Place: Preening in the Snow by Tyler Reber

The judges thought this snap was perfectly positioned and appreciated the pop of color among muted grays and falling snow. The picture captures the stillness and peacefulness of a snowy day on the water.



First Place Winner

“Contest” continued on page 7

“Contest” continued from page 6

2nd Place: Berry Determined by Amy Minton

This unique shot immediately caught the judges’ eyes. The bright bluebird and red berries are set off against another muted background. The picture is crisp, but the blurred wings add to the action. One can imagine the bird flapping and twisting as it worked for its berry treat.

3rd Place: Caught on a Log by Tyler Reber

The judges particularly loved the cropping and framing of this photo (below). It was crisp, clear, and well lit. Viewers can imagine themselves walking through the woods catching a glimpse of the fox staring back with curiosity.

Honorable Mention:

- Blastoff! by Rena Schild
- Profile in Red by Rena Schild
- Watching and Waiting by Doug O’Boyle
- Snug as a Bug Gray Tree Frog by Mar Acevedo
- Blue-eyed Grass Blooms by Mar Acevedo
- Sunset by Annaliis Canty

Special FOHMP Recognition

- Huntley in Autumn by Rodney Fisher

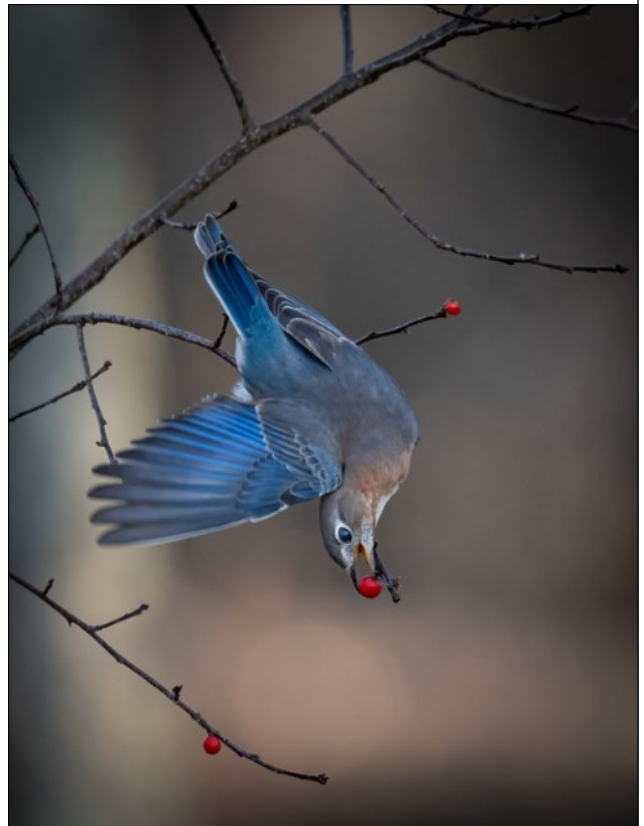
Youth Awards

Elementary Category

- 1st Place: A Lil Peeper by Karsyn S. age 10
- Honorable Mention: Berry Meadow by Jacey M. age 7

Middle/High School Category

- 1st Place – Fly on a Frog on a Stone in a Pool by James F. age 14



Second Place Winner



Third Place Winner

Do You Need a Receipt?

The 2020 tax season is here. If you paid membership dues or made a monetary donation to Friends of Huntley Meadows Park in 2020, these contributions may be tax deductible.



If you would like a letter of receipt, please send your request to treasurer.fohmp@gmail.com, and we will be happy to provide one.

Save the Date!

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, June 13. Anyone interested is encouraged to join us to learn what FOHMP has accomplished in FY20-21. Members are eligible to vote on the next year's Board members. More information to come.

Earn Money for Huntley by Shopping!

Did you know you can earn money for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) while you shop? FOHMP is one of the non-profits that participates in the AmazonSmile program. It's a simple and automatic way for you to support FOHMP every time you shop at Amazon, at no cost to you.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping experience as at Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your designated charitable organization. To set or change your charity to FOHMP, use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/54-1338505>, and thank you for choosing FOHMP as your charity of choice through AmazonSmile.



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Donation and Membership Form Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

To become a FOHMP member or to make a donation to FOHMP, please complete this form and mail it to: Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Dues information: Donation information (please insert donation amount here):

_____ \$15 Individual, Annual

_____ \$20 Family, Annual

_____ \$10 Student/Senior, Annual

_____ \$150 Lifetime Membership

_____ General Donation

_____ Donation in the name of _____

_____ Donation to be applied to _____ fund



Alternatively, you can use PayPal by clicking [here](#), or finding the link on our website www.friendsofhuntleymeadow.org.

Website: www.fohmp.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark

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

Phone: 571-336-2674