

# Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Spring 2017

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

## Awards!

Huntley Meadows Park's (HMP) wetland restoration project was honored with a prestigious **Governor's Environmental Excellence Award**. The **Gold Medal** in the Environmental Project category was awarded to Fairfax County Park Authority representatives on April 4, 2017. The award "... recognizes that your commitment to environmental sustainability has made a lasting impact on the Commonwealth," wrote U.S. Senator Mark Warner of Virginia in a letter to the Park Authority. "This recognition honors Fairfax County's dedication to protecting the environment through the HMP Wetland Restoration. I commend all those who work with the County to help strengthen the community and promote sustainability in Virginia."

Click on the following link for more information <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/press/html/ir048-17.htm>.

During the April Volunteer Fairfax award ceremony, the Friends Groups of Huntley - Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) and Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH) - received an award in the **Adult Volunteer Group** category. Board Member and volunteer Karla Jamir received the **Fairfax County Individual Government Volunteer** award. Shannon Dart, another Park volunteer, won the **Rising Star** award.

Click on the following link for more information <http://www.volunteerfairfax.org/non-profits/nominees-17.php>.



Pictured left to right: Clyde Cristman, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation; Molly Joseph Ward, Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources; Harry Glasgow, member of the Fairfax County Park Foundation Board of Directors; Kirk Kincannon, Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority; William Bouie, Chairman of the Park Authority Board; and David Paylor, Director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.



Pictured left to right: Halley Johnson, HMP Volunteer Coordinator; and HMP Volunteers and Friends Groups Members Karla Jamir, Ron Clabbers, Shannon Dart, Steve Lindblom, Carolyn Gamble, and Cathy Ledec, FOHMP President.

## Annual Meeting

Please join us on **June 4th** from **4:00-5:30 p.m.** for our annual Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) meeting.

At this meeting FOHMP members will elect the officers and members of our Board of Directors for FY2018 for a one year term, as required by our bylaws and articles of incorporation. The nominees will be presented and nominations considered prior to the election. After the election, all are invited to join the newly elected Board on a walk through the Park.

FREE and open to the public, refreshments provided.

## **Solar Eclipse Festival**

Join us Monday, August 21, 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Historic Huntley as we celebrate the rare solar eclipse! What were the myths and superstitions behind the history of humans viewing eclipses? Why do solar and lunar eclipses happen? Come and enjoy this fascinating astronomical event with fun experiments and storytelling while you safely view the solar eclipse and create crafts to take home. For ages 4 to adult, \$8. Register here [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes), Registration code: 5783048101



## **New Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Lifetime Members**

Doug Mason  
Howard Bergman  
Barbara Wyckoff  
Colonel & Mrs. Rocky Ventrella  
Eric Atkisson

## **Park Manager's Message**

I am overjoyed to share with you that Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) is the recipient of the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award Gold Medal. This honor was presented at the annual Environment Virginia Symposium. The environmental project that received accolades is the HMP wetland project.

The three million dollar restoration project completed in 2013 created the opportunity to revive the wetland. The innovative technology and structures assist Dave Lawlor, the Park's Natural Resource Manager to implement the wetland management plan. Dave's vision for active adaptive management has proved a huge success with increased plant diversity and animal species. This ongoing management is critical to maintain a vibrant wetland.

The return of rare species to the wetland is the result of numerous ongoing staff and volunteer efforts led and coordinated by Dave. Building on the natural resource success, Huntley's interpretative team created, and continues to create, awesome program opportunities for visitors to better enjoy their wetland experience and gain insight into resource management.

So what's going on in the wetland this spring? It's breeding season for many species, and every spring day brings new additions to the park: tadpoles, turtles and birds are hatching, insects are emerging, and fish and snakes are being born. The Hooded Merganser ducklings have left their tree/box cavity and splashed into the wetland. The ducklings leave the nest within 24 hours of hatching! At this young age they look more like fluff balls than ducklings. The faithful parents stay close to the ducklings, so on your next visit you may see the family. It's a wonderful time to be at HMP and to experience the successes of wetland management.

Hats off to everyone involved in the wetland project and those who continue to support this valuable resource! We'll be sharing the Governor's award with visitors and volunteers at Wetlands Awareness Day on May 7 at 1:00 p.m. I hope you'll join in the celebration.

Karen Sheffield, Huntley Meadows Park Manager

## **Free Summer Art Show**

Nina Tisara is presenting *Inspired by Nature*, a compilation of Mosaics. Nina is a long time visitor and lover of Huntley Meadows Park. Her work over the years has included photography, which she has shown at the Park in the past.

Nina's exhibition will run from June 2 through August 3 with an Opening Reception and Artist's Talk on June 4, 2:30-4p.m. at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22306.

Photo of a Nina Tisara mosaic.



## **Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor**

By Cathy Ledec, President of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP)

Why should Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) be interested in the Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor? For Huntley Meadows Park (HMP), Dogue Creek is an important natural biological corridor for native wildlife traveling between the Potomac River and HMP and many areas in between. This is important for non-flying native wildlife, including mammals such as Beavers and River Otters, that use Dogue Creek to travel between HMP and other natural habitats. The corridor is also important for reptiles, amphibians and fish that live and breed along the banks of Dogue Creek. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has classified the Huntley Meadows – Dogue Creek Wetlands Conservation Site as a site of High Significance. Furthermore, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has designated Dogue Creek as a Threatened and Endangered Species Water because of its population of threatened Wood Turtles. The natural biological corridors that enable movement of wildlife between HMP and the Potomac River are thus sites to protect.

Roads and residential neighborhoods obstruct free movement of wildlife between natural areas. As a result, HMP is an isolated island of natural habitats. Even though HMP encompasses 1,564 acres and has the largest non-tidal wetland in Fairfax County, it is still not big enough to support viable populations of certain species that need large areas in which to thrive. These include: Spotted Turtles, River Otters and Beavers. Connectivity to other habitats is needed for the long-term survival of these species, and this is the role filled by the Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor.

In 2013, the Fairfax County Park Authority invested \$3 million in a Wetland Restoration Project at HMP. Some goals of the project include maximizing habitat diversity, managing the habitat for species of interest, and wildlife management. The Wetland Restoration Project is expected to result in more wildlife of interest to nature tourists at the Park. Today and continuing for many years into the future, this project will improve the natural habitat at HMP, attracting ever more species of conservation interest. The Wetland Restoration Project continues to receive awards, including a Gold Medal from Governor McAuliffe's 2017 Environmental Excellence Award (see article on pg 1). HMP is increasingly recognized as a tourism hotspot in our area, attracting visitors not just from our region but also international visitors who meet with and seek to learn from the experiences of HMP Staff. Recent ads placed by Fairfax County in the magazine of the American Birding Association *Birder's Guide* reference the important diversity of wildlife here in Fairfax County. The ad identifies HMP as the #1 location in Fairfax County for observing wildlife ([www.fxva.com/birding](http://www.fxva.com/birding)). We need to protect this tourism asset, and this means protecting the Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor. Any damage, or adverse impact to the Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor would adversely impact Huntley Meadows Park and Fairfax County's investment in the Park.

You may (or may not) know that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is working on a project to widen US Route 1 (Richmond Highway) between Jeff Todd Way and Napper Road. This project includes an area of the Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor. While the project is in the early design phase, it is an important time for us to submit public comments and shape this project's design and implementation. The project description can be seen here: [http://virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/richmond\\_highway.asp](http://virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/richmond_highway.asp). There is a public comment period open between now and May 18, 2017. Our recommendations for this project (and for other stream crossings too) include the following (1) close consultation with the impacted communities including FOHMP, the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other Fairfax County and Virginia agencies (2) strong protection measures for any work in the area of Dogue Creek Wildlife Corridor so as to not disrupt the free movement of wildlife (3) a large under-the-

'See Dogue continued on page 5'

## **Wetland Management**

By Dave Lawlor

Springtime is here and it seems like a great time to share the expected wetland management plan for 2017. The wetland management plan provided by Wetland Studies and Solutions Incorporated (WSSI) recommends a “shock” year every 4 - 5 years. A shock year is a growing season with either very high water, to slow succession of upland/dry plants and promote more wetland plants i.e. hydric plants, or very low water, to promote germination of plants especially annuals and seed producing plants i.e. more mesic plants. Additionally, it's important to note that wetland water levels should fluctuate each year to allow for maximum plant diversity. The predetermined water levels are changed slightly each year to prevent stagnation and eventual pond conditions, as were seen here at Huntley in the early 2000's. Shifting high and low water marks allows new species to become established and most importantly doesn't allow any single plants species or community to dominate. For the 2017 growing season the management plan is to maintain water levels higher than in the past few years. The decision to have higher water is based on management goals, past wetland management decisions, weather conditions and current wetland conditions.

The 2014-2016 management goal was dual purposed to establish new wetland vegetation and provide good marsh bird breeding habitat. New vegetation communities were successfully established along the newly inundated perimeter of the wetland and in areas that were forested or more upland vegetation communities. The new areas of soft rush, sedges, etc. will provide additional marsh bird breeding habitat in the future even with higher water levels. Additionally, the past three year plan focused on slight variations of the “ideal” marsh bird breeding water levels. In the central wetland this is achieved by lowering water levels to a predetermined elevation in the spring and holding water levels as steady as Mother Nature allows for the breeding season. Although no breeding was confirmed the past three years, marsh bird sightings were much higher the past three years than in the 9 of the previous 10 years, indicating the wetland breeding habitat is getting more appealing to the marsh birds.

The current wetland conditions are indicating a slow trend towards mesic plants and early successional plant communities as a result of continued dry periods during the growing season. In three of the past four years the wetland has experienced significant droughts in the middle and late summer, including a completely dry summer in 2013 the year during the wetland restoration construction project. These conditions promote increases in annual vegetative and early successional growth. After several droughts over the past four years, a wet year will help completely hydrate the soils (required for hydric plant communities), promote wetland plant communities and reduce the early successional communities that are increasing in the wetland.

## **Historic Huntley Renovation Update**

The renovation of Historic Huntley's Tenant House - both inside and out - is nearing completion! The photograph on right shows the newly installed windows and the land made ready for paving and landscaping.



## **Thank You RunningBrooke!**

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park is able to offer another interesting internship for 2017 thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Alexandria-based RunningBrooke charity <http://runningbrooke.org>. The nine month Outdoor Education/Community Outreach intern will be working with students and families from Hybla Valley Elementary as part of a Healthy Lifestyle community partnership. Each week, students and their parents will be invited to a 90 minute class in outdoor nature education at the Park using movement, games, hiking and observation to learn about different science topics. Kids will be getting their heart rates up with exercise, as their brains are engaged in learning outdoors; it's a healthy alternative to indoor desk learning! For more information, or to apply, please contact Kathleen O'Shea at 703-768-2525 or [kathleen.o'shea@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:kathleen.o'shea@fairfaxcounty.gov).



HMP 2016 RunningBrooke intern Elena Bischak with children from Hybla Valley Elementary.

'Dogue continued from page 3'

road wildlife crossing at Dogue Creek. This should be an open design that provides clear lines of sight using pillars rather than walls with a tunnel, an option that has the effect of deterring wildlife (4) substantial space along both banks of Dogue Creek to allow larger animals easy and safe passage under the road, even during heavy rains (5) restoration of the tidal influence of Dogue Creek into Pole Road Park (this was likely to have been tidally influenced prior to original road building many years ago), and (6) climate change adaptations, including flood protection through a wider and taller under-the-road stream crossing that will also be able to handle increased intensity and frequency of precipitation events, decreasing the likelihood of flooding and incorporating climate resilience into the project design.

We ask you, our Friends, to submit comments to VDOT that include some or all of these recommendations as indicated here: [http://virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/richmond\\_highway.asp](http://virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/richmond_highway.asp). The public comment period will close on May 18, 2017. This project will impact the future of wildlife at HMP. I hope to see you at an upcoming meeting for this project as well as on the trails! Enjoy the warming days of spring!

## **Go Green**

We now offer an electronic version of our quarterly newsletter! If you wish to receive you newsletter via email please email us at: [friendsofhmp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofhmp@gmail.com).

FOHMP DOES NOT SHARE OUR EMAIL LIST WITH ANY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

## **Donate through Amazon**

If you shop on Amazon, you can identify Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) as your favorite charity. For every transaction you complete, FOHMP will receive a donation amount of 0.5% of your purchase. Simply register FOHMP as your preferred charity at <https://smile.amazon.com>.

This costs you nothing and costs FOHMP nothing. Amazon makes the donation.

## Huntley Meadows Park Programs

All programs **require reservations**, unless free. Sign up and find DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS 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.

### **MAY**

- 20 Saturday - Live Animal Lunchtime!** - (Families), 12-1pm. \$7. Registration code: 3402036101
- 20 Saturday - Delicious Dairy at Historic Huntley** - (Families), 1-3pm. \$8. Registration code: 5782827201
- 26 Friday - Twilight Hilltop Tour at Historic Huntley** - (Adults), 7:30-8:30pm. \$5. Registration code: 5782833901
- 27 Saturday - Wetland in Bloom** - (Ages 5-Adult), 10am-12:00pm. \$8. Registration code: 3402842201
- 27 Saturday - Bread and Butter Tea at Historic Huntley** - (Families), 1-2:30pm. \$8. Registration code: 5782037901
- 27 Saturday - Evening Walk** - (Adults), 7:45-9:45pm. \$8. Registration code: 3402881802
- 28 Sunday - Birding for Beginners** - (Ages 12-Adults) 8-11am. \$10. Registration code: 3402842502

### **JUNE**

- 3 Saturday - Hardtack and Johnnycakes** - (Families), 1:30-2:30pm. \$7. Registration code: 5782038001
- 4 Sunday - Inspired by Nature** - (All), 2:30-4pm. Art show opening and artist talk. FREE.
- 4 Sunday - Annual Meeting, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park** - (All), 4-5:30 pm. Free.
- 10 Saturday - Twilight Hilltop Tour at Historic Huntley** - (Adults), 7:30-8:30pm. \$5. Registration code: 5782833902
- 10 Saturday - Evening Stroll** - (Ages 6-Adults), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3402827903
- 17 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy** - (Ages 12-Adults), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3402865102
- 23 Friday - Twilight Hilltop Tour at Historic Huntley** - (Adults), 8-9pm. \$5. Registration code: 5783833901
- 24 Saturday - Evening Walk** - (Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403881801

### **July**

- 1 Saturday - Evening Stroll** - (6-Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403827901
- 7 Friday - Safely See the Great American Eclipse** - (3-Adult), 7-8pm. \$7. Registration code: 3403043701
- 7 Friday - Twilight Hilltop Tour at Historic Huntley** - (Adults), 8-9pm. \$5. Registration code: 5783833902
- 22 Saturday - Ancient Plants Sketch Hike** - (13-Adult), 10am-12pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403834601
- 22 Saturday - Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** - (2-Adult), 1-2pm. \$8. Registration code: 5783039101
- 29 Saturday - Evening Walk** - (Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403881802
- 30 Sunday - How to Draw Your Dragon(fly)** - (13-Adult), 1-3pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403820101

### **August**

- 12 Saturday - Evening Stroll** - (6-Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403827902
- 12 Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy** - (12-Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403865101
- 19 Saturday - Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** - (2-Adult), 1-2pm. \$8. Registration code: 5783039102
- 21 Monday - Solar Eclipse Festival** - (4-Adult), 2-4pm. \$8. Registration code: 5783048101
- 26 Saturday - Evening Walk** - (Adult), 8-10pm. \$8. Registration code: 3403881803

### Children's Programs

Huntley Meadows Park offers a variety of summer camps for children ages 2-12 as well as programs for Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows-park/calendar.htm> for more information and to view the complete list of classes offered. Or call 703-768-2525 to speak with a staff member.

## Wetlands Awareness Day

On the first Sunday in May Huntley Meadows Park hosts its yearly Wetlands Awareness Day. A day in which Staff, Volunteers, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) and Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH) Board Members, and FOHMP and FOHH members share with visitors the importance of wetlands and watersheds. This year over 800 people attended the event held on May 5, 2017. During the day a ceremony was held in recognition of Huntley Meadows Park's receipt of the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award (See front page for details). Attendees also learned about how the animals of Huntley are adapted to survive, saw live animals, got up close and personal with wetland clay, and enjoyed an informative and exciting day at the Park.



Ceremony attendees pose with the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award gold medal.



Ceremony speakers (from left to right) Dr. Cynthia Jacobs Carter, Fairfax County Park Authority Board Lee District; Aimee Vosper, Fairfax County Park Authority Deputy Director of Business and Development; and Delegate Mark Sickles, Virginia House of Delegates 43rd district.



Elenore C. Lawrence Staff member Jim Dewey shows visitors a live Barred Owl. Jim talked about adaptations owls have that make them fierce predators.



Staff member Jen Crawford and Volunteer Karen Tokarsky show visitors the difference between a beaver (left) and a muskrat.

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

Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining our Friends group. Dues contribute toward funding 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
- Donation

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

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

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

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

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



Alternatively you can use our PayPal feature on the Membership page of our website <http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html>.



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