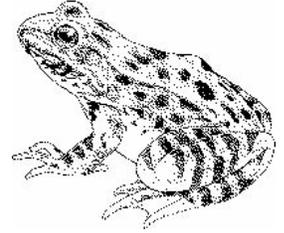


# Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



December 2007

Email: [info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](mailto:info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)

Website: [www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](http://www.Friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)

## Note from the President

**B**y the time you read this the trees will be bare, but now they are bright and beautiful! Fall is here and as green turns to brown and gold, the sky becomes a crisp and sparkling blue. Thanks to some rain in October, we now have water again in the central wetland at HMP. There is evidence that the beavers have been actively building some small dams and repairing the larger ones. The calls of the frogs and insects are being replaced by the sounds of migrating and resident winter waterfowl.

We have all been touched by the tragic event that unfolded at HMP in early October – Joan Gilinson, a frequent visitor to HMP, was killed here in the park. Joan had been visiting HMP for at least a dozen years as I remember her from the days that I worked here and frequently met her on the trail walking her dogs. More recently she came to the park for the beauty and solitude and to sit and read. We will miss and remember her and extend our deepest sympathy to her friends and family.

I was at HMP the Saturday morning following Joan's death with my daughter Madalena. We walked out on the boardwalk on a damp, foggy morning with the sun beginning to brighten everything up. It was just gorgeous and Madalena took some great photographs. I left her out there and as I returned down the cedar trail, I passed several birders and photographers on their way out. Back at the parking lot we had groups of scouts, high school students, and visitors ready to clean up trash along Lockheed Blvd., Harrison Lane, and in the Park's waterways. There was also a group of volunteers constructing the foundation for a pond near the visitor center and the invasive plant group was diligently removing vines and plants that don't belong

in the park. It was busy! Inside the visitor center was hopping also! It lifted my spirits to see and hear all the activity at the Park – all of it very positive.

Please keep yourself informed on the progress of the Wetland Restoration Plan via visiting the park and checking the website. Come out and take a walk! Soon the grasses in the wetland will die back and the "beaver spotting" in the early morning and at sunset becomes an interesting activity. I wish you all well through the upcoming season and hope to see you at an HMP event or just out in the Park!

*Kathi McNeil*

**Wetland Restoration Project  
Public Meeting and  
Final Plan Presentation  
Thursday, January 24, 7 to 8:45 p.m.  
Groveton Elementary School  
6900 Harrison Ln., Alexandria**

Please join us on this important evening as we review the final plans for the wetland restoration project. The program will include time for comments, group discussion, questions and a "what's next" portion where we discuss the project schedule and monitoring opportunities. No reservations are necessary; we strongly encourage everyone to attend. To find more information on the project, please visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/restorationproject.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/restorationproject.htm).

## Park Manager's Message



**F**all has always been my favorite season and this year was no exception. It will be winter or close to it when you read this, but today is crisp, colorful and wonderfully autumnal. Fall is a season of great change and movement. Many birds lose their summer color and all species, migrants and year-round residents alike, change their daily movements to fit shorter days and changing food sources. Plants finish their growing season with an explosion of fruit and seed and each day the play of light, dark, shadow and weather seem to re-invent the landscape.

As much as I enjoy the season, this particular fall brought with it some difficult times. As Kathi mentioned, you've probably all heard about the death of Joan Gillinson, one of the park's regular patrons, that took place in the park this October. A deeply saddening and disturbing event for all of us, we will miss Joan's visits to the park and our hearts go out to her family and friends. The park's daily natural patterns, sounds and sights of visiting school groups and our many interactions with wonderful folks like yourselves have however served as a reminder that this park is overflowing with life. We remind ourselves that this was an isolated incident, the only murder in the park's 30 years and a million plus visitors. Just as Kathi described all the great energy in the park that very weekend, it was healing for all of us to see that just two days after the incident Huntley was jumping with visitors of all ages, we had 3 full programs, our parking lot was crammed and the visitor center looked like a train station with folks coming and going as they enjoyed a gorgeous fall day in the county's largest park.

### *A Walk on the Wild Side*

Fall brings some of the most interesting wildlife observations of the year and this fall was no exception. In September we had Rough Green Snakes, Common Snipe, Rusty Blackbirds and several sparrow species, including Swamp, Lincoln and Savannah. October brought us an Orange-crowned Warbler and one of the largest Box Turtles we'd ever seen while November gave us small flocks of Green-winged Teal and daily bird feeder visits from Red-breasted Nuthatches. Reports of Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks are popping up in the area, so it sounds like a good year for northern finches – keep your eyes open this winter for all of them including Common Redpolls, Purple Finches and Crossbills. Black Oil Sunflower is the best seed for attracting these seldom-seen northern visitors.

### *News and Events*

A lot of neat projects and events took place and more are on the way. We now have the beginnings of an outdoor classroom behind the visitor center with a beautiful pond generously donated and installed by the Boykin family in memory of their daughter, Ryan Marie. We hope to add a pollinator garden, mason bee boxes and a bench by the spring. We're working on a programming partnership with our FCPA neighbor, Lee District Park and look forward to all that could bring. We had our first Birth of the Wetland walk with 10 adventurous participants that met in the neighborhood north of the park and followed the path of water into Barnyard Run and all the way to the boardwalk. Plans for the wetland restoration project are moving along after several productive public meetings and public review of the minor site plan. Our start date goal is still July and August and our next public meeting is January 24<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at Groveton Elementary School.

We have a new event I'm especially excited about coming up this spring. It's our first Eco-savvy Expo - we'll be providing native plants, bee boxes, rain barrels, wildflower seed packets and other great products to help homeowners provide wildlife habitat and responsible land management on their property. The date is Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> from 12PM to 4PM and we'd love to have your help – please mark your calendars. Thanks for all your help and please have a wonderful winter and holiday season. Hope to see you in the park!

*Kevin Munroe*



## Winter Art News

### Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 2007 Photography Contest Awards reception December 9th, 2 to 4 p.m.

The winners of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest will be announced at an awards reception on Sunday, December 9th. The annual Photo Contest event features nature photos taken in the park by amateurs, professionals, kids and just plain park enthusiasts. At the reception, refreshments will be served and the photos will be on display. In a concurrent event at 3 p.m., the raffle drawing for the beautiful, wooden bowl carved from an oak tree taken down at Historic Huntley will take place. Sales of raffle tickets benefit Historic Huntley and all sales of photos from the contest benefit Huntley Meadows Park. The public is invited to attend, no reservations are necessary. Photos will be on display until February 28th, 2008.



Marianne Mooney



*Please join us on December 8<sup>th</sup> from 1PM-4PM for Huntley's Holiday Happening – an afternoon of holiday shopping (10% off), crafts, snacks and nature walks.*

Remember to donate your used nature books to our book sale. Just drop them off at the visitor center. Good condition appreciated.

Please, no book sets. Thanks for your help. All funds from the booksale are used to support park projects.



Madalena McNeil

*Sparrows and squirrels  
Fill the rain-waiting world  
Twenty-four geese  
No critters or "meese."  
A dozen blue jays fill the sky  
As on the boardwalk I walk by.  
Cardinals, sparrows, eastern blue  
Quickly spotted in autumn hue.  
Rain has soaked the ground last night  
Once again the world is right.  
Canada geese are here to stay.  
The water's back, hooray, hooray!  
M. Nichols*

## Huntley Meadows Park News



On the afternoon of November 27, friends of **Willa Howard** gathered at Huntley Meadows Park for a memorial walk and celebration of her life. Willa died on September 29 in Jonesboro, Arkansas. She was a long-time member of FOHMP and a supporter of the annual HMP Bird-a-thon plus other park activities. Willa was born in a log cabin on a farm in Paul's Switch (Bono), Arkansas, ninety-three years ago. She was a dear friend to all who knew her and we were always happy to see her during the past decade when she would fly back to Alexandria each June to present the HMP Ken Howard Volunteer of the Year Award.

Willa lived in the Mt. Vernon area for 40 years with her husband, Kenneth, who was a HMP volunteer extraordinaire for many years. When Willa and Ken weren't busy traveling, Ken was often at the park keeping a keen eye on the developers working upstream of HMP and alerting the county to serious siltation problems and other violations. He also volunteered at many park programs including the nocturnal Halloween programs, weekend Scout programs, outreach slide shows at garden clubs, and led many birdwalks. Willa often said that after Ken retired she always knew where to find him - at his favorite Fairfax County park. Willa eventually grew to love HMP as much as Ken did and often treated the staff to some of her delicious home cooking.

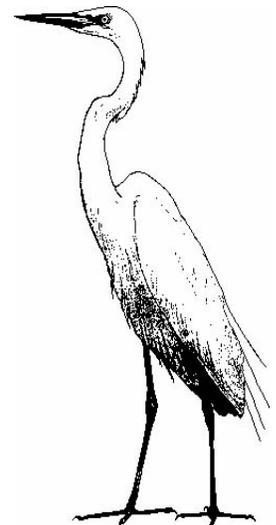
After Ken died in 1995, Willa decided to move back to Arkansas to be near her brother and sister who still lived there. In Jonesboro, she continued to be active in her local hospital auxiliary where she volunteered twice a week and also in her church. She enjoyed reading and watching the birds at her feeder. The young college students who lived on her street were often the recipients of her baked goods and her stories. And she continued to support a Native American (Navajo) family whom she and Ken had adopted and visited years ago. Energetic, optimistic, generous, enthusiastic, and cheerful are just some of the attributes that capture her personality. Willa's estate included a generous gift to Huntley Meadows Park. We will miss her but will remember her always.



*Suzanne Lepple*



***T***his Christmas, give the gift of nature with a membership to the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park. Your gift will support the park and introduce someone new to Huntley Meadows. A life membership is \$150, family memberships are \$15 and individual memberships are \$10. For all new gift memberships, the recipient will receive an announcement of their membership, an FOHMP newsletter and the Great blue heron park patch. HMP sweatshirts and t-shirts are for sale at the center as well as a nice assortment of nature books and small gifts.



### *Pressed for Time*

Henry David Thoreau spent the final years of his life in an intense study of the plants in his native Concord, Massachusetts. He sauntered around town and kept meticulous records of all he saw, and when and where he saw it. Huntley Meadows has three amateur botanists who are following in Thoreau's footsteps here at the Park. Karla Jamir, Virginia Powers, and Dorothy Raduazo are quietly dedicated volunteers who care for an herbarium of the plants of Huntley Meadows. An herbarium is a collection of plant specimens, carefully and artistically preserved for study and cataloguing. The goal is to get a sample of every plant and tree in the Park. The herbarium volunteers estimate that there are over 500 species of flora at Huntley Meadows. They have collected over 700 specimens of these plants, noting when and where the collection occurred, what was the weather at the time of collection, and what sorts of other plants were growing nearby.



*Henry David Thoreau*

The Herbarium project was started by Karen Goodlatte some 30 years ago. A librarian by profession and an amateur botanist by avocation, Goodlatte established a thorough and painstaking standard of collecting, pressing, and record keeping. Joined later by Janet Meisenhelder, they worked tirelessly through the 70's and 80's collecting and cataloguing the plants of Huntley Meadows. Eventually, Karen retired and Janet moved away, but Karla Jamir stepped in to take over the herbarium project in 1995. Virginia and Dorothy joined Karla in 2005. In honor of her tireless and loving devotion to this effort for nearly 30 years, the enterprise was named the Karen Goodlatte Herbarium in a ceremony in 2002.

So what do these modern Thoreaus do as keepers of the Herbarium? Much of their work is done outside, as they search through the Park, seeking to locate and identify new plant species. While this is a daunting undertaking, it is not as overwhelming as it may sound. They lay out a detailed track, follow it precisely, and note everything they find. They collect species at particular times of the year, and during specific growing seasons to add to the collection.

The parallels between the Huntley volunteers and Thoreau end abruptly when it comes to how plant information is now catalogued. Thoreau, with his famously illegible handwriting, kept written journals of his plant studies. Jamir, Powers, and Raduazo employ the most modern instruments and data techniques to store their information. So, while Henry David may look upon satellite global positioning equipment and computer thumb drives with disdain, he will most certainly smile on our determined and committed Huntley volunteers as they practice his time-honored procedure of walking in the woods, collecting plants and noting date, place and weather.

*Harrison A. Glasgow*

*Karla, Dorothy and Virginia  
Practicing with the GPS.*



## Winter Program Schedule



### **Children**

Monday, December 10

Young Explorers - Holiday Crafts

(6-8 yrs.), 3:15-4:30pm. Join the fun of making holiday gifts, ornaments and cards with a nature theme. Reservations required. \$5

Wednesday and Thursday, December 12 and 13

Nature Detectives - Holiday Crafts

(3-5 yrs.), 10-10:45am. Listen to a winter tale, and then make a holiday ornament. Reservations required. \$5

### **Families**

Friday and Monday, January 25 and 28

Winter Chills and Thrills

(5-10 yrs.), 1pm-3pm. What a fun way to spend the day off from school. Discover how wildlife copes with winter by playing games, making crafts and exploring self-guided activities. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Sponsored by FOHMP. \$2/child

Saturday and Sunday, January 26 and 27

Winter Chills and Thrills

(5-10 yrs.), 1-3pm. What a fun way to spend a winter day. Discover how wildlife copes with winter by playing games, making crafts and exploring self-guided activities. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Sponsored by FOHMP. \$2/child

Saturday and Sunday, February 16 and 17

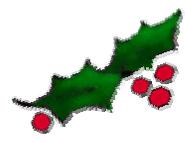
Sherlock Bones

1-3pm. Skulls, skeletons and self-guided activities will be set up in the classroom to bring out the Sherlock in you. FREE

Saturday and Sunday, February 23 and 24

Sherlock Bones

1-3pm. (SEE 2/16.) FREE



## Winter Program Schedule



### Adults

Saturday, December 1

#### Owl Outing

4:30-6:30pm. Learn about the secret lives of the park's resident owls. Following the slide presentation, take an off-trail walk in search of these nocturnal birds of prey. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. Cancelled if rain. \$5



Saturday, December 8

#### Owl Outing

4:30-6:30pm. (SEE 12/1.) Reservations required. Cancelled if rain. \$5

Sunday, December 9

#### Photography Contest Opening

2-4pm. Enjoy this year's winning entries from the Friends of Huntley Meadows' annual photography contest. Sponsored by FOHMP. FREE

Saturday, January 5

#### Birding for Beginners

8-10:30am. Winter is a great time to begin birding. Program starts with a discussion about field guides and optics then we'll walk to look for resident birds. Reservations required. \$2

Friday, January 25

#### Café Cattail

7-9:30pm. Welcome to Huntley Meadows' very own coffeehouse! Enjoy a relaxing evening applauding our community's talents. Musicians, dancers and poets are encouraged to share their arts with a nature theme. Reservations required for performers only. Sponsored by FOHMP. FREE

Saturday, February 23

#### Winter Birds and Bagels

8-10:30am. Enjoy the winter season during this morning search for resident birds. Following the walk, we'll warm up with hot drinks and fresh bagels. Sponsored by FOHMP. Reservations required. Canceled if inclement weather. \$6



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

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

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

***Dues information:***

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

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

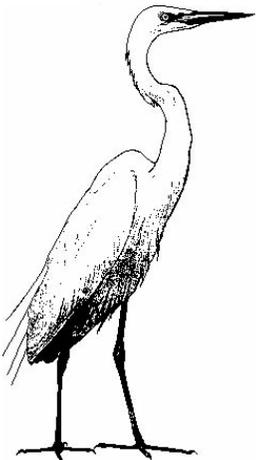
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



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



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