

Summer 2021

Newsletter

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



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Park Manager’s Message

By: Karen Sheffield, Park Manager

The arrival of three Roseate Spoonbills in early July at Huntley Meadows’ wetland has caused great excitement. These birds have drifted far from home, as Spoonbills are usually found only as far north as Florida and Texas. It’s difficult to say how the Spoonbills arrived at Huntley; however, a few days after a tropical storm system pushed north, the first Spoonbill arrived. More recently, two other Spoonbills joined the first in the wetland.



Two Roseate Spoonbills in central wetlands.

The fact that the first Spoonbill has been here for several weeks now, and others have joined it, speaks volumes for the wetland restoration project and the ongoing active management of the wetland. The Park’s Natural Resource Manager can influence water levels and plan maximum water heights to vary throughout the year in order to help maintain the wetland as a hemi marsh. This managed hemi marsh provides an environment that encourages vegetative growth at the right times of year, creating the healthiest, most inviting habitat practicable. This habitat is very favorable for Spoonbills.

Huge kudos are extended to Dave Lawlor, Resource Manager 2004-2021, who played a key role throughout the Wetland Restoration Project and led the ongoing active management of the wetland. This is an outstanding testament to the restored wetland’s success. Thank you Dave!

Further congratulations go to Dave as he was recently promoted to the Natural Resource Branch of the Fairfax County Park Authority. I’ll miss working with Dave every day, but in his new role he’ll be assisting on Huntley projects from time to time. Thanks again Dave for all your successes at Huntley!

Help Friends of Huntley Meadows Park streamline our administrative work; use our PayPal link to renew your membership or donate! Go to <http://fohmp.org/membership.html>, and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Huntley Meadows Park: A Renowned Birding Hot Spot

By: Cathy Ledec, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park President

I was at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) with more than 40 of my “friends”, including photographers, birdwatchers, and nature lovers, viewing the July 2021 visit of the Roseate Spoonbills that had wandered to HMP. It was an amazing walk in the Park to the wetland that day.

Many of us who volunteer at and visit the Park are frequently reminded that HMP is a special place. When we share this with other visitors, they really see us at our very best! We are lucky to have a protected area like HMP – more than 1500 acres - in such a heavily urbanized area that supports a wonderful variety of habitats and wildlife, some of which are rare and threatened. The Park is indeed a crown jewel here in Fairfax County. Thanks to HMP’s first Park Manager, Gary Roisum, for the thoughtful and very effective design of the established trail system. This trail system is designed and intended for optimum wildlife viewing in a way that does not disturb Park wildlife, yet allows us to get close-up views of sensitive wildlife and habitat.

Visitors are given the opportunity to follow the established trails through a fantastic woodland habitat with shade that helps surroundings stay reasonably cool on a hot summer day. Once at the boardwalk that extends into the wetland, visitors can quietly stand or walk slowly on the boardwalk to see wading birds like the Roseate Spoonbills. On my recent visit, Roseate Spoonbills appeared comfortable and continued feeding even with all of us visitors right next to them. Other wading birds, like herons and egrets, also seemed undisturbed by all of the nature watchers.



Excited Park visitors line up to see the Roseate Spoonbills. Photo by Cathy Ledec.

It was so peaceful out on the wetland. With the sounds of nature surrounding us, it was easy to forget that we were in the middle of a densely populated area. The Roseate Spoonbills, with their light pink and white feathers, were simply gorgeous with the colors of the trees, shrubs and water as a background. It is important to note that this year’s water management regime was also fortuitous in that it was convenient for the Spoonbills and other wading birds (herons and egrets) that were also present in large numbers for us to enjoy.

I want to take a moment to thank the many photographers who continuously share their captured images of HMP’s natural habitats and wildlife with all of us on Facebook. Each photo is a treasure to me and presents a view of nature that not everyone gets to see. The shared photos also provide many of our out-of-area followers with an idea of what can be found at HMP. As a result, many new visitors came to HMP in July to see and record the Roseate Spoonbills on their bird lists. I also know of many who can no longer travel to HMP who enjoy these photos. Thank you for sharing with us.

We are now eight years past the Wetland Restoration Project at HMP. The habitat has been improving every year since the project’s completion in 2013. We are lucky to be enjoying the natural systems, habitats and wildlife that make their homes at HMP. The wandering wildlife, like the Roseate Spoonbills, are such a treat. I wonder what the next wandering bird will be that visits us at HMP. I look forward to this visit with great anticipation. In the meantime, I intend to enjoy the peaceful refuge that HMP is for me. I look forward to seeing all of you on the trails!

Enjoy the remainder of the summer!

A New Opportunity

By: Dave Lawlor

As many have of you probably heard by now, I recently accepted a new position as an Ecologist with the Natural Resource Management and Protection Branch of the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). I'm sad to be leaving Huntley Meadows Park (HMP), but looking forward to new challenges and the opportunity to continue increasing my knowledge in the field of Natural Resource Management.

On November 1st 2004, I walked into the Visitor Center for the first time as an employee of Huntley Meadows Park. I was so excited to start my new job as Huntley's Natural Resource Manager. I was quickly immersed in invasive plant management, project management and endless maintenance projects. The wetland restoration project process started shortly afterwards, which ramped up my knowledge of wetlands and wetland management. I learned so much as the Natural Resource Manager at Huntley Meadows over nearly 17 years. I have truly been blessed to have this job for so long. I can honestly say that for most of that time, I came to work and went home with a smile on my face every single day.

I will dearly miss working in the Park every day, but I will miss the Huntley Community even more. The volunteers and staff have a profound passion for the Park and set the standard for the entire FCPA. I have an enormous amount of respect for the staff, volunteers, and stakeholders of Huntley Meadows Park; their passion is contagious!

Thank you to all the Huntley Meadows Park Staff and Volunteers that influenced me over the last 17 years! There are too many to list, but I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity to have worked with you!! A special thank you to the entire Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) organization; your continuous support over the past 17 years is overwhelming and inspiring! We were able to accomplish so many amazing Resource Management Project surveys thanks to the continued support of the FOHMP! And a special thank you to Karen Sheffield who has been an amazing Park Manager and has provided immeasurable support for me since her arrival at the Park!

In my new role, I will continue supporting HMP in every way possible. I will also continue working on ongoing HMP projects already in progress, so I will not say goodbye, but rather, see you soon!



Dave Lawlor carrying supplies through the wetland.

Get Ready for the 2021 Photo Contest



Prothonotary Warbler gathering caterpillars. Photo by Ed Edar.

Start planning your 2021 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest submissions! Parents, guardians, caretakers, and/or friends to those in high school or younger, please note we have a youth category and encourage all youth to enter!

Entries will be accepted in late fall. As in years past, each contestant will be limited to three submissions. All pictures must have been taken at Huntley Meadows Park in 2019, 2020, or 2021. More information will be provided in the fall newsletter and on our website www.fohmp.org; both will be available in October.

Huntley Meadows Park Programs

Program topics at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) include photography, art, nature, and history. Offerings are provided for families, individuals, and groups of all ages. In addition, school programs are offered for schools, homeschool individuals, or anyone wanting to supplement children’s learning opportunities for students of all ages. The programs provide another look at the diverse history and nature of HMP.



2021 Naturalist Intern Luis Teran helps campers complete a craft.

As of this publication, all on site programs are held entirely outdoors. Learn more about what programs are available, and sign up on the Park’s website at:

https://fairfax.usedirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place_id=7891.

Make a Donation by Shopping Amazon

You can earn money for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) while you shop using the AmazonSmile program. Shop at smile.amazon.com, and you’ll find the exact same experience as at Amazon.com. However, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your designated charitable organization at no cost to you. 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.

Donation and Membership Form

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP)

To renew a membership, become a FOHMP member or to make a donation, 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:

- _____ \$15 Individual, Annual
- _____ \$20 Family, Annual
- _____ \$10 Student/Senior, Annual
- _____ \$150 Lifetime Membership

Donation information (please insert donation amount here):

- _____ General Donation
- _____ Donation in the name of _____
- _____ Donation to be applied to _____ fund



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