



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Fall
2022 Newsletter

Table of Contents



****REMEMBER**** To navigate directly to an article, click on the icon at the bottom right of the screen. The icon is a small black box with horizontal lines in it.

- [Huntley Meadows Park Photo Show, details and submission information](#)
- [Donate or Renew Membership, link to donation and membership renewal page](#)
- [Audubon Photo Exhibit Coming to Huntley Meadows Park, an announcement](#)
- [Take a Walk on the Wild Side, highlighting Hike/Bike Trail virtues](#)
- [Beavers, Wetland Engineers, creation of channels in the wetland](#)
- [Calling Artists, upcoming Historic Huntley event needs your help](#)
- [2022 Summer Intern Bios, FOHMP contributed to their success](#)
- [Park Information, resources to learn more about Huntley Meadows Park](#)

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Photo Show



The 2022 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest & Fundraiser is coming back to the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium. Submissions are being accepted through December 2nd. The show will open Sunday, December 11th and run through February 10th. Winners will be announced at our opening reception on December 11th, at which time we will also have our FOHMP logo merchandise available for sale.

We are hoping to showcase images that capture unique moments at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) to engage and inform those who view the show. There is a huge range of flora and fauna at the Park – let's see how many different species we can feature this year! [Hot tip – historically, judges have preferred unique poses and movement over beautiful, but static images.] There is a \$5 submission fee for each entry, with a maximum of three entries allowed per individual. Youth submissions (participants high school age or younger) are exempt from entry fees. Photos need to be taken at Huntley Meadows Park and be predominantly nature themed. Photos must be matted/mounted, but not framed, and should not exceed 18 inches by 24 inches.

There are two ways to submit your entries:

1. Submit photo info and entry donation electronically: <https://forms.gle/Bxhc4WzNNzkiRCC6>

2. Print a paper entry form from the FOHMP website, and pay by check: <http://fohmp.org/Photo%20Contest%202022.html>

All photos must be dropped off at the HMP Norma Hoffman Visitor Center at 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306 no later than December 2nd.

NOTE ON VIEWING THE SHOW: Depending on the availability of the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, the exhibition will be open during regular Visitor Center hours (see below). If you are coming to the Park specifically to see this show, we advise you to call first (703-768-2525) to be sure the Auditorium is not otherwise in use for unrelated scheduled programs (during such times, visitors to the exhibit will not be able to gain entry to the exhibit).

Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Hours:

View Park hours on HMP's website [HERE](#) and holidays during which the Visitor Center is closed [HERE](#).

[Donate or Renew Membership](#)



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park uses funds received from dues and donations to financially support new Park initiatives and programs and to advocate for protection of Huntley Meadows Park as a wildlife preserve.

Click on the [Donate or Renew Membership](#) link to make your payment/donation using the PayPal feature on the **Membership page** of the FOHMP website. To make a donation from the Membership page, click on the yellow "Donate" button. For memberships, scroll to the bottom of the page to view options.

Audubon Photo Exhibit Coming to Huntley Meadows Park



The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia will exhibit photographs at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) this winter. The display will be made up of award-winners from the National Audubon Society's 2022 photo contest.

The prize-winning photographs will be on display at the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium from February 22 - March 15, 2023; stay tuned for more details. Depending on availability of the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Auditorium, the exhibition will be open during regular visitor center hours (see below). If you are coming to the Park specifically to see this show, we advise you to call first (703-768-2525) to be sure the Auditorium is not otherwise in use for unrelated scheduled programs (during such times, visitors to the exhibit will not be able to gain entry to the auditorium).

Huntley Meadows Park is located at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, VA. For more information, call 703-768-2525 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows.

Norma Hoffman Visitor Center Hours February - March:

Weekdays - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed Tuesdays and Presidents' Day

Weekends - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Banner Photo (above):

Captured at HMP, *Red-winged Blackbird* by Kathrin Swoboda was the Audubon 2019 Grand Prize Winner

Take a Walk on the Wild Side



By: Ben Jesup, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Interim President

If your experience with Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) has been limited to the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center and the trails emanating from it, you are missing out. The Hike/Bike Trail, accessed via South Kings Highway, can provide a very different and equally appealing view of the Park. It is a wide, paved trail just over a mile in length that leads to an observation platform overlooking the central wetland of the Park. Although it lacks the intimate access to the wetlands provided by the boardwalk, it more than compensates with other benefits. Here are some reasons that you should check it out:

1. Diverse habitats. In addition to woods and wetlands, the Hike/Bike Trail provides access to much more meadow, edge, and shrubby habitat than the other side of the Park.

2. Birds. See point 1. You can reliably find more species of birds from the Hike/Bike Trail than from the other trail network. And during the spring, you can witness the display flight of the American Woodcock. During March and April, you can join one of the Park's Woodcock programs in the early evening (Park closed to individuals after dark) and experience one of the wonders of nature. (In late February, look for a Woodcock program that fits your schedule here: https://fairfax.usedirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place_id=7891)
3. Dog walking, running, and biking. These are allowed on the main trail of the Hike/Bike Trail.
4. Wildflowers. In early summer, you can see three species of milkweed blooming. In the fall, the yellows of the goldenrod and several species of sunflower can be spectacular. And, there are lots of wildflowers at other times.
5. Butterflies. See point 4. You can also see several species that don't take nectar at flowers.
6. Macro photography. The butterflies (and many smaller, more obscure insects) attract macro photographers. They sport impressive equipment, but try your phone – you may be surprised.
7. Habitat management. How does HMP staff keep meadows in an environment in which forests grow quickly? The Park staff engages in intensive management, including mowing meadows and executing prescribed burns. It is interesting to see how such management affects the vegetation and wildlife, and it provides a perspective on the duties of the Park staff beyond nature interpretation.

The Hike/Bike Trail is accessed from a parking lot off of South Kings Highway, near the intersection with Telegraph Road. So, take a walk on the wild side. (Apologies to Lou Reed.)



1 - An American toad on the Hike/Bike Trail

Beavers, Wetland Engineers



By: Karen Sheffield, Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) Manager

During times of low water levels in the Park, it's a wonderful opportunity to see the wetland's bottom with turtle tracks and shell drag marks, bird footprints and other wetland curiosities like the 'ditches' pictured to the right. Who did this? Beavers or HMP staff? Visitors seem to be equally split on their guesses as to the answer to this question.

When the Park was acquired in 1975, there was no central wetland; however, East Barnyard Run was a meandering stream flowing through the Park from its north eastern edge to its south western edge. A few years later, beavers built a dam in East Barnyard Run and created the central wetland. The Park's first boardwalk through the wetlands was built in the 1980's.

I'd always heard stories that the beavers created channels under the boardwalk to use as travelways, and with the lower water levels, you could see the channels under long portions of the boardwalk. These travelways provide cover, shade and protection for the beavers.

So, what about the channels visitors saw this August and September in the wetland? If you're a long-time park visitor, you already know the answer to the question. These channels follow the pathway of the old boardwalk (pre-1993). Just like today, the beavers dug travelways under the boardwalk system back in the 1980s and 1990s. If you observe closely, it looks like the stream banks have been enhanced with mud. And yes, that's the beavers' work too. As the water levels continued to become lower during this summer due to the immense lack of rainfall, the beavers responded by fortifying stream banks and deepening the channels. Beavers are true engineers!

No worries, it's healthy for a hemi-marsh to go through dry periods, so there are no long-term concerns regarding the low water levels we had this summer. Check out my article in the FOHMP Summer 2022 newsletter [HERE](#) where I discuss the importance of water-level variation and dry periods in the Park wetlands.

I hope you enjoy your next visit to Huntley. It's a different place every day!



2 - Central wetlands during a dry period reveal channels created by beavers.

Calling Artists



By Todi Carnes, Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH) President

We're seeking poets and poems inspired by Huntley Meadows Park (HMP)! If your visits to HMP have moved you to write in verse about your experiences there, and/or the wonders of nature you've witnessed or imagined to be there, we would love to know your work. The FOHH invite you to share your HMP-inspired poems at a poetry reading to be held in April 2023. This event will be part of Arts and Architecture Day at Historic Huntley. To sign up or seek more information, please contact Ms. Todi Carnes at todicarnes@verizon.net.

2022 Summer Intern Bios



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) has the pleasure of sponsoring summer interns each year. All Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) Naturalist Interns, the Natural Resource Management Intern, and the Virginia Native Plant Society Intern are able to interact with staff and explore the natural habitats of a truly unique wildlife sanctuary. HMP interns bring their own talents and backgrounds to their summer positions with aspirations of improving their knowledge base. As they learn, these interns also give back to the Park in more ways than can be listed here.

Pictured above (from left to right): Rose Foshee – 2022 Historic Huntley Intern, Porter Cather, Pete Peterson, Jen Vo, Andrew Liaupsin, and Mollie Coogan – 2022 Naturalist Interns

Hello! My name is **Porter Cather**, and I was a summer 2022 HMP Naturalist Intern! I am currently studying biology and psychology with a minor in pre-veterinary medicine at Marymount University in Arlington, VA. I am in the Honors Program there and am currently writing my thesis on factors that influence attitudes towards animal experimentation. I will be graduating in May of 2023, and afterwards will be pursuing a Master's Degree in wildlife biology and conservation.

In my free time, I love reading and spending time outside, looking for and listening to, the sounds of nature all around me. I was so happy to have been accepted for the HMP Naturalist internship, and I learned an incredible amount during the all too short 12 weeks. Observing all the beautiful and interesting plants and animals that live in the wetlands has given me a deeper understanding of the importance of the wetlands as a font of biodiversity. From the breathtaking birds and dragonflies, to the sweeping vegetation across the wetlands, there is so much life everywhere you look, and I saw something new every day! I am so grateful to FOHMP for granting me the opportunity to kickstart my career in this amazing field! I loved learning and expanding my knowledge of wildlife conservation. Thank you so much!

My name is **Pete Peterson**. I was a summer 2022 HMP Naturalist Intern. I am a junior at Virginia Commonwealth University majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Painting & Printmaking.

I applied for the HMP internship hoping to gain hands on experience working on a wetland preserve. This opportunity taught me so much about native Virginia wildlife. I learned about identifying native and invasive plant species as well as many other types of wetland inhabitants. Teaching children about enjoying and respecting nature was a very rewarding and informative experience for me. In the future, I hope to use this experience to pursue a career in wetland research to help restore these beautiful and vital ecosystems. I would like to thank the FOHMP for this opportunity.

Hi! My name is **Jennifer Vo**, and I was a summer 2022 Naturalist Intern. When I was 10, I joined Girl Scouts, which ignited my interest in nature. As I grew up and stopped Girl Scouts, I also grew away from nature. Now, I am a sophomore at the University of Virginia (UVA), studying computer science. I discovered a growing interest in the environment through UVA's pillars of sustainability: economy, society, and the environment. Living so close to Huntley Meadows, I regret not visiting sooner! My internship at HMP allowed me to recognize first-hand the helpful and harmful tendencies in an ecosystem, aiding my journey to develop a more sustainable mentality.

Although sustainability was my main reason for applying for the HMP internship, I quickly found my interests went far beyond just that. Through various nature walks with the other interns and naturalists at the Park, I found the entire space intriguing; the ways in which the multitude of plants and animals interact with each other inspired my own engineering ideas. I wanted to know every single plant name and animal species in the Park!

I've been coaching kids' volleyball for about three years, and I enjoyed every aspect of it. The Park internship gave me the chance to share my excitement about the wetland with the camp kids, while also developing my communication skills with different age groups. I want to thank the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park for allowing me this amazing experience. I was able to reignite my passion for nature while spending time surrounded by kind, supportive individuals who share this passion. I hope to use this experience, continue growing my knowledge of nature, and introduce more ideas that encourage environmental sustainability throughout my future.

My name is **Andrew Liaupsin**, and I was one of the summer 2022 HMP Naturalist Interns. I am a senior at The George Washington University majoring in history with a minor in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teaching. My love of nature originated in the Sonoran Desert of Tucson, Arizona, where I was born and raised. Coming to the east coast has certainly been a jarring change for me, but I have come to love the HMP wetlands.

I applied to the Naturalist internship to continue gathering teaching experiences and fell in love with interpretation while working in the Park. Working with the camps at HMP and learning from all the incredibly talented interpreters at the Park was an amazing experience. Seeing the kids so thrilled to learn about nature was so heartwarming and inspired me to continue working in education outside of the classroom

I hope to use what I learned during my internship to pursue a career in interpretation at a park or historical site. Thank you to FOHMP for helping me discover a passion for interpretation that I never knew I had.

My name is **Mollie Coogan**, and I was a summer 2022 HMP Naturalist Intern. This fall, I am a junior at Virginia Tech. I'm studying Environmental Conservation and Society with a concentration in Environmental Education and Outreach. Additionally, I am minoring in Biodiversity Conservation, Forestry, Leadership and Social Change, and Wildland Fire Ecology. In my free time, I enjoy reading and photography, as well as training my dog Kousa.

I was so excited to be interning at HMP this summer! I took a class on environmental interpretation in the spring of 2022, and I was over the moon to have chances to apply my new skills in camps. It was incredibly valuable to see how different interpreters shape their camps and to learn tips from them. I can't wait to apply some of those tips while I develop my own style.

The bulk of my course work at Virginia Tech is related to forestry, so I enjoyed learning more about the forests at HMP and absorbing information about native plants and insects that do not receive as much attention in my classes. I enjoyed using my forestry knowledge to help campers appreciate the complex beauty of forests (while still having plenty of fun!).

Hi! My name is **Sophia Ferens**. I had the pleasure of being the 2022 Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) summer intern at HMP. I'm a senior at the University of Mary Washington, majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Economics. As someone who was born and raised in Fairfax, finding an internship so close to home that encompassed both my degree and interests and provided the opportunity to experience many new and exciting things was a dream come true.

My project for the summer was creating an identification guide of plants found in the main wetland. This involved long walks with some of the very talented naturalists at the Park (special shout out to volunteers Judy Dority and Karla Jamir for taking the time to help me identify wetland plants). It also included some long research days. Before my time at HMP, I did not have much knowledge of different plant species. While the scientific names still trip me up sometimes, I can say that one of the most

valuable things I have taken from my time at the Park is the ability to identify native and invasive plant species.

Over the course of my internship, I was able to participate in a multitude of other exciting projects. One of these was the collection and identification of macroinvertebrates for a water-quality analysis of the main wetland. Another highlight of my summer was assisting in a turtle survey with Natural Resource Management Intern Matt Collins. We wanted to get a better idea of the types of turtles in HMP. Along with those projects, I was able to try my hand at other aspects of natural resource management: removal of invasives using manual methods and herbicide; raising and lowering the wetland water levels to encourage plant growth; maintaining Park trails; and installing enclosures to support native plant growth, among other things.

The expertise and positive environment created by HMP staff and the large HMP volunteer base allowed me to learn a variety of new skills and knowledge over the course of the summer. The enthusiasm and appreciation for wildlife and conservation displayed by everyone at HMP is inspiring and emphasized all the reasons why I want to continue working in conservation and resource management post-graduation.

I cannot thank VNPS enough for providing me with this experience, and FOHMP for facilitating the payout of the VNPS-provided funding. The knowledge I gained over the summer at Huntley makes me feel prepared for my next stages in life. I want to thank all of the HMP staff and interns for making this a summer to remember, but I would especially like to thank Matt, who didn't laugh at me too much every time I fell into the wetland, and Chris King, Natural Resource Manager, for his support and for sharing his knowledge with me.

My name is **Matt Collins**, and I was a 2022 HMP Natural Resources Intern. I am a senior at George Mason University, majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Atmospheric Science. I want to extend my gratitude to the FOHMP and all the wonderful staff at HMP for affording me the wonderful opportunity of being able to work there. This summer was a blast and one that I won't ever forget.

Over the course of the summer, I got to work on, and be a part of, many different projects that served as a great introduction to what a career in parks might look like. My first week, I joined a walk with an environmental consulting group and other Park officials as we surveyed potential areas for wetland restoration projects that allow additional native vegetation to prosper. I also participated in an invasive species walk to learn about management strategies for invasives in parks. There were also many great walks led by HMP volunteers that taught me a lot about the local flora and fauna. It was amazing how the volunteers who led the walks were practically walking encyclopedias who could answer almost any question posed.

Where it started to get really fun was when I got to start working on my projects for the summer. I worked on two projects with Sofia Ferenes, Virginia Native Plant Society Intern and Chris King, Resource Manager - the water-quality survey of the wetland based on collecting macroinvertebrates and a new turtle survey. For the water-quality survey, we strapped on our waders and trudged through the wetland, its inflow, and outflows to collect macroinvertebrate samples. We took the samples back to the HMP office where we examined and analyzed them for their pollution-tolerance values. Finally, Sophia and I put together a report assessing the current state of water quality in the wetland.

When it comes to the turtles, I want to extend special thanks to Chris. He was very supportive in obtaining all the equipment I needed as well as helping with the handling of the turtles. I also need to thank Sophia for helping record all the measurements as we handled the turtles during the survey.

To further understand population characteristics within the central wetland, we conducted the turtle survey with the intent of producing data that could be used to identify trends within the HMP turtle population. For this survey, we used hoop net traps baited with sardines to capture the turtles. Once we took the turtles out of the traps, they were weighed and measured then released with a harmless dot of paint on their backs. The first day we deployed the traps was one of the most eventful days of the whole summer. We had three traps and were only hoping to catch about ten turtles. We found thirty in a single trap! It was exciting and very unexpected. It took us well over an hour to process them all, and we were beat after that. As cool as it was, we thankfully didn't have another thirty-turtle day. We did start trapping more Snapping turtles and big ones too. The biggest we caught was a twenty-five-pound snapper. We found the bigger they were, the less likely they were to want to bite your fingers off. In the end we caught and recorded eighty-nine turtles consisting mainly of Painted turtles (52%), Snapping turtles (25%), and Red-eared Sliders (20%). We also found a single Eastern Musk turtle (1%) and a single Northern Red-bellied Cooter (1%). For the Snapping turtles we caught, we found their average carapace (upper shell of a turtle) length to be 27.4 cm with males approximately 5 cm longer than females. In terms of weight, snapping turtles averaged about 4.8 kg overall, while males averaged 2 kg more than females. Of the eighty-nine captures, we only had a single recapture, suggesting a large and mobile turtle population within the HMP wetland.

This summer was a blast! I met so many people and formed so many new friendships. I can't express my gratitude enough to the FOHMP for making this opportunity possible.



3 - Left: Matt Collins -Natural Resource Intern

Right: Sophia Ferens -Virginia Native Plant Society Intern

Park Information



Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) is run and managed by the Fairfax County Park Authority. To find out more about Park hours, visitation rules, rental opportunities, and programs, visit the Parks' website at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows>.

Programs at Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley provide a unique look at the diverse history and nature of HMP and its associated historic site. Program topics offer scouts, families, other groups, and individuals of all ages a chance to experience nature, art, and history with experts on this special natural area and historic home.

Learn more about available programs, and sign up to participate on the Park's website at: https://fairfax.usedirect.com/FairfaxFCPAWeb/ACTIVITIES/Search.aspx?place_id=7891.