



ASNV Birding Hotspot Fact Sheet

HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK

LOCATION: 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, Virginia 22306 in Fairfax County

DIRECTIONS: From the Capital Beltway (Interstate 95/495), take Exit 177A (Richmond Highway/Route 1) and go south for 3.5 miles. Take a right on Lockheed Boulevard. The park entrance is approximately two-thirds of a mile on the left just before the right turn onto what becomes Harrison Lane.

ACREAGE: Approximately 1500

HISTORY: Huntley Meadows is part of the Fairfax County Park system. The land was part of the plantation holdings of George Mason, IV. In modern times it has been used for such things as testing asphalt road surfaces by the State of Virginia, an anti-aircraft site defending Washington, D.C., and classified military research. After the U.S. Government declared the land surplus, President Gerald Ford signed legislation in 1975 donating 1,261 acres to Fairfax County for use as a public park. The Park Authority purchased an additional 163 acres in 1992. Recently, additional acreage was acquired for a wetlands restoration project.

ECOSYSTEM TYPE, HABITATS, & ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE: Despite what it has been through, this beautiful park is now a combination of mixed hardwood forests, meadows, and freshwater wetlands. Beaver dams, rainfall, and surface water run-off from the surrounding developed areas affect the wetlands portion of the park.

BIRDS AND BIRDWATCHING: Huntley Meadows offers some of the best year-round bird watching in the Washington Metropolitan area. The park is easily accessible via a ½ mile boardwalk trail that meanders through the wetland portion, an observation tower overlooking the wetlands, a two-mile trail through the woods, and a separate Hike-and-Bike Trail that can be accessed from a small parking lot near the intersection of South Kings Highway and Telegraph Road. The latter ends at an observation platform overlooking the wetland portion of the park. The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FofHMP) Web site (www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org) includes a printable (PDF) bird species list with abundance and breeding

coding. As recently as May 2008, Least Bitterns and a breeding pair of Virginia Rails were found in the wetlands part of the park. There have been regular sightings of Mississippi Kites for a number of years. The wetlands draw a variety of shorebirds such as Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary, Spotted, and Least Sandpiper, as well as various species of Herons, Egrets, Geese, and Ducks—including nesting Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser. There are usually several walks scheduled in the spring to look for American Woodcocks that have been known to nest in the park. Spring and fall migration are a great time to look for the various Warblers, such as Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Yellow, Black and White, Blackpoll, Ovenbird, and Worm Eating. The Park is included in the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) Northern Virginia Bird Survey. Every Monday at 7 a.m., there is a bird walk led by knowledgeable volunteers. Meet in the parking lot. Check the ASNV Web site (www.audubonva.org) or call the ASNV office (703) 256-6895 for information about ASNV sponsored walks or participating in other ASNV activities at the park.

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES: Huntley Meadows is surrounded by suburban development, which puts its own pressures on the park. In addition, lack of moisture, either in the form of snow or rain, sometimes affects the health of the park.

CONSERVATION WORK AT THE SITE: Conservation work is the responsibility of the Fairfax County Park Authority. Please call, or inquire at, the Visitor Center about volunteer opportunities at Huntley Meadows. The F0fHMP is an active group of citizens dedicated to preserving and protecting the park. Currently, (as of February 2009), a major renovation of the wetlands is planned.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Call (703) 768-2525 or write to Huntley Meadow Park, 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, Virginia 22306.

FEES AND OPENING TIMES: There is no fee and park hours are dawn to dark. The Visitor Center is closed Tuesdays, Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1, and its hours of operation vary according to the season. Call, or check www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/ for the current hours of the visitor center.

FACILITIES: The Visitor Center has exhibits, a classroom, auditorium, restrooms, and ample parking. A bird list, trail map, trail guide, and historical information brochure are available at the Visitor Center.