



Friends of Little Hunting Creek

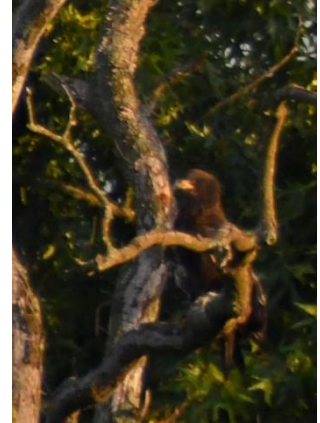
Spring 2023 Newsletter

Introducing the Bald Eagles of Little Hunting Creek

Two Bald Eaglets were conceived by “George” and “Martha” on Sunday, 12 February 2022 near their treetop nest across the creek from Stockton Parkway, on National Park Service land. They hatched around 19 March and fledged on 16 June. Lord and Lady Fairfax (who are larger than George and Martha) nest upstream of the pump station and normally stay in their territory north of the bend where the construction was ongoing last year.

Last year George and Martha attacked and ate the baby osprey in the platform nest just downstream from Snake Island. This year the ospreys have already tried to attack the eagle's nest, and we see frequent aerial conflict between osprey and eagle.

This year, George and Martha mated on 11 February 2023. The eggs hatched on 17 March. This year there are three eaglets. The eagle nest is checked daily via telescope for eaglet activity and a 2023 update will be provided in future issues of the newsletter.



"George" and "Martha"

Eagle photos, names, and information courtesy of Jeff at JSJ Photography (jsj-photography.myportfolio.com)

Learn about Mosquitoes and Ticks on May 17, 7 p.m.

This Zoom presentation, sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh, will include information about how to reduce the number of mosquitoes in your yard without using insecticides. Click [here](#) to register.

Little Hunting Creek Cleanup Report and Reflection on 20 Years of Cleanup Efforts



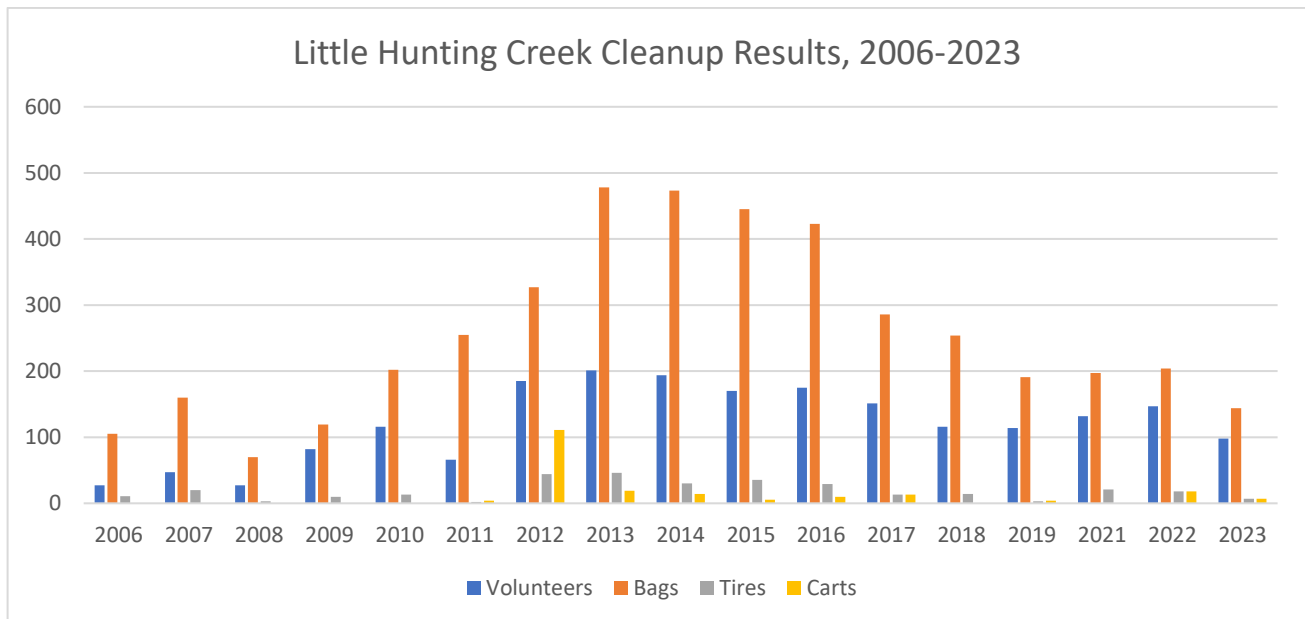
On April 15th, volunteers working from land and water at 10 sites along Little Hunting Creek picked up 144 bags of trash and recyclables, seven tires, seven shopping carts, and plenty of bulk trash.



Thanks to site leaders Will Friedman (First River Farms), Jennifer Giunta (Brady Street), Mark Miller (Wessynton), Donna Stauffer and Carrie Howe (Fort Hunt Elementary School), Greg Crider (Col. John Byers Park), Bryan Birch (Gum Springs), Owen Matthews (Mount Vernon Plaza), Jose Rodriguez (Audubon Estates), and Dalton Bisson (Janna Lee Avenue Bridge). The last three sites were organized by Senator Scott Surovell and Delegate Paul Krizek. Our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to site leaders and organizers, and to all 98 volunteers.

We have cleaned up Little Hunting Creek every year since 2002, except 2020, during the pandemic. Almost 2,000 volunteers have collected over 4,000 bags of trash and recyclables, over 300 tires, over 200 shopping carts, and hundreds of tons of bulk trash since 2006.

A graph of our efforts over time tells the story...



Early on, we focused exclusively on sites south of Richmond Highway, in Riverside Estates, Gum Springs, First River Farms, Stratford Landing, Stratford on the Potomac, and Wessynton. They were trashy enough, but in 2011 we ventured north of Richmond Highway for the first time, to attempt to clean up the overwhelming amount of trash near Janna Lee Avenue bridge. That turned out to be a years-long effort.



The appalling amount of trash inspired (if that's the right word!) then-Delegate Surovell to begin organizing his own cleanups in trash hotspots north of Richmond Highway in 2012. Thanks to his efforts, the number of cleanup volunteers almost doubled and the amount of trash pulled out of the creek reached truly heroic levels from 2012 through 2016, as shown in the graph.

In 2012, we discovered a shopping cart graveyard downstream of the Janna Lee Avenue bridge, where 149 Walmart shopping carts had been dumped and were embedded in the creek bottom.



Each one had to be winched out of the mud and hauled out to the road (thanks to Robert O'Hanlon) where it could be hauled off by the county's big crane.



During all this time we have not picked up trash and litter year after year without complaint. Far from it. We began to advocate for county and state actions to reduce the amount of litter getting into the creek in the first place. Other groups also advocated for improvements; in 2011,

the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations adopted a *Citizens' Action Plan for Litter Prevention*.

Our elected representatives introduced and eventually passed bills to ban single-use plastic bags (Senator Ebbin and Delegate Lopez) and to permit the county to remove abandoned shopping carts and charge the owner for the cost of disposal (Senator Surovell), although the county has yet to implement the law by adopting an ordinance. The state litter tax was increased (Delegate Krizek). The county took steps to reduce litter, by installing a trash trap behind Mount Vernon Plaza, and by instituting Operation Stream Shield, a program that hires shelter residents to clean the trash out of streams. Operation Stream Shield has made a large and visible difference in the amount of trash we see in the creek.

These new laws and programs have helped reduce the amount of trash in Little Hunting Creek. We are very grateful to our elected representatives for taking steps to restore Little Hunting Creek to its natural (untrashed) beauty. We who live along the creek can see the difference, and the graph above confirms that trash is declining.

The improvement shows up in sites that were once trash-filled, but are no longer. For example, every year volunteers used to pick up dozens of bags of trash each in the Little Hunting Creek Preserve (in Stratford Landing) and in Little Hunting Creek Park (First River Farms), but no longer. As a result, volunteers have turned their attention to removing English ivy, Wintercreeper, Japanese honeysuckle, and other exotic invasive vines that threaten trees and displace native plants, and to projects to improve creek access to nearby neighbors.

What's left to do?—**Pass a bottle deposit law!**

Volunteers are still collecting over a hundred bags of trash a year, on average. That is a great improvement compared to five to ten years ago, but it's still too much trash. Most of what we collect is water bottles, beer cans and soda bottles. For years the Friends have advocated for a deposit on beverage containers. Evidence shows that a deposit provides an incentive to return the container rather than discard it.

Dear friends and elected representatives, let's do it, and get out of the litter cleanup business altogether! —*Betsy Martin, President of FOLHC*

Expansion of Little Hunting Creek Preserve

Thanks to a generous donation to the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, another parcel of land on the creek has been preserved as part of the Little Hunting Creek Preserve. A celebratory gathering and ivy-pulling event was held there with Stratford Landing neighbors on February 26. NVCT is in the process of consulting neighbors about their concerns and wishes for management of the property.



Friends of Little Hunting Creek, a 501(c)(3) organization
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Friends of Little Hunting Creek is formed exclusively for charitable, scientific and educational purposes. “More specifically, the purpose...is to encourage the preservation of open space, restoration of riparian habitat, improvement in water quality in the Little Hunting Creek watershed, and to promote stewardship and opportunities for recreational enjoyment of Little Hunting Creek by nearby neighbors and the public. The Friends of Little Hunting Creek seeks to improve nearby neighborhoods by organizing and conducting community cleanups of trash and litter on the creek, by educating citizens about stewardship and litter prevention, and by promoting community access to the creek for recreation and respite.”—*Articles of Incorporation.*

Name: _____

Class of membership:

Junior (age between 12 and 18) ____ -- non-voting member, annual dues \$1.00

Class I (age 18 or over) ____ -- voting member, annual dues \$5.00

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone number: _____

Send email to: _____

“I agree to abide by the By-Laws of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek, Inc.”

(Bylaws are found at <http://www.friendsoflittlehuntingcreek.org/images2022/bylaws-rev2022.pdf>)

Signed _____

Date: _____

Mail with your check to: Treasurer, Friends of Little Hunting Creek, 8707 Stockton Pkwy, Alexandria, 22308.