



# Friends of Little Hunting Creek

7 August 2023 Newsletter

## Message from the President

*Betsy Martin (President, Friends of Little Hunting Creek)*

- Notice our new logo? Friends of Little Hunting Creek is undertaking a review of its website and also commissioned development of a new logo. We like it and hope you do too. (Thanks to Good Goose Graphics.)
- Are you curious and want to learn more about the wildlife and wild plants that live along the creek and around us? Check out Allen Collins's article below and become a citizen scientist!
- In recent years, Friends of Little Hunting Creek has invested time and money to improve public access to the creek for recreation and respite.
  - One project, sponsored with Stratford Landing Citizens Association and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, added benches, signage, and wood duck boxes to a two-acre wetland preserve owned by the NVCT. The past two winters, NVCT, neighbors and other volunteers removed English ivy, Wintercreeper, and other invasives, and maintained the wood chip trail. Work continues! Email [info@folhc.org](mailto:info@folhc.org) if you wish to be notified of volunteer opportunities.
  - NVCT recently acquired a new parcel just downstream, and NVCT and Earth Sangha plan to hold a Planting Day from 9 a.m. to noon on Sept. 7 to plant natives to take back some lawn areas and restore the riparian buffer. Contact Alyssa Hemler at [ahemler@nvct.org](mailto:ahemler@nvct.org) to volunteer.
  - Last winter, members of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek board, New Gum Springs Civic Association, and Fairfax County Park Authority toured possible trail access to Little Hunting Creek from Gum Springs and chose an access point within Martin Luther King Park. Supervisor Storck supported allocation of funds for development of this long-promised amenity. Funds were allocated, and planning is underway. *See article by Benjamin Boxer on p. 5.*
  - Does your neighborhood include an area next to the creek which you and your neighbors would like to improve wildlife habitat quality and make more accessible to humans, too? Email [info@folhc.org](mailto:info@folhc.org) to discuss.
- FOLHC is looking to fill vacancies on its Board of Directors for vice president and two at-large members. The Board meets quarterly via zoom typically for an hour, so the time commitment is relatively small. If you are passionate about the creek, want to preserve it and increase public access for more to enjoy its beauty, we invite you to download and fill out the [application](#) and email it to [info@folhc.org](mailto:info@folhc.org).
- Please join the Friends of Little Hunting Creek! You can find a membership application [here](#).

## You Can Help Document the Biodiversity of Little Hunting Creek!

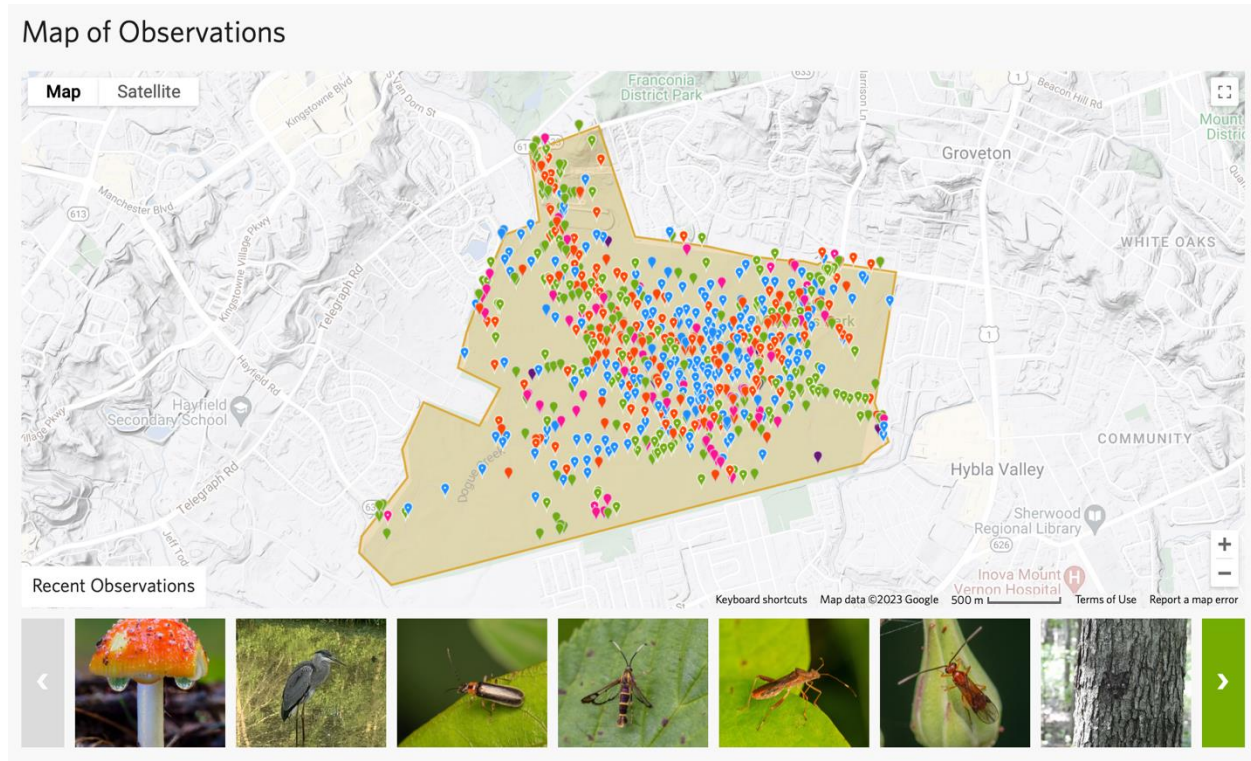
*Allen Collins (Friends of Little Hunting Creek)*

Most of the Little Hunting Creek watershed is developed, but that does not mean that it does not support a broad variety of different organisms. That variety of life is called biodiversity and we can all pitch in to help characterize the biodiversity inhabiting Little Hunting Creek and its environs. When out enjoying nature, most of us are carrying powerful computers, our cell phones. Lately I have been really enjoying an App called iNaturalist, which can help us document our local biodiversity. Using iNaturalist is pretty easy; just take or upload a picture and either provide an ID or let the App make a suggestion based on the picture and your location. Experts and knowledgeable amateurs

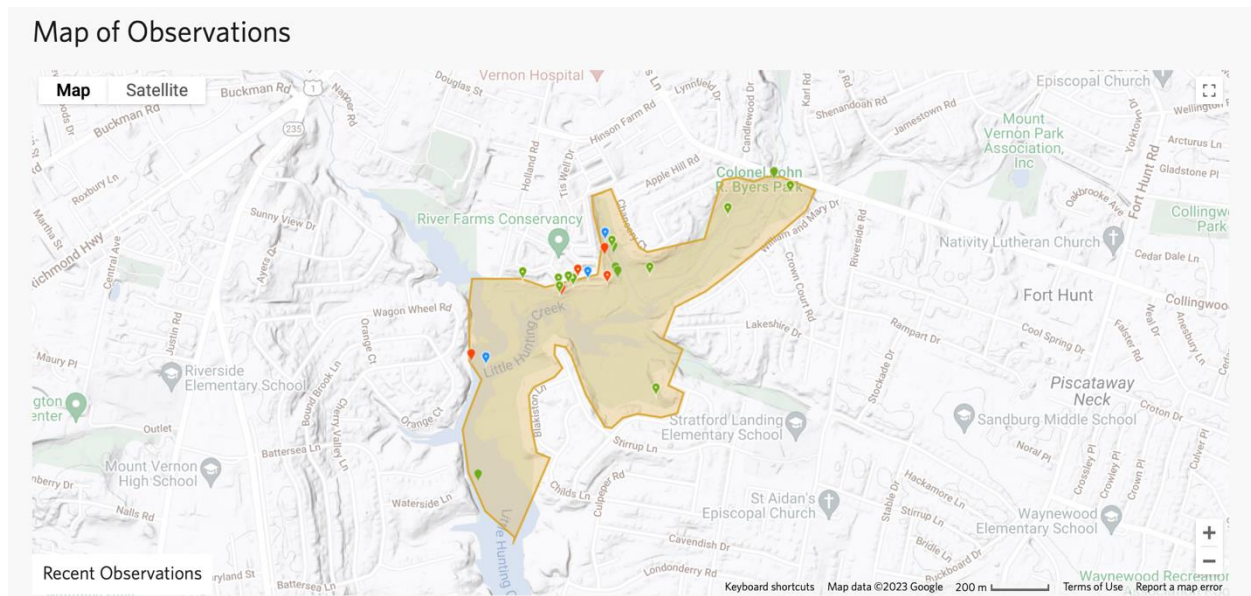
can then confirm, update or refine the identification. Over time, one can get a great idea of the organisms inhabiting a place. Consider our well-known jewel of a local park, Huntley Meadows. iNaturalist has a Project for Huntley Meadows Park. As you can see from the statistics below, more than 1,300 people have shared over 35,000 observations that have documented 2,435 species!

The screenshot shows the iNaturalist website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links: Explore, Your Observations, Community, Identify, and More. A green 'Upload' button is visible on the right. The main content area features a large image of a wetland with tall grasses and water. Below the image, there is a title 'Huntley Meadows Park, Alexandria, VA' and a statistics bar. The statistics bar shows: Overview, 35,509 OBSERVATIONS, 2,435 SPECIES, 3,305 IDENTIFIERS, 1,348 OBSERVERS, and a 'Stats' button. To the right of the image, there is an 'About' section with a 'Leave' button and a user count of 51. The 'About' text describes the park's features and wildlife. Below the 'About' section, there is a 'Project Journal' button.

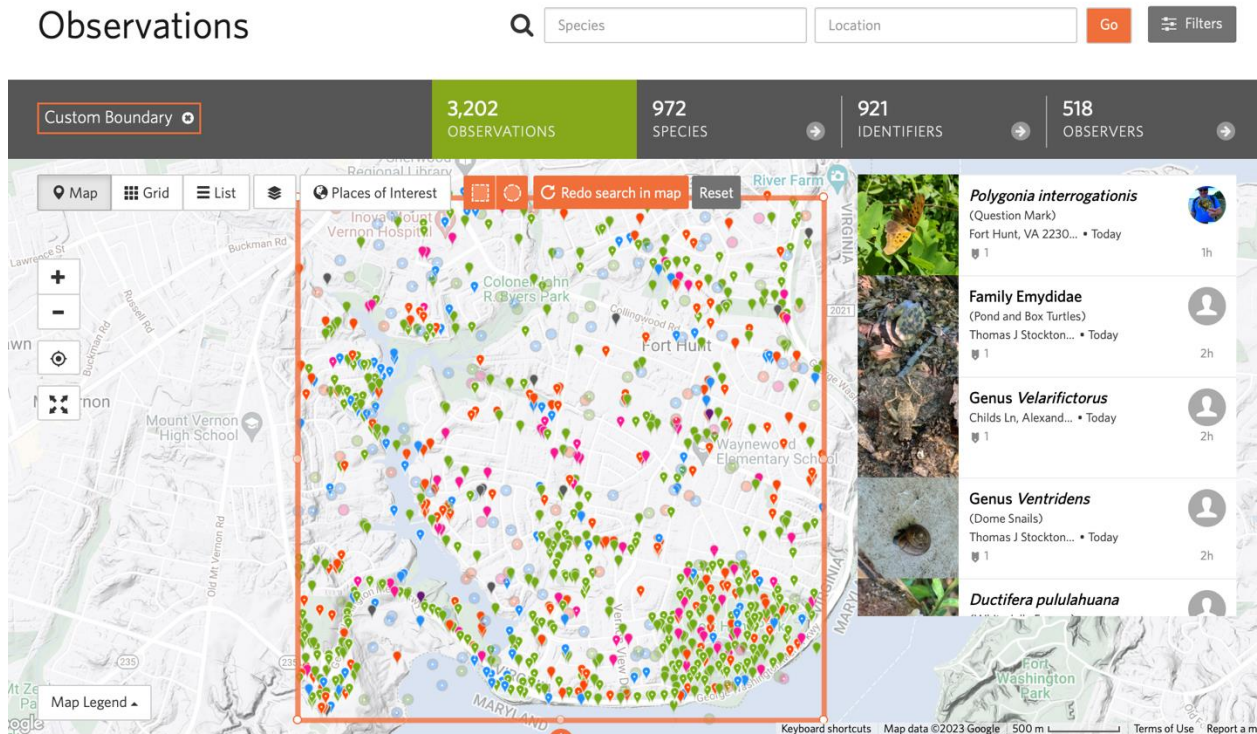
Through a project such as this one, peoples' contributions help paint a picture of the biodiversity of an area. The American bullfrog, great blue heron, snapping turtle and red-winged blackbird are the most observed species, not surprising if you have ever ambled along the Huntley Meadows board walk. But one can dig in to look at any group of interest. For instance, I love snakes and have learned that 10 different species have been observed in Huntley Meadows. Now I can try to find them all, with new knowledge on places to look and times of year when past observations have been made to help guide me in my quest.



But what about Little Hunting Creek and iNaturalist? Well, it turns out there is already a small project for Little Hunting Creek Park (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/little-hunting-creek-park-alexandria-va?tab=species>). But you can see from the map below that not many observations have been made in the region they have designated as Little Hunting Creek Park.







In fact, only 30 observations have been made in this area, representing just 27 species including beaver, several spiders and a number of plants. That said, one is able to draw any bounding box around an area, and iNaturalist will tabulate everything that has been seen in the area. Consider the map below, which more closely approximates the boundaries of the Little Hunting Creek watershed. That's more like it. Nearly 1000 species have been documented in our area. There must be many more species in our area, but just scrolling through the different species is inspiring, and for me awe inspiring. We live in a beautiful place, and share it with a lot of truly fascinating neighbors (from bald eagles to pawpaw trees).




If you can start sharing observations of organisms living in and around Little Hunting Creek, we'll get a better picture of the biological communities it supports. In addition, we are building a baseline of data, to which future observations can be compared. For example, we can track introduced species or responses to climate change. Moreover, all our pictures -- along with the identifications that the community provides -- help improve the algorithms that make automatic species identifications. And finally, the best part of using iNaturalist is that you start learning a lot more about the fascinating organisms around us, like this bicolored striped sweat bee that I found pollinating an evening primrose in my yard.

*Agapostemon virescens* (Bicolored Striped Sweat Bee) Research Grade Edit










**tesserazoa2**  
🌿 125 observations

← →

<b>Observed:</b>	<b>Submitted:</b>
Jun 16, 2021 · 8:50 AM EDT	Jun 16, 2021 · 10:30 AM EDT



Map data ©2023 Google 5 km Terms of Use Report a map error

📍 Waterford Rd, Alexandria, VA, US Details

☆ Be the first to fave this observation!

#### Extra Notes:

- I have no ties to iNaturalist. I just like it.
- iNaturalist works on your computers and tablets, as well as on cell phones. You can reach it at <https://www.inaturalist.org>.
- iNaturalist's companion App, Seek, gives real time identifications when one points a camera at an organism.

### Gum Springs Trail Project

*Benjamin Boxer (Public Information Officer, Fairfax County Park Authority)*

The Fairfax County Park Authority is in the process of designing a future Gum Springs Trail that will provide access to the water at the edge of Little Hunting Creek from the nearby Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. This will be a multi-year project given the requirement for both local and federal permitting review.

#### Where Are We Now?

The Park Authority is in the process of completing the wetlands and cultural resources studies required for the conceptual design of the project. These studies are essential to ensure the consideration and preservation of natural, cultural, and historical resources that exist in the area. This information is critical in designing a trail path that not only minimizes the impacts to the surrounding area, but for the consideration of interpretive signage to support the educational and outreach objectives of the Park Authority.

#### What Is Next?

Following the completion and evaluation of the wetlands and cultural resources studies, a conceptual design of the project will be developed and presented for community review prior to submission for local and federal permitting.

### Milestones in the Development Process

The following is intended as a very high-level guide to the general steps of the development process. Approximate timeframes are based on past experience and are not guaranteed. They may change due to a number of circumstances.

- Wetlands and Cultural Resource Studies (expected Summer 2023)
- Conceptual Design Development and Public Input (approximately 6 months)
- Obtaining Federal and Local Permits (approximately 12 – 18 months)
- Begin Construction

### Public Input

A project page on the Park Authority website will be developed once we have concepts to share with the community. Community input will be solicited during the milestones listed above. We anticipate opening the community discussion on a proposed conceptual design in fall 2023.

