

I'm Claudia Thompson-Deahl, Environmental Resource Manager for the Reston Association. Although this parcel is not owned by the Reston Association, many residents feel that it is one of RA's unique natural areas. In fact, we do several environmental maintenance tasks on the site and have worked closely with the long history of owners. We remove purple loosestrife, addle goose eggs and mow the meadows.

This site is a combination of several habitats. It is actually comprised of naturally occurring wetlands, created wetlands, a restored farm pond, and uplands buffers. The created wetlands area is about 3.3 acres out of 15.75 acres in total. There is no where in Reston quite like it. It is by far our largest and best wetland. It is a favorite spot for environmental education, birds and birders, wildlife and nature enthusiast, dog walkers and office workers looking for a quiet spot to take a lunch time walk.

We are well aware that the created wetland was constructed to mitigate for other impacts made to existing wetlands during development of the Reston community. This was not done because someone thought it would be the right thing to do but because a concern resident called the Army Corp of Engineers and they were forced to mitigate for the losses. Although we know a portion of the wetland was created, the Blue Heron, Eastern Towhee, Hooded Warbler, turtles, frogs or Swamp Sparrow doesn't know this and call this site home.

This special place is continually used for programs of all ages. It is used by Reston Association's summer and science camp programs, our hug-a-tree program, family and adult programs such as Marsh madness and twilight walks and was a field trip destination for many years for a wetland study program for the students at Sunrise Valley Elementary school. It is the only boardwalk where you can stand and watch nature all around you.

Remarks by Bill Brown
302 Missouri Avenue
Herndon
February 27, 2010

Good morning. My name is Bill Brown and I live in Herndon. I am here to speak about one of the true delights of Reston: the Sunrise Valley Wetlands Park. I urge planners to preserve and protect the natural character of this lovely place.

The park, which lies just ^{west}~~east~~ of the Monroe Park and Ride, serves a variety of needs of the local community, from simple relaxation to organized education. A growing population will only make those needs grow and increase the park's value as a natural resource.

I often go to the park to walk my dog and unwind at the same time. Sassy sniffs for rabbits and shrews, while I enjoy listening to Red-winged Blackbirds sing. Half an hour there leaves us both refreshed. We are not alone in that feeling. Cubicle residents from nearby office buildings eat lunch on the park benches and stroll the paths, enjoying the fresh air and a reinvigorating connection with nature. Other folks come to photograph or even paint the park's natural beauty. Some come just to walk hand-in-hand with a loved one.

The park also serves as a natural classroom. I often see parents pointing out to delighted children the frogs sitting on a lily pad, painted turtles basking on a log, or a Great Blue Heron fishing on the bank of the pond. With a bit of luck, a child might see his first fox or snapping turtle there. Reston's Environmental Education staff brings school groups to the park for nature study programs. Reston's Summer Camp program regularly uses the park as well. On the other end of the age spectrum, GMU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute uses Sunrise Valley Park for programs for seniors from all over the county. The close-up observation of nature provides a memorable learning experience that no textbook or website can match.

At a time when children, and even some adults, are suffering from Nature Deficit Disorder, Sunrise Valley Wetlands provides Reston with an increasingly rare opportunity for local contact with nature. I hope that Reston will choose to maintain this small but valuable natural resource for the good of its citizens.

My name is Carol Hadlock. I live in Herndon. I would like to speak to you about Sunrise Valley Wetland. You have already received, and I hope you have read, a brief history of the site, its construction as a wetland mitigation project in August, 1994, its several changes in ownership, and the continuing issue of responsibility for its maintenance. While all of this is important from a historical and legal standpoint, it doesn't matter very much to the birds and other wildlife who live there and the people who visit, as long as the wetland itself remains.

I am a member of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, and happily admit to being a birdwatcher. I lead birdwalks for that organization and for the EAC Committee of RA. Sunrise Valley Wetland is a regular stop on our circuit of monthly birdwalks in Reston. As one of the requirements for earning a Master Naturalist Certificate from ASNV, in 1999 I undertook a study of the wetland's birdlife with the goal of compiling a checklist of the birds to be found there. In 4½ years of nearly weekly visits, I noted 122 different species. Of those, 33 species had nested there at some time during my visits. 18 species were warblers that dropped in during migration to rest and feed. Seven years later, the number of nesting species has dropped to 23, primarily because of development nearby. Even so, these numbers are impressive for such a small piece of land. Further development around the site will likely mean more loss of species. *This loss can be softened by leaving the wetland intact.*

Aside from the importance of Sunrise Valley Wetland to the wildlife, I'd like to make a case for the importance of the site to humans. There are many people who like to walk around the wetland, with or without their dogs; there are those who come on their lunch hour just to get away from the pressures of their jobs and the stuffy air of an office; there are those who come to photograph the wildlife; and those, like me, who just like to look at birds.

At the meeting Tuesday night, John Carter gave a detailed presentation on the planning and development of areas around Metro stations in Montgomery County. He stated several times that *creating* open spaces is a required component of the planning and development process. He showed photos of several public open spaces that had been *created*. Notice, I emphasized the word *create*. But think about this—What if, instead of standing in a concrete plaza gazing at a fountain encased in concrete, you could stand on a bridge over a lily pond and watch dragonflies darting back and forth and gaze at a Green Heron perched perfectly still, watching for his next meal to swim by? At Sunrise Valley Wetland you can do that. The lilies, the dragonflies, the heron are all there. The bridge is there—it doesn't have to be created. What if, instead of sitting on a concrete bench watching pigeons fight over the remains of someone's French fries, you could stand on a wooded path and watch Towhees scuffling in the leaf litter for beetles and spiders, and Catbirds, Cardinals, and Brown Thrashers feasting on blackberries and mulberries? At Sunrise Valley Wetland, you can do that. The blackberries and mulberries, maples and oaks are already there. They don't have to be planted, watered, cared for until they get big enough to produce shade and food.

I know high density development is the name of the game for these metro stations, but I firmly believe the more people you cram into less space, the more necessary green spaces become. More than ever, we will need places where we can get away, clear our heads, listen to nature. More than ever we will need Sunrise Valley Wetland. I would like to see it preserved as it is—for the birds and the humans.

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