

RESOURCES

NATURE, HISTORY AND HORTICULTURE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY
 An IABC Silver Inkwell and AMPC MarCom Award and Hermes Creative Award-winning publication

VOLUME 8, NO. 1 WINTER 2008



SPYING UNDER COVER

The tool is highly sophisticated, angled and weight-balanced just right, so that the snake cover board can be flipped over quickly and with precise control. It's a golf club shaft.

The board's not as sophisticated. It's a piece of plywood. Together, they're used to attract snakes, for education during school field trips and to answer the question, "How many snakes are out there?"

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park (ECLP) has about 20 snake cover boards. Tony Bulmer is a naturalist, historian and senior interpreter there, and he says the key to a successful board is location. Morning sun is the prime consideration, so the boards need to face east. They're placed in areas that don't get full sun so temperatures don't get too hot under the boards. It's important to use natural colors. Black would get too hot. Terrain is another consideration. Bulmer says there are snake species that like meadows and others that like forest, and he says "if you gave me one board, I would pick an edge where both habitats meet." Size matters. The bigger the board, the bigger the snake that can use it to hide, to shed skin, to lay eggs or to sun.

SNAKE BOARDS need about six months in the field to become effective. First, the vegetation under them has to die. When that happens, insects appear. Mammals, like mice, show up under the boards next. Reptiles follow.

The ECLP boards, which vary in size but are generally four-sided and about three feet long on each side, provide a range of population and environmental information. "The most important thing

is you're learning what's out there," says Bulmer, who adds, "It gives you a chance to catch the specialist." By that he means something like a queen snake, a threatened species in Fairfax County. They eat only freshly molted crayfish, and crayfish are dying off because of silt. A queen snake under a board sends a message that the snakes are there, the creek's okay and the crayfish are okay. Discovering a corn snake, which may have disappeared from the county, would "send out the message that the whole area's good" for them and they could return. Finding a black racer curled up around its eggs says "the black racer population's pretty good." Bulmer says a board "tips you off on the environmental indicator species" like queen snakes, salamanders and rough green snakes.

THE FIELD TRIPS he guides to the boards help teach people about native snakes and their importance, and Bulmer says the boards are excellent teaching tools. "Schools now are using them for insects and anything they can find, like worms." He says teachers tell him "it was the easiest thing. The kids love checking them out." He adds, "They're a great teaching tool for anybody." *continued on page 8*



Tony Bulmer flips a snake board at ECLP.

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WINTER EVENTS

NATURE CENTERS AND HISTORIC SITES

BURKE LAKE PARK

7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station
Call 703-323-6600

COLVIN RUN MILL

10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls
Call 703-759-2771

ELLANOR C. LAWRENCE PARK

5040 Walney Road, Chantilly
Call 703-631-0013

FRYING PAN PARK

2709 West Ox Road, Herndon
Call 703-437-9101

GREEN SPRING GARDENS

4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria
Call 703-642-5173

HIDDEN OAKS NATURE CENTER

7701 Royce Street, Annandale
Call 703-941-1065

HIDDEN POND NATURE CENTER

8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield
Call 703-451-9588

HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK

3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria
Call 703-768-2525

LAKE ACCOTINK PARK

7500 Accotink Park Rd., Springfield
Call 703-569-3464

LAKE FAIRFAX PARK

1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston
Call 703-471-5414

RIVERBEND PARK

8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls
Call 703-759-9018

SULLY HISTORIC SITE

3601 Sully Road, Chantilly
Call 703-437-1794

HISTORIC PROPERTIES RENTAL SERVICES

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/weddings.htm
Call 703-827-0609

Need directions or more information?

VISIT www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks

SULLY WOODLANDS 703-817-9407
(Cub Run RECenter)

Meteor Shower and Sky Watching

Friday, December 14 (All ages), 7-8pm.

Coincides with the peak of the Geminid meteor shower. Learn about the night sky. Dress warmly. Bring a lawn chair, blanket and flashlight. Canceled if rain. Reservations required. \$4/child, \$2/adult

SULLY HISTORIC SITE 703-437-1794

Holiday Concerts

Thursday, December 27, 1, 2 or 3pm. IONA.

One of the top rated pan-Celtic groups in the world. House tour included. Prepaid reservations required. \$10/seat

Friday, December 28, 2 or 3pm.

RICHMOND GUITAR QUARTET.

Four guitars, four individuals, one unique new sound. House tour included. Prepaid reservations required. \$10/seat

RIVERBEND 703-759-9018

Holiday Ornaments: Make Your Own

Through December 31 (All ages)

Teasels, pine cones and walnuts make cool holiday ornaments. Bring your imagination. Reservations recommended for groups. \$5 for two ornaments.

Open House and Fireside Stories

Fridays, January 18, February 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (6 yrs. and under plus adult), 10:30am-noon.

Gather 'round the fireplace while the naturalist tells a story. Play time, exploration, exhibit animals, hot drinks and cookies. Reservations and advanced payment required. \$6/child, \$2/adult

Night Sky Festival

Saturday, February 9
(All ages) 6:30-8:30pm.

Guided star gazing. Look through a telescope; listen to ancient stories about the constellations around the campfire. Canceled if rain or snow. \$5/person

Animal Valentines

Thursday, February 14 (3-6 yrs.),
10:30-11:30am or 2-3pm.

Celebrate the holiday. Learn how local animals find a valentine. Reservations and advanced payment required. \$7

COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE

..... 703-759-2771

Maple Syrup Boil-down

Sundays, February 10, 17 and March 2.

Celebrate spring with an old-fashioned maple syrup boil-down. See sap collected from trees. Taste maple syrup on fresh baked cornbread. Free

HIDDEN OAKS NATURE CENTER

..... 703-941-1065

It's a Wrap! Children's Holiday

Nature Craft Extravaganza

Sunday, Dec. 16 (5-10 yrs.), 3-4:30pm.

Make gifts, cards, wrapping paper and decorations. Reservations and advanced payment required. \$10/child

Naturalist Corner

Friday, Saturday, Jan. 25 and 26

(3-12 yr. with adult), 1-4pm.

Budding artists and naturalists can explore over a dozen learning and craft stations. Make crafts to take home. Reservations required. \$4/child

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

Sunday, Jan. 27 (Families with children ages 5 yr. and up), 1-2:30pm.

Sip tea, enjoy bread and butterfly sandwiches at the strangest of tea parties. Discover fun facts about Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Reservations and advanced payment required.

GREEN SPRING GARDENS

..... 703-642-5173

Winter Lecture Series

Sundays during January, February and March, 1:30-3pm. Limited seating. Please call ahead to register. \$10

January 13, A Garden Odyssey — In Search of the World's Most Creative Gardens

January 20, Survival in the National Garden

January 27, Invasive Plants: Identification, Impacts and Control of Common North American Species

February 3, Teaming With Microbes

February 10, Designing School Gardens K-12: A Whole New Ball Game for Children's Gardens!

February 17, The Natural History of Tree Branches and the Unnatural History of Tree Pruning

February 24, Hardy Terrestrial Orchids: The Best Kept Secret in the Gardening World


RESOURCES

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and Fairfax County libraries.

Visit **ResOURces** online at
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources

 **ResOURces** is printed on recycled paper.

Partnering to Preserve and Protect our Past

By Nancy Russo, Fairfax County Park Foundation

1861. THE CIVIL WAR.

The nation's capital needed protection.

When the war started, there was only one fort guarding Washington — Fort Washington, 12 miles down the Potomac River. The National Park Service says by 1865, Washington was “the most heavily fortified city in the world” with 68 forts and 93 batteries surrounding it.

Fairfax County's Fort Willard, built of soil and rocks by the Union Army in 1862, was one of those guardians. It was heavily armed with artillery inside its 240-yard perimeter, and the regiments garrisoned there came from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Wisconsin.

Its secluded location within a quiet Alexandria neighborhood has served to preserve and protect the historic earthworks.

It took a county resident, his family, a homeowners' association and the Park Authority to preserve the site with all its history. “My father and I realized many years ago that Fort Willard must be protected as a historic site,” said Gene Olmi, regarding the need to preserve and interpret the fort.

Gene Olmi and Eugene J. Olmi, Sr. had developed the surrounding residential area of Belle Haven in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The Olmi family deeded the 1.6 acre Fort Willard site to the Fairfax County government in 1978, and Gene Olmi continues to generously support the renovation of Fort Willard today. The Belle Haven Citizen's Association is contributing to the beautification of the site's outer circle with a trail, benches and landscaping, making it an attractive neighborhood space, as well as a historic point of interest.

The Park Authority's archaeological team has initiated a site survey and will develop a fortifications treatment plan for interpreting the site for the public. That plan will direct the Park Authority's care of the earthen fort, which included nine openings for firing cannons, a munitions storage area, a moat and a sentry gate area.

Other remnants of Civil War forts that ringed Washington are at Fort Marcy (National Park Service), Fort Myer (U.S. Army), and Fort Ward (City of Alexandria).



Gene Olmi, in red hat, at the Fort Willard site.

Support our historic sites, nature centers and recreation programs.

For information:

Call 703-324-8581 or email Robert.Brennan@fairfaxcounty.gov

To donate online: www.fxparcs.org

To donate by mail:

Fairfax County Park Foundation
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 404
Fairfax, VA 22035

The Fairfax County Park Foundation is a 501©3 nonprofit organization and all contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The National Park Service has more about Washington's Civil War defenses online at www.nps.gov/archive/rocr/ftcircle/.

The Fort Willard Master Plan can be accessed at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gmp/ftwillardgmp.pdf.

Light Pollution

By Carol Ochs, Park Authority Volunteer

Enjoy some of Fairfax County's darkest skies at Turner Farm and through stargazing programs at Riverbend Park and Sully Woodlands, many of which are scheduled during peak meteor times.



Using Light in a Sundial Garden

The first sundial is in place. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Park Authority and the Analemma Society have dedicated a new sundial in Observatory Park at The Turner Farm. It's one of the first components of a planned astronomy-themed park in Great Falls.

The sundial was designed, built and donated by award-winning British craftsman Tony Moss to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding Jamestown settlement. It's the first of a planned collection of sundials from around the world to be displayed in the International Sundial Garden.

Observatory Park at The Turner Farm is at 925 Springvale Road in Great Falls, VA. Online, see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turnerfarm/

"**S**TARRY, STARRY NIGHTS" have inspired artists, musicians, lovers and mystics for centuries, but stargazers are becoming an endangered species. Light pollution is making it hard to find a star to wish upon.

It's estimated that only about 30% of Americans can see the Milky Way from their back yards. While certainly an aesthetic loss for people, it can be a critical loss for animals.

"If we can't see the stars, neither can the birds," says Tammy Schwab, naturalist, historian and senior interpreter at Cub Run RECenter. "Birds migrate at night a lot and they use stars to navigate." Too much artificial light shining into the sky can disorient birds, and Schwab says "birds are actually crashing into the lights."

Schwab points out that other animals, such as mice, need darkness to help them avoid predators. Too much light can also affect animal sleeping patterns. In one documented case, there was a decrease in frog calling at a pond flooded with light from a nearby football field. Why does that matter? Frog calling is part of the breeding process.

Plants need darkness, too. Schwab explains that during the day plants use light and the

process of photosynthesis to make necessary sugar. They need darkness at night to perform other processes.

To put it in human terms, Schwab says "imagine if your house was next to a motel with a flashing neon sign or if it was out in the country." Consider the difference in lighting inside your house and how that would affect your life and sleeping pattern.

Look around your house and workplace. Lights should be shielded and pointed downward so the light goes where it's needed and isn't wasted in the sky or squandered on nearby property. Schwab says light is like fertilizer. A little can improve the looks of your yard, but too much can run off into streams and cause pollution. Homeowners and businesses have financial incentive to do their part. Excess light wastes energy and costs money.

Ironically, Schwab says there is one positive effect of light pollution for stargazers. It can actually be easier to find constellations in lighter skies because the stars that make up the constellations tend to be the brightest in the sky. In true dark sky territory, there are so many stars that constellations can be harder to distinguish.

Fairfax County Puts Light on the Problem

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved an Outdoor Lighting Standards program in 2003 (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoningordinance/articles/art14.pdf), and the Virginia Outdoor Lighting Taskforce (VOLT) hails it as "one of the most comprehensive ordinances in the nation."

For individuals, VOLT (www.volt.org) recommends these energy saving techniques:

- ★ Turn off lights when they're not absolutely necessary.
- ★ Reduce wattages and don't overlight by shining light into the atmosphere.
- ★ Use efficient fixtures, such as high and low pressure sodium and metal halide.
- ★ Make use of timers and motion sensors.



Light pollution across the globe.

Photo courtesy of NASA

NASA has information about light pollution online at:
http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2001/asto1nov_1.htm.

RMD HONORS VOLUNTEERS

Park sites thrive because of volunteers!



Huntley Meadows
Park Volunteer
Kathi McNeil



Colvin Run Mill
Volunteer
Barbara Raymond



Something New Out of Something Old

The Resource Management Division has awarded three stewards of our resources the 2007 Volunteer Excellence Award for their contributions to the interpretation and stewardship of the county's natural and cultural resources.

Kathi McNeil, Alexandria, Huntley Meadows Park. Kathi's active in interpretive services, educational programs and resource management activities and has been for nine years.

Carol Porter, Arlington, Hidden Oaks Nature Center. Carol organizes the front desk and sales area, provides exhibit upkeep, tidies the children's area, tracks volunteer and program data, and makes suggestions for improved service and safety.

Barbara Raymond, Vienna, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. Barbara's gardening has filled the site with color, fragrance, texture and education for the past eight years.

Delight in a piece of the county you haven't seen in your lifetime — new parkland on the former Lorton correctional facility land that hasn't been accessible to the public for over 100 years. Another 153 recreational acres within the 1,200-acre Laurel Hill Park were officially opened on October 20.

Central Green and Giles Run Meadow encompass pedestrian and mountain biking trails, improvements to the Laurel Hill Greenway/Cross County Trail, picnic areas, a small play area, a trail running along a pond, historic objects and interpretive signs.

While you're there, drop by the Laurel Hill golf course clubhouse for a bite to eat. (Try the excellent crab sandwich.)

Directions: Take I-95 S to exit 163 toward Lorton. Turn Right at Lorton Road. Go a half-mile to 8400 Lorton Rd. Follow the road up the hill to the parking lot on the left.

A Memory Planted at Mount Air

*A tree is growing in memory of
Mrs. Catherine H. Thorsen.*

Mrs. Thorsen was a spirited proponent who championed the creating of Mount Air Cultural Park. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Park Authority Board recognized her contributions when the tree was planted and a plaque unveiled October 20.

Learn about the former plantation at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/archives/mountair.htm

**More volunteers recently were honored for long-time service to our parks.
These individuals have combined to contribute 335 years of service!**

25 years of service:

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site
Nick Yannarell, Springfield

Cultural Resource
Management & Protection
Jackie Cuyler, Ammissville

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park
Gwen McIntyre, Fairfax

20 years of service:

Sully Historic Site
Pat Bennis, Vienna
Charlene Carey, Vienna

10 years of service:

Cultural Resource
Management and Protection
Pat Fuller, Falls Church

Philip Gloss, Woodbridge
Joel Langert, Arlington
Chet Liddle, Alexandria

George Monken, Bristow
Vicki Monken, Bristow
Howard Reblitz, Vienna

Jim Reid, Reston
Dave Shonyo, Dumfries
Leigh Watlington, Falls Church

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park
Frances White, Fairfax

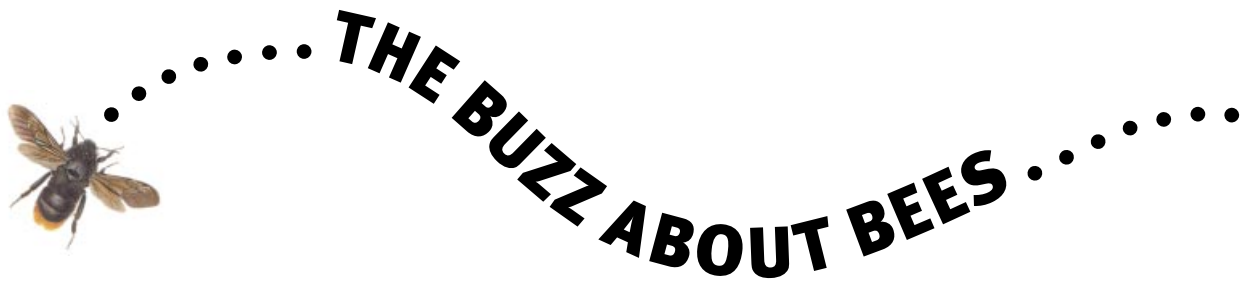
Green Spring Gardens
Eileen Curtis, Alexandria
Anne Gill, Annandale

Amjad Gill, Annandale
Margaret Shutler, Annandale
Johanna Zinn, Fairfax

Natural Resource Management
and Protection
John Dodge, Annandale

Sully Historic Site
Michelle Beatty, Chantilly
Shirley Boning, Herndon
Dottie O'Rourke, Herndon
Allen Taylor, Burke
Mary Lou Ziller, Ashburn

Resource Management Division volunteers provided more than 52,392 hours of service last year valued at nearly \$1 million. For information about volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-8750 or see our website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/volunteer.htm>.



THE BUZZ ABOUT BEES

We're in the strange position of needing more of something that wasn't originally here.
WE NEED MORE HONEYBEES.



Beekeeper Dane Hannum checking honeybee hives.



By David Ochs, *ResOURCES* Editor

We've disrupted their habitat, they're plagued by Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and their numbers are dropping, as are the populations of native pollinators. Park Authority naturalist Charles Smith says, "Wild hives of Eurasian honeybees are rare these days."

Honeybees are not native to the United States. They were brought here by Europeans to pollinate crops that were introduced to the New World. Records show hives arriving at Jamestown around 1623.

Dane Hannum, the man Fairfax County Park Authority officials rely on when bees are the issue, says pollination is a \$14 billion business in this country. He points out that California needs almost two million hives, with 50,000 to 75,000 bees ideally in a hive, to pollinate the almond crop. He says that without pollinators "there would be no apples, no cucumbers, watermelon, or cantaloupe. They all require insect pollination. Bees are key to all of them."

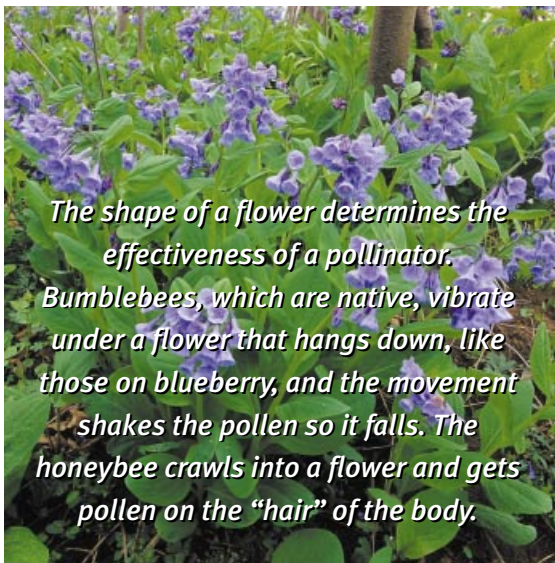
"The honeybee is tied to so much of our food supply that without it I don't know that farming as we know it would exist," Hannum says.

Parasitic mites, a small beetle from South Africa and CCD are all trouble for bees. Hannum says CCD affects primarily commercial beekeepers, and some have lost 80% of their hives. Researchers think CCD may be connected to a virus called Israeli acute paralysis. (www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2007/070906.htm)

Drought also impacts bees and beekeepers. "We're farmers. We just don't put it in the ground, but we depend upon what's in the ground," says Hannum. "If the plants produce no bloom, then there's no nectar out there for the bees to collect."

Habitat also is critical for bee survival. In Hannum's words, "Concrete doesn't raise any plants with flowers on it."

DANE HANNUM has been a volunteer at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park since 1990 and has been a beekeeper for 22 years. He's a past president of the Virginia Beekeepers' Association and has served on the National Honey Board. In 2004, he received the ECLP Donald F. Early Award for Volunteer Achievement. Hannum trained under Early for four years when he started beekeeping.



What You Can Do

Dane Hannum's suggestions for helping bees: Grow perennials. "Most annuals have been hybridized to the point that they are of very little use to the insects." They have showy blooms, but "most of them are nearly sterile." Seek out native trees and plants. And, avoid pesticides.

LEARN MORE about beekeeping from the Beekeepers Association of Northern Virginia: www.beekeepersnova.org/. Colvin Run Mill Historic Site and Ellanor C. Lawrence Park host honey harvesting programs in the fall.

The Take on Turtles

By Lori K. Weinraub, Park Authority Volunteer

THEY LOOK LIKE LITTLE TANKS.

Orange and black on the back. Or maybe yellow and brown on their high-domed shells. If you've ever seen a turtle in your backyard or come across one trying to cross a road, it's likely you were looking at an eastern box turtle.

Even the busiest among us will take a moment to admire them or wait to let them cross a street safely. Children love to touch them.

Box turtle numbers are dwindling in Fairfax County — indeed throughout Virginia. Long before people settled the Old Dominion, the box turtle feasted in abundant eastern woodland forests. Arlington County Natural Resource Specialist Greg Zell says Virginia's forests always provided the habitat turtles needed to survive, but our urban way of life is changing that. Where forests once provided the berries, worms, slugs and other insects that turtles eat, buildings, parking lots and cleared areas have devastated the box turtle's natural habitat. The turtles have had to move, and they're not good at that.

Naturalists say that female turtles need good habitat about the size of a football field to live successfully. Moving them is risky, because box turtles are creatures of habit with a tendency to try to find their way home no matter where you put them, and it doesn't help that turtles are not very mobile. As they search for new feeding grounds, they risk getting crushed by cars or run over by lawn mowers.

Zell, who once worked at Huntley Meadows Park, says turtles are a good example of wild creatures increasingly at risk because of urban development.

Naturalists at Hidden Pond Nature Center in Springfield agree. Several display cases in the center are devoted to turtles, much to the delight of the many children who visit the center and can get up close



Box turtle in the grass.

"When we treat nature kindly, we're nicer people."

and personal with the creatures or enjoy them in the park.

"What's not to like about a turtle?" asks Jim Pomeroy, manager of Hidden Pond. Pomeroy says turtles serve as a good representative of problems the wild kingdom experiences because of development. "They have our sympathy because we like them."

Hidden Pond Assistant Manager Mike McCaffrey says the turtles don't have anyone to lobby for them, so naturalists have to do it. "If we care about them, we care about ourselves," McCaffrey says.

Zell agrees. "People feel better when they have nature around. When we treat nature kindly, we're nicer people."

If we see a turtle and there's nice habitat nearby, we should leave it alone.

Hidden Pond's McCaffrey says, "Private citizens can do much to help preserve box turtle habitat by getting involved in the public hearing process when it comes to the possible development of natural areas."

Developers can be good stewards

The Wildlife Rescue League has organized "rescues" of turtles and other creatures before development of an area begins. Volunteer Grace Holden speaks admirably of the Donohoe Companies, which allowed rescuers on site before beginning construction of a hotel in Arlington. Donohoe President Peter Gartlan says it's important that his company be a good neighbor.

Turtle experts know that it's unrealistic to stop development, but they agree that leaving sufficient habitat within a development can help, as can rescues. Says Zell, "the world without box turtles would be a sad place."

OUR PARKS AND STAFF ARE AWARD WINNERS

The Fairfax County Park Authority has won three **BEST OF THE BEST** in 2006 Awards from the Virginia Recreation & Park Society.

- ★ **BEST NEW FACILITY** (Population Greater than 150,000)
Clemyjontri Park (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/clemyjontri/)
- ★ **BEST PROMOTIONAL EFFORT SPECIALTY**
Stewardship Campaign (Meghan Fellows, Joanne Kearney and Don Sweeney)
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/stewardshipbrochures.htm
- ★ **BEST NEW PROGRAM** (Population Greater than 150,000)
Community Connections (Wangin Bang, Ricardo Cabellos and John Berlin)

Community Connections, a comprehensive outreach and education program which is increasing diversity in park programs, has also received an Achievement Award from the Virginia Association of Counties.

Riverbend Park has been named the Park Authority's Site of the Year for the innovation, expansion, teamwork, stewardship and commitment to community and quality of its staff and services.

ResOURces has won a Silver Inkwell Merit Award from the DC Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators for high quality work in business communication. And it has earned Association of Marketing & Communication Professionals MarCom Platinum Awards for Photography and in the category of External Newsletter/Government.

2008 ANNIVERSARIES

10 Years Ago

Camp Early at Union Mills joined the National Historic Register.

15 Years Ago

Frying Pan Farm Park's 4-H Club was re-established.

Friends of Green Spring was founded.

30 Years Ago

County archaeology started October 7, 1978.

Dranesville Tavern, built in 1823, was dedicated.

35 Years Ago

The Park Authority acquired Hidden Pond.

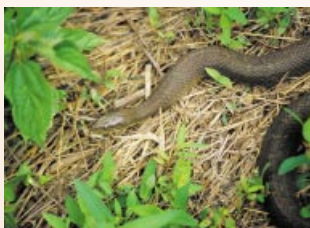
40 Years Ago

Hidden Oaks became a park.

SPYING UNDER COVER *continued from page 1*

A list of species that Bulmer has found under snake boards at ECLP:

- Northern water snake
- Smooth earth snake
- Northern brown snake
- Eastern garter snake
- Northern ring snake
- Rough green snake
- Northern black racer
- Black rat snake
- Mole King snake
- Northern five-lined skink
- American toad
- Spotted salamander
- Red-backed salamander
- Two-lined salamander
- Meadow vole
- Short-tailed shrew
- Mole
- White-footed mouse
- Deer mouse



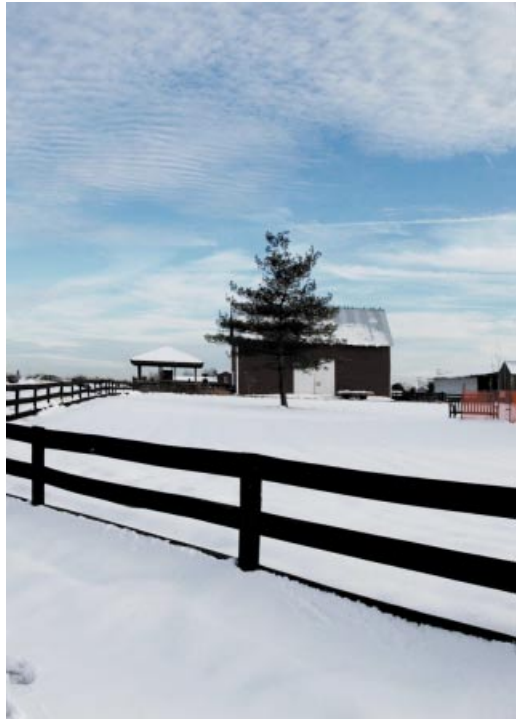
A snake board in a field at ECLP.

IF YOU COME ACROSS A PLYWOOD BOARD LYING OFF THE BEATEN PATH, PLEASE LEAVE IT ALONE. It's research at work.

The boards must remain in place to be effective, and there's a proper technique for flipping them for safety. Improper flipping may leave you face-to-face with a copperhead. Remember, the taking, killing or harassing of park animals is against the law. Ellanor C. Lawrence, Riverbend and Burke Lake parks are among the Fairfax County sites that have snake boards.

Winter in the Parks

Winter in Fairfax County parks can be full of wonderful sights. Here are a few of them. Take in a few of them yourself this winter.



Slip Sliding Away in the Parks

Fairfax County parks are winter wonderlands. Slip on boots, a sweater and a coat and head for a trail or a hill. Most park hiking trails become excellent cross-country ski trails during winter snows.

Here are some of the best Park Authority places for cross-country skiing:

(See page 2 for some addresses and phone numbers. Find others online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/).

Cross-County Trail: Pick a spot anywhere along the 40-mile trail that runs across the county. Start your search here: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/cct/.

Huntley Meadows Park: Huntley Meadows, the county's second-largest park, has 1,428 acres of suburban wilderness for spotting



white-tailed deer, beaver and fox. A variety of trails on gentle terrain. For safety reasons, avoid the boardwalk. Trail information and wild-life sighting information available at the Visitor Center.

Riverbend Park: Views of the sometimes frozen Potomac River, wintering geese feeding and in flight, silent woodlands and animal tracks in the snow. A brochure, available at the Nature Center, describes the trails, which range in skill level from beginners to advanced. Lots of scenic beauty on trails up to one and three-quarter miles long.

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park: The several miles of Rock Run Stream Valley Trail connect to ECLP. Experienced users might like the woodland trail.

Accotink Stream Valley Trail. Nearly two and a-half miles along Accotink Creek. Flat, wide and excellent for beginners.

Burke Lake Park: The six-mile trail around the lake has gently rolling terrain and views of the 890-acre lake and wintering waterfowl. No skiing on the golf course.

Lake Fairfax Park: 476 acres with a variety of views and terrain. Woodlands, open meadows, steep and gentle hills. Suitable for all levels of skiers.

Mason District Park: A self-guided nature trail. A stream meadow, pond and woodlands are part of the hilly quarter-mile loop.

Wakefield-Accotink Trail: Two miles of wide, level trail at Wakefield Park. A hilly, one-mile trail at Lake Accotink through woods and along the lake.



SLEDDING HILLS:

Lake Fairfax Park: On the hill behind the picnic area restrooms.

Mason District Park: On the hill at the end of Meadow Trail.

Jefferson Manor Park: The hill running from the shelter building toward Telegraph Road.

Cardinal Forest Park: Along the easement between Carleigh Parkway and Roxbury Avenue.

Greenway Heights Park: Through stream valley property.

Westgate Park: Behind the second ball field.

What's RMD?

RMD stands for Resource Management Division. It's part of the Fairfax County Park Authority. RMD connects people to natural, historic and horticultural resources. We're online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/.

For Skiing or Sledding

You need your own equipment, and please be safe. Trails aren't groomed, and we can't promise snow. And no skiing on the golf courses, of course.

Planting a Kiss

By Leah Abuza, Park Authority Intern

She said her boyfriend reminded her of a parasite. It was a compliment.

She was thinking about mistletoe, a Fairfax County native that provides valuable habitat and may help to cure cancer.

Mistletoe has been revered and linked to life and fertility, has been considered an aphrodisiac, and was a central part of the Druid religion. Darwin used it for his theories for adaptation. The berries, a good source of food for birds, are poisonous to people, although the plant's been used since ancient times to treat ailments and, recently, the extract has been shown in labs to kill cancer cells and boost immune systems (<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/cam/mistletoe>).

Technically, Oklahoma's state flower is a hemiparasite. It obtains its water and nutrients directly from a host, like a tree, however it does still photosynthesize. Mistletoe doesn't harm its host tree enough to do severe damage and actually helps some forest residents by producing high quality fruit and nectar. It relies on animals for pollination and dispersal



Photo courtesy National Institutes of Health

Some researchers consider mistletoe a keystone species, which means the whole ecosystem suffers if it is removed. Like the top "keystone" in an arch, if the keystone's removed, all the other stones crumble.

of seeds, and birds play a key role. Inside the white berries are seeds covered in a sticky substance called viscin. Birds eat the berries, then either pass the seeds or wipe the sticky

viscin off their beak onto a branch. The seed sticks and germinates in spring.

The kissing tradition may have evolved from the belief that mistletoe was an aphrodisiac, from the Druid belief that it ensured fertility, or from a Scandinavian tradition of enemies laying down arms and observing a truce when they met under it. Our holiday use of mistletoe may come from the Druid practice of using branches of mistletoe to announce the coming of a new year. The kissing custom is observed in some European countries and Canada as well as the United States.

So this winter, observe some holiday tradition and learn from the girl who's thinking about her boyfriend. She knows that all parasites aren't bad.

*There's a lot of mistletoe worldwide — over 1300 species inhabiting every continent except Antarctica. The variety in Fairfax County is American mistletoe (*Phoradendron serotinum*), but it's relatively scarce here. Removing it, or any plant, from a park is prohibited.*

Something useful and good to mark on your calendar!

"All Manner of Useful Goods: Craftsmanship in Early America, 1750-1850"

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2008

A day-long symposium at George Mason University examining the history of crafts and craftsmanship in America from 1750-1850. For information, call Museum Collections at 703-631-1429 or email susan.clark@fairfaxcounty.gov.

DO YOU BURN FIREWOOD?

Help us keep something in it out of the county.

Fairfax County trees don't show signs of the Emerald Ash Borer. It's an Asian insect, accidentally introduced, that has killed millions of trees in the Midwest. It can spread through the movement of firewood.

Be stewardship conscious. Remember this winter to use local sources of firewood, and don't transport wood from your home to a campsite or anywhere else.

Keep in mind that collecting firewood from park land is prohibited. We leave dead wood in the parks to provide habitat for animals.

There's more information at

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/eab_general.htm and www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/stewardshipbrochures.htm.

There's more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks or see the "Nature" and "History" pages in the county publication *Parktakes*.



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MAIL TO: Resources/RMD, Suite 936
12055 Government Center Parkway • Fairfax, VA 22035-1118
or: subscribe through our website at
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources

30 Years of Digging in the Dirt

In 2008, we're partying like it's 1999 — B.C.

Join our celebration of 30 years of archaeology in Fairfax County. The county initiated its archaeology division on October 7, 1978, and it became a part of the Park Authority in June 1996. In the works for this year are an exhibit at the Government Center, presentations, a poster, T-shirts and more.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/resources-crp.htm>

HISTORIC PROPERTIES RENTAL SERVICES



Stone Mansion Photo by David Wyttenbach

Rustic, privileged, historic and unique.

The Resource Management Division of the Fairfax County Park Authority has historic properties available for weddings, corporate and social gatherings. Rent one for your next soiree.

Call 703-827-0609 or see the sites on the Web at
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/weddings.htm

- Cabell's Mill in Centreville
- Clark House in Falls Church
- Dranesville Tavern in Dranesville
- Great Falls Grange in Great Falls
- Hunter House in Vienna
- Old Schoolhouse in Great Falls
- Stone Mansion in Alexandria
- Wakefield Chapel in Annandale

SOMETHING SIMPLE YOU CAN DO TO BE A GOOD STEWARD:

*Swap your incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent bulbs.
See www.energystar.gov for help in selecting them.*



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EQUAL ACCESS/SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

The Fairfax County Park Authority is committed to equal access in all programs and services. Special accommodations will be provided upon request. Please call the ADA/Access coordinator at 703-324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the date services are needed.

ADA/Access Coordinator 703-324-8563 • TTY 703-803-3354
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ada.htm