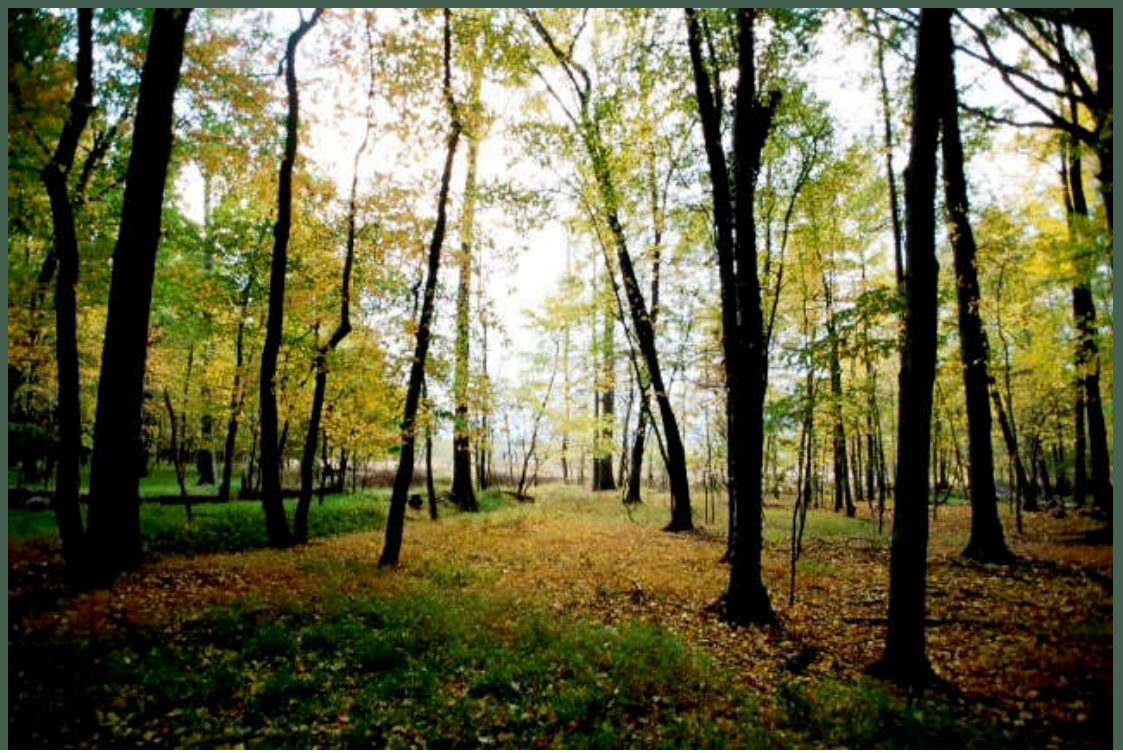
Good things to know before you arrive

If accommodations or alternative formats are needed, Please call 703-324-8563 at least 10 working days before event. TTY 703-803-3354

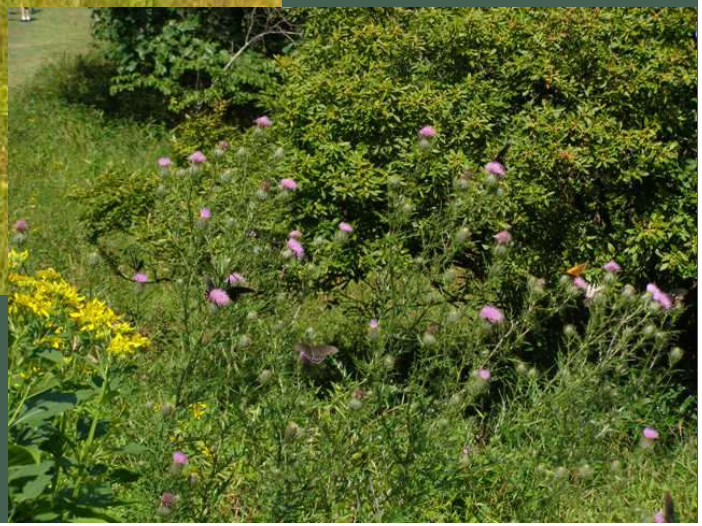
Huntley Meadows Park is over 1,550 acres of protected land.

It is a wildlife sanctuary containing diverse habitats including…

Impressive Forests



Wildflower-speckled meadows…

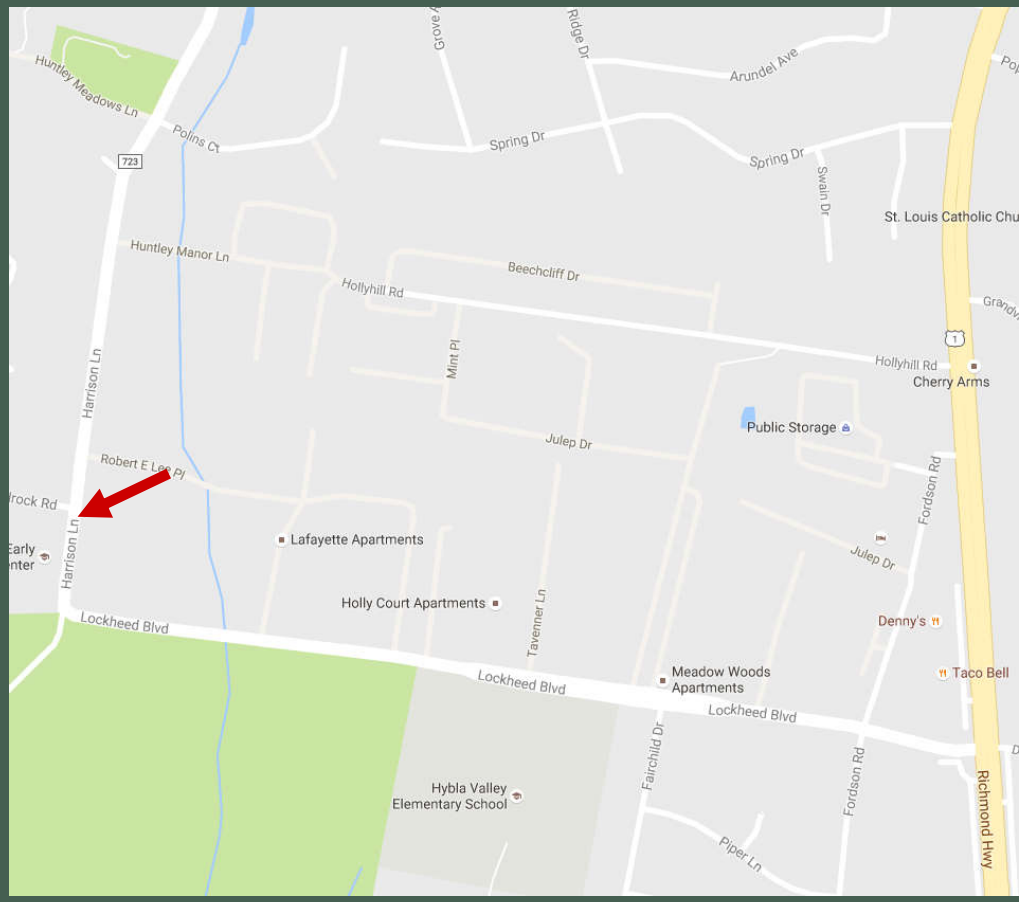


…and a freshwater wetland.

Getting to Huntley Meadows Park

The Park entrance is at the corner of Harrison and Lockheed.

GPS has been known to be unreliable in giving proper directions. Driving directions can be located at the top right of this page: http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows-park/fieldtrips.htm



Please note that Self-Guided Field trips should call ahead to reserve their visit. The Self-Guided Field Trip Group Admission Fee is $30 for groups of 12-60 people. For groups over 60, add $1 for each additional person.

Our Facilities

The Norma Hoffman Visitor Center, with a classroom, auditorium, exhibit area, and restrooms.

An outdoor shelter is available for rent to host picnics, classes, and parties.

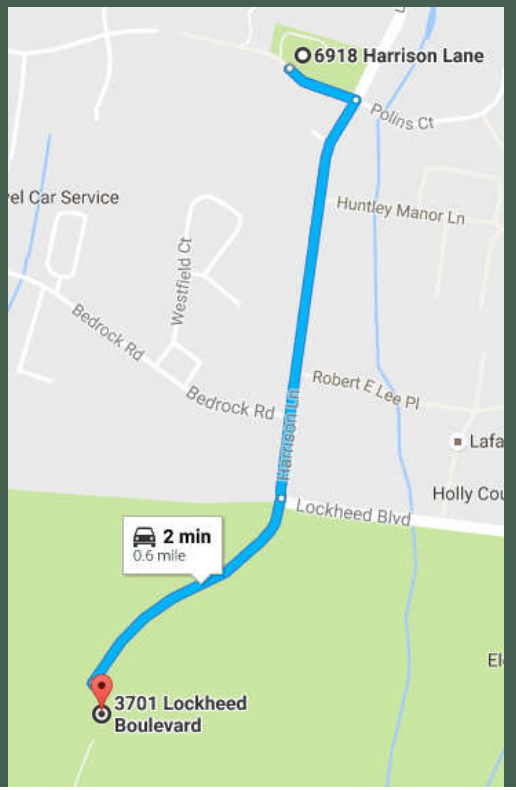
All facilities are ADA accessible.

Historic Huntley

Historic Huntley was built in 1825 by the Mason Family. The house is open for tours every Saturday morning. Other programs, including school programs, can be scheduled on the Huntley Meadows Park website.

NOTE:

Historic Huntley is off-site, just ½ mile up Harrison Lane!



Guided School Programs

Every guided program includes a brief presentation…

…and an outdoor 1.5-2 mile walk into the wetland. We go outside rain or shine, dress for the weather.

Please note, schools must preregister for all guided and self-guided programs on the park website or call 703-768-2525.

As you walk, follow the trail from the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center into the forest.

Look for many different tree species…

Sweet Gum

Oak

Maple

vines….

A **Poison Ivy** vine is hairy and the plant has three leaves. It runs along the ground AND climbs trees. Touching any part of the plant can give humans an itchy rash. Animals such as deer, rabbits, and birds eat its leaves and berries.

Fall leaf color.

Wild Grape vines attach to trees and have flaky bark. Many animals enjoy the fruit found at the very top of the tree canopy.

…and other life growing on the trees.

Lichens

Fungi

Moss

The trees provide homes for animals in the **tree canopy**…

What animal might make their nest in a hole in a tree?

It could be a **Pileated Woodpecker.**

This is a squirrel nest, called a **drey.** →

…and on the ground.

Fallen trees, **decaying logs**, and **brush piles** on the forest floor provide shelter for many animals, including insects, rodents, and birds.

Animals of the Forest

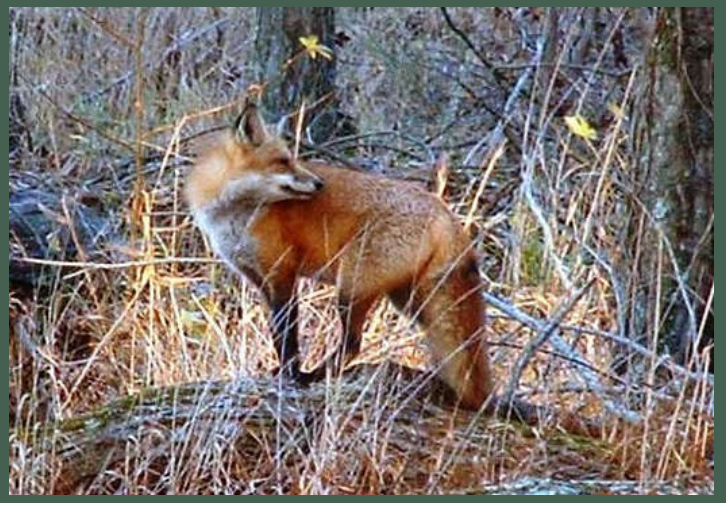
Red-bellied Woodpecker

White-tailed Deer

Northern Cardinal

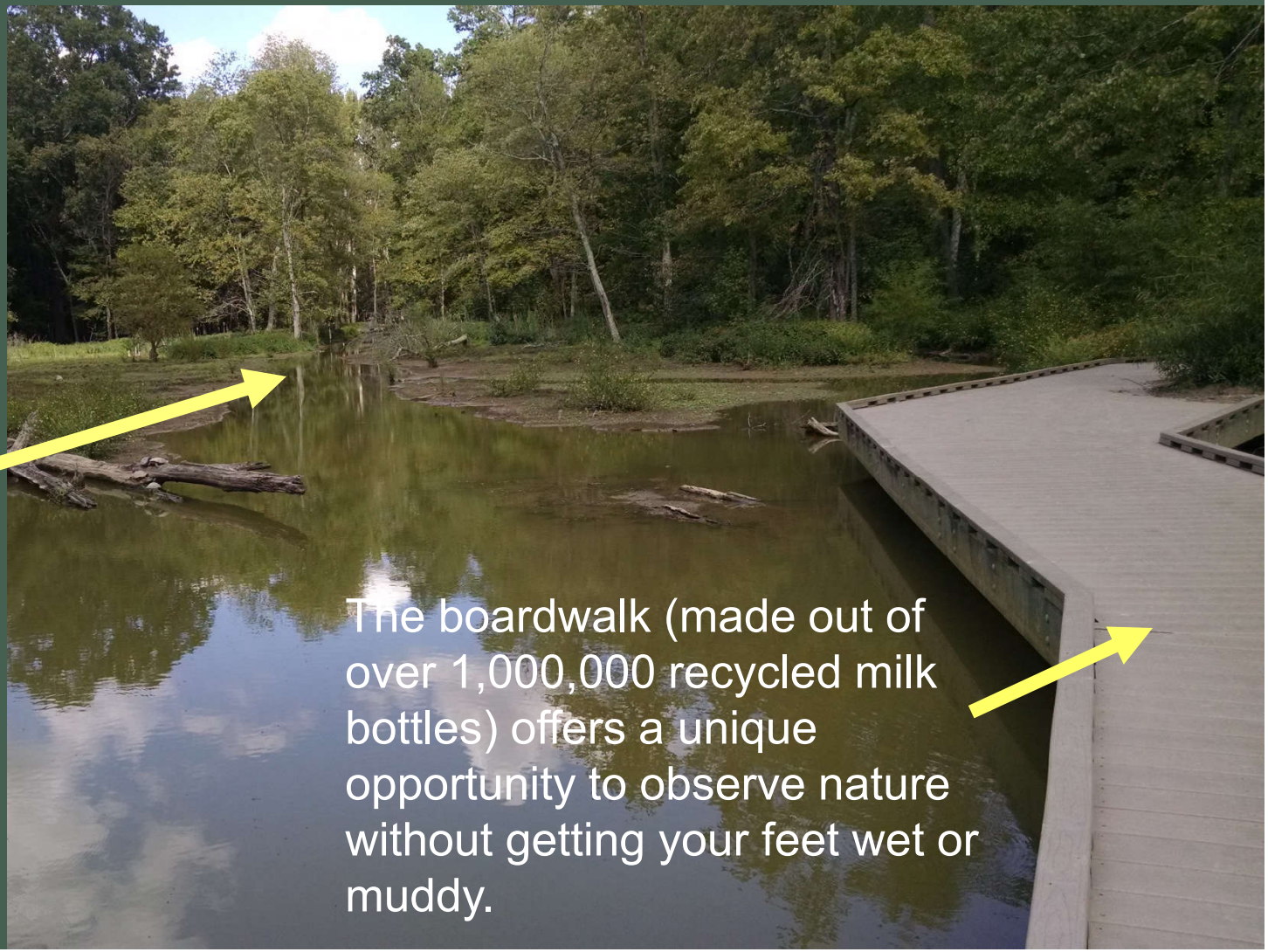
Eastern Grey Squirrel

Red Fox



The forest trail leads to our freshwater wetland.

Upon exiting the woods and entering the wetlands, Barnyard Run is the first stream you see. This stream is the main source of water for the wetlands.



Huntley Meadows Wetlands

Beavers helped create this unique freshwater habitat in 1978 by building a **dam** to hold in the water and continue to build dams to this day.

As seen in Fall

Try to spot this **beaver dam** when you first enter the wetlands.

A berm was built in 2014 so that humans would be able to control the wetland water levels and maintain it as a **hemi marsh**.

A **hemi marsh** is 50% water and 50% plants.

Wetland Plants

Pennywort

Cattails

Arrowhead

Spike Rush

Crimson-Eyed Rose-Mallow

These are the seed heads left behind after blooming.

Jewelweed

Turtle Head

Wetland Birds

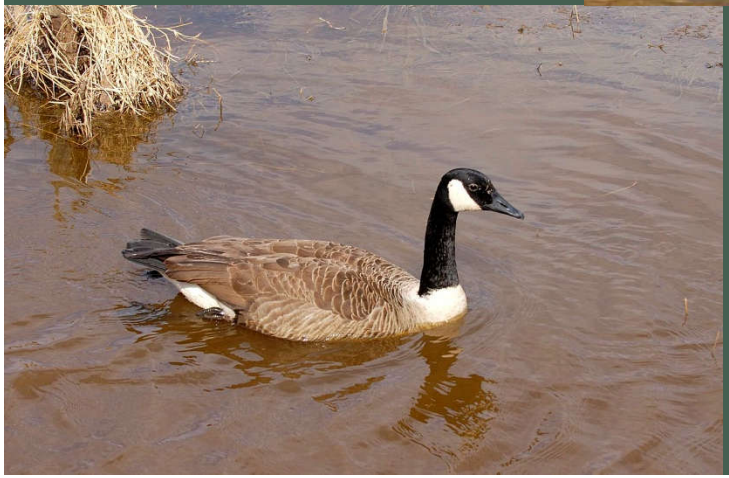
Great Egret

Great Blue Heron

Mallard Duck

Red-winged Blackbird

Canada Goose



Look in the water, you might see…

Snails on the bottom of the wetland.

Water Striders

But be careful! Some things look very similar…

Fish **vs.** **Tadpole**

Fish swim through the water and are narrow.

Tadpoles sit at the bottom of the wetland and have a FAT head with a NARROW tail.

Frogs & Toads

Fish look the same throughout their life. **Tadpoles** turn into…

American Toad

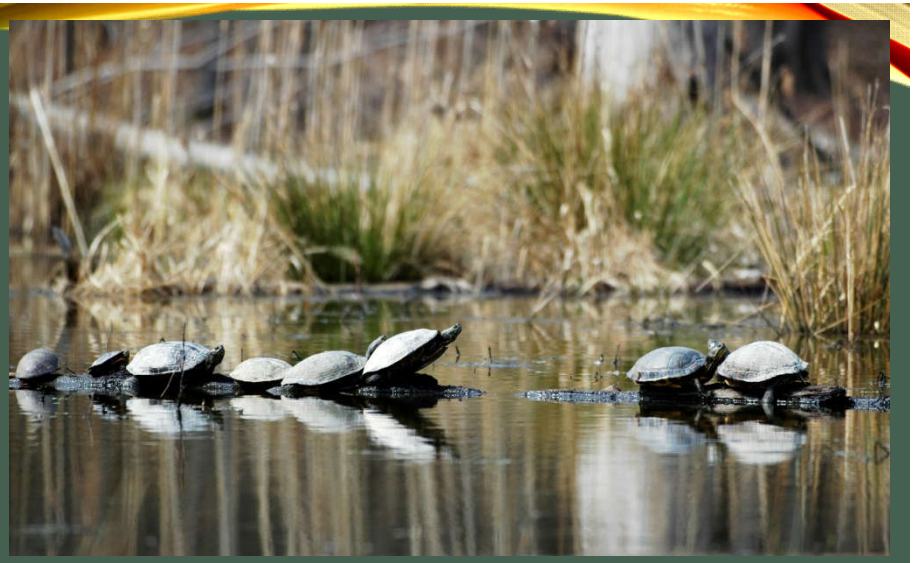
Green Frog

Southern Leopard Frog

Bull Frog

Reptiles can often be found **basking** in the sun. Basking is the way turtles regulate their body temperature.

Reptiles



Turtles basking on a log

Northern Water Snake

Snapping Turtle

Five-lined Skink

There are no venomous snakes in Huntley Meadows Park.

Wetland Insects and Spiders

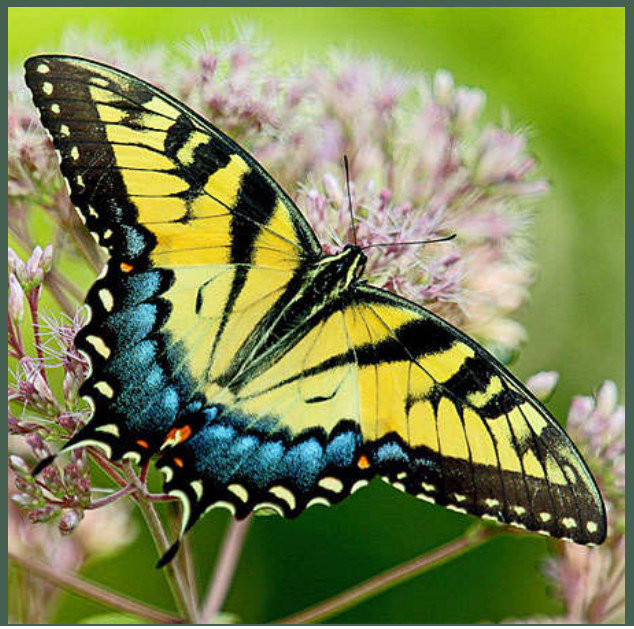
Grasshopper

Fritillary

Black & Yellow Argiope

Dragonfly & Damselfly

Tiger Swallowtail



This is the Virginia state insect!

Mammals of the Wetland

Beaver vs. **Muskrat**

Beaver tails are flat.

Muskrat tails are thin and round.

Beavers are **nocturnal**

Look around the edge of the wetland and see if you can find evidence of beaver activity.

Muskrats are **diurnal**

Muskrats are often seen munching on roots among the tall plants.

Beavers build **dams** out of mud and sticks to hold back water and make it deeper so they can more easily swim and build their homes.

Muskrats do not build dams.

A beaver's home is called a **lodge**. They are built out of MUD and STICKS, and have underwater entrances.

A muskrat's home is also called a **lodge**, They are built out of CATTAILS and MUD, and have entrances half underwater.

Man Made Structures

Weather Station

Nest Boxes

Brush Piles are made with sticks and NO mud.

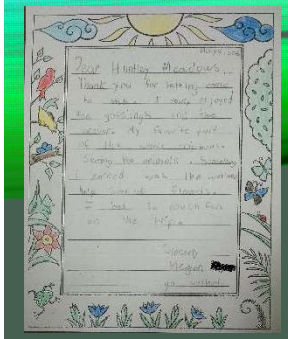
Like any wildlife sanctuary, animal activity, plant growth, and plant bloom at Huntley Meadow Park **VARIES** by the season and the time of day.

A visit to Huntley Meadows is **NEVER PREDICTABLE**, but always interesting.

Things to remember during your visit:

- Please be respectful and do not touch or disturb the plants and wildlife that live in the park.
- You will see more animals **if your group is quiet**.
- Please stay on the trails and boardwalk at all times.
- More tips and trail etiquette are online.

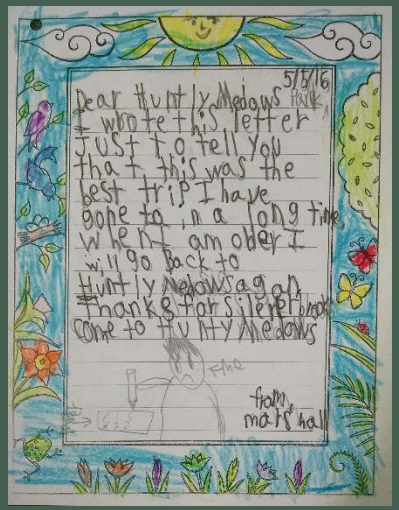
Student Feedback



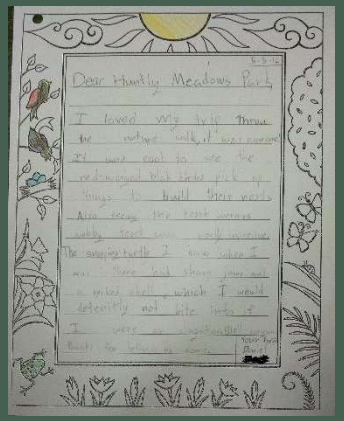
"I wrote this letter just to tell you that this was the best trip I have gone to in a long time."

"My favorite part was going on the boardwalk."

"It was cool to see the red-winged black bird pick up things to build their nests."



"Something I learned was the wetlands help soak up floods."



Let’s go for a walk!