

MARSH MUSINGS

The latest news and updates from Friends of Heinz Refuge



Friends of Heinz Refuge *Annual Report*



Fiscal Year 2021

Our Mission

The Friends of Heinz Refuge (FOHR) is a non-profit charitable organization working in partnership with John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge to connect people with nature and promote a culture of environmental stewardship through education, outreach, service and nature-based recreation for the conservation of wildlife and habitat.

Friends of Heinz Refuge Annual Report

First and foremost, please allow the FOHR Board of Directors to thank you, our dedicated members, for your continued support each year. Without you, a great deal of what we do as a non-profit would simply be impossible. As we celebrate our 22nd year of operation, we would like to share with you some of the amazing accomplishments we have made thus far. We would also like to share some of our goals and how we can go about achieving them in the upcoming fiscal year. Let us continue to work together, hand in hand with refuge staff, to promote habitat restoration, wildlife conservation, and environmental education at the refuge. As always, we remain committed to implementing the FWS initiatives of "Connecting People with Nature" and, more recently, the "Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership."

Thank you for making our work possible!

Dear Friends,

Another year in the books which was a bit brighter for the refuge as more and more people visited, and the Friends and Fish and Wildlife Service successfully held a number of events on-site and off-site in the nearby communities.

The next year is exceptionally exciting, since 2022 will be the 50th anniversary of the John Heinz Wildlife Refuge and 25th anniversary for the Friends of Heinz Refuge! This means a lot of work to celebrate for such a momentous occasion. We are just starting to plan for this PARTAAAY, and we would love to have your help, your thoughts, and especially support for such a wonderful event.

As such, the Friends operate solely on grants and individual donations. Supporters like you do so much to continue educating the public, bringing in new visitors, cleaning up the refuge from refuse and plastic pollution, and restoring important areas like our tidal marsh.

Last year, the refuge center was not open to the public. This meant that our nature store was also closed, except for our pop-up stores that took place outdoors seasonally. This was a cool new way to reach visitors to the refuge, so please look for our store outdoors in 2022 again.

A lot of activity has taken place this past year despite the continuing pandemic. The tidal marsh restoration began; our Young Adult Advisory Committee continued to meet; refuge cleanups took place; a new plastics committee was formed, and we received support from Americorps for a new VISTA. Although we couldn't meet in person as often as we would have liked, we have learned to accommodate our new way of working.

Thank you for being a supporter of open space, wildlife protection, and outdoor recreation. Thank you for being a FRIEND. Many blessings for a great new year, and enjoy this review of the many activities that took place in 2021.

*Sincerely,
Jaclyn Rhoads*

Sponsored by FOHR

PHILLY FALL NATURE FEST

Early this fall the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge and the Friends of Heinz Refuge partnered with Cecil Street Garden, The Common Place, and Myers Recreational Center to bring the annual Philly Fall Nature Fest to the community! While previous years' events have been held at the refuge, this year we wanted to make the festivities more accessible while also following social distancing protocol. The celebrations were spread over two days and included an outdoor film screening, wildlife presentations, games and crafts, with water ice and soft pretzels provided by the Friends!



Board members Tom and Duane manning the Friends table



A local resident poses with their new tree

TREE GIVEAWAYS

This year the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, the Friends of Heinz Refuge, and Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition have continued our partnership with TreePhilly to provide free trees to local residents! At our last giveaway in October we were hosted by the Glenda Ann Christopher Memorial Park and gave away dozens of trees of several varieties. Pickup was quick and easy, and we look forward to continuing these giveaways into 2022! For any interested in a free tree, keep your eyes peeled - we are already getting ready for our next event in the spring!

AMERICORPS VISTA PROJECT

For the fourth year in a row, FOHR has sponsored an AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)! VISTA is a federal program that provides full-time volunteers to work on projects at organizations like FOHR with a specific aim at alleviating poverty within local communities. This year we welcome a new VISTA, Matthew Knox, who joined FOHR in August. Matthew graduated in May of 2020 from Temple University with a degree in sociology. He will build on the groundwork laid by his predecessors Jolie Jacobs and Madilyn Schwer to form community partnerships, develop programs and events, and secure resources. Matthew is excited to bring a youth perspective oriented towards environmental justice to the Friends as head of our Young Adult Advisory Committee, along with his other responsibilities with the Friends.



Matthew prepared this annual report!

Sponsored by FOHR

ANNUAL GROUNDHOG DAY FESTIVAL

January 30th, 2021

While social distancing restrictions limited our options for this year's annual Ground Hog Day Festival, they didn't prevent us from celebrating with a unique twist! To limit crowding, the refuge spread out the celebration between an online event featuring our resident groundhog, Tincum Tim, alongside a self-guided story walk on the trails! Visitors were treated to free snacks and instructions for a winter scavenger hunt. Look out for our festivities in 2022 - will we suffer a long winter or be treated to an early spring? Only Tincum Tim will know!



Phragmites benches crafted by Sarah Kavage

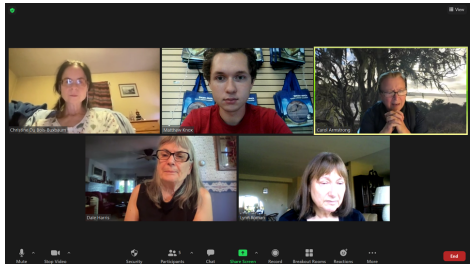
ANNUAL SUMMER SOLSTICE FESTIVAL

June 22nd, 2021

After over fifteen months, the Friends of Heinz Refuge celebrated our first event back in person and 5th Summer Solstice Festival. This year, our annual solstice celebration coincided with Juneteenth, so we got the opportunity to celebrate diversity in the outdoors while acknowledging the important ideals of freedom and justice. We had our traditional activities such as s'mores, a scavenger hunt, and guided nature walks, while also forming a new partnership with a wonderful local artist collective "Tiny Room for Elephants", who helped to make the event more engaging and dynamic by featuring our new Phragmites bench installation (pictured left) by artist Sarah Kavage and providing music through the artist "Jello Vibes".

PLASTICS CAMPAIGN

Through our plastics board, the Friends of Heinz Refuge has been steadily organizing a campaign to reduce plastic waste at the refuge and raise awareness about the problem of plastic pollution globally! Over the past year we have taken advantage of social distancing needs and greater ease of online organizing to host educational events and share content about the threat of plastic at the refuge and elsewhere. We have also provided resources for guided "plastic walks" and plastic cleanups at the refuge. Those interested in participating should email info@fohrefuge.org!



Our Role as a Friends Group

FWS employs a myriad of programs, projects, and events in order to accomplish the congressionally mandated goals set for the Heinz Refuge. Their mission includes implementing measures to restore habitat lost in the years immediately prior to the establishment of the refuge, to improve and maintain healthy habitats, and to provide environmental education and compatible recreation opportunities for the public. The available funds to accomplish these tasks are often limited by the federal budget. Therefore, FOHR's monetary support for FWS programs, projects, and events makes it more feasible for the Heinz Refuge to accomplish their goals. Aside from direct monetary assistance, FOHR also provides countless volunteer hours in support of FWS's mission and we publicize refuge programs and events through our newsletter, e-bulletin, Facebook page, and website. We are proud to be volunteers and proud that we make a meaningful impact!

Donations to FOHR directly support programs, projects, and events at the refuge. Together we are stronger and can make a huge difference in the world!

Supported By FOHR

PHILLY NATURE KIDS (PNK)

This year the refuge continued its Philly Nature Kids program, shifting focus towards online learning in order to accommodate for COVID safety protocols. Online teaching has created new challenges and opportunities for our refuge staff and young learners, but despite these changes the program was successful in developing scientific literacy and a greater appreciation for the outdoors. Obtaining grants for the purpose of promoting environmental education and stewardship to our youth is just one example of the work FOHR does in support of the refuge and surrounding community.

JUNIOR BOWHUNT

Early this fall, the refuge hosted a free two-day bowhunting camp where kids aged 11-15 learned to shoot archery and track wildlife with USA Archery Certified Refuge Rangers. Over three days, participants gained new outdoor skills and a greater appreciation for wildlife at the refuge! Throughout the fall the refuge has also held afternoon pop-up archery events where visitors can test their skill and meet refuge staff. **FOHR supports this program by providing snacks and bus transportation.**

GUIDED WALKS

One of the first programs established at the refuge was FREE guided walks staffed by volunteer naturalists. These walks touch on a variety of topics including birds, plants, butterflies, photography and physical fitness. Occasional evening walks have been added to the schedule, much to our visitors' delight. Some walk leaders have been volunteering since the program began, while others continue to be added as time goes on. **FOHR supports this program by providing volunteer leaders.**

WEED WARRIORS PROGRAM

Weed Warriors continue to wage a never-ending war against invasive plant species at the refuge. This year, the Weed Warriors focused on removing Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, Japanese hop, Phragmites, thistle, and purple loosestrife at the refuge. The program also works on replacing invasive plant species with native plant species. **FOHR supports this program by providing volunteers and promoting the program.**

Our Latest Projects

RAIN BARREL GIVEAWAY

Inspired by last year's partnership with the Philadelphia Waterworks, the Friends of Heinz Refuge have acquired thirty rain barrels to provide to the community! These rain barrels are ideal for your gardening needs and would make a great project as the winter turns to spring. Supplies are limited and several have already been claimed - to those interested, please contact info@fohrefuge.org to schedule a pickup!



POP UP + HOLIDAY SHOPPING

With the visitor center (ordinarily) closed, the Friends have had to get creative to support the refuge! This past year we have held weekend pop-up shops outside under the visitor pavilion, with the exception of two special holiday events held inside the visitor center. We are on temporary hiatus due to the winter cold, but look out for us again this spring - unless the visitor center has reopened, that is!

TURKEY FOOT RESTORATION PROJECT

Refuge staff are always maintaining the watershed and searching for ways to make improvements, but this restoration project is one of our biggest (not to mention, most expensive) yet! The project is aimed at removing invasive species and reestablishing a tidal zone for native species to flourish within. With financial assistance from the Friends, the refuge has contracted Princeton Hydro to carry out the restoration and it will be taking place throughout the following year - or more!



YOUNG ADULT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Many Friends organizations suffer from an unfortunate lack of diversity among membership, not only in terms of race and income but age, and the Friends of Heinz Refuge is no exception to this trend. That is why we are pushing for a renewed effort to broaden our membership base and better represent the community through the Young Adult Advisory Council! This group is open to local residents from ages 18-35 and will be led by Friends VISTA Matthew Knox for the remainder of his term.

Urban Refuge

By Hal Freedman

Tree swallows swarm,
perched high up on
branches, raptors soar,
eyes downward. Swamp
Sparrows flit and hide in
the cattails. Beneath the
Phragmites, two bulging
eyes pop up, then dart
deep down back under.

A Carolina Wren unseen
cries tea-kettle-tea-kettle-
tea-kettle. A bumblebee
circles the purple coned
flowers of Pickerelweed.
Waterfowl throng, glide
on calm waters through
rustling marsh grasses.
A Marbled orb-weaver
spins its web, Snapping
Turtles bask in the sun,
Dragonflies rest on the
fragile pink petals of
Marsh Mallow blooms.

He stands tall in the
reeds barely noticed.
A phantom statue frozen
still, waits and watches,
Like a messenger sent
by Horus incarnate, a
winged soul freed from
the burial chamber of
Pharaoh's tomb.

Quickly unfurling long
silvery wings, he launches
with regular strong steady
wing-beats, sweeps over
head like a ghost shadow
cast by the ancient world.
His ancestors battled a
million storms fearless so
he might come stalk in
the Tinicum Marsh.

Not far in the distance a
passenger jet like some
pale mirage, flying low
through the hazy smog,
it lumbers heavy, in for
a landing much too close!

The Great Blue Heron,
stands tall in the reeds
barely noticed. A phantom
statue frozen still, waits
and watches all ages pass.

Poem & Photo by Hal Freedman,
and inspired by his appreciation
of nature and Heinz Refuge 2021

(*Previously published in
"Poems of a Classical Musician,"
the Moonstone Press, 2021)



Recognition

FOHR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jaclyn Rhoads, *President*
 Mary Batt, *Vice President*
 Dick Carroll, *Treasurer*
 Ann Faulds, *Store*
 Carol Armstrong, *Plastics*
 Katie Adamcik, *Social Media*
 Tom Considine, *Membership*
 Walter Nadolny
 Amanda Muir
 Duane Horne
 Candice Thompson
 Jean Diehl

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Dale Harris
 Lynn Roman
 Kim Sheridan
 Jolie Jaycobs

IN MEMORIAM

Mike Cosgrove, *Board Member*

FRIENDS OF HEINZ REFUGE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Watershed Education (AWE)
 Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed (CDRW)
 Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA)
 Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN)
 Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition (EFNC)
 Friends of Bombay Hook
 Friends of Forsythe
 L.L. Bean
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
 National Wildlife Federation (NWF)
 National Wildlife Refuge Association
 New Jersey League of Conservation Voters (NJLCV)
 Patterson Elementary School
 Penrose Elementary School

PennFuture
 Pennsylvania Audubon Society
 Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)
 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
 Pennsylvania Game Commission
 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
 Pennsylvania Sea Grant
 Philadelphia Zoo
 Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
 Student Conservation Association (SCA)
 The Franklin Institute
 TreePhilly
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
 Volunteering Untapped PHL

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James Houston III

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Matthew Knox
 Kim Sheridan

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Wing yi Kung
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Matthew Knox
 Princeton Hydro
 US Fish and Wildlife Service

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Hal Freedman

Thank you to all of our members and volunteers for making our work possible!

A special thanks to the members who made it to our 24th Annual Membership Meeting! If you did not receive an invitation in the mail for this event, please email info@fohrefuge.org so we can update your address.