



Volume 5, Issue 1
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Message From The Board

The past year has been filled with lively activities and good things happening at the Hempstead Plains. From our management projects and educational endeavors to our volunteer assistance and successful gala fundraiser this past fall, Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College has much to be thankful for. As you read about these events we hope that you will consider joining us for more of the same in the coming year.

Caring for and restoring this special ecological habitat known as the Hempstead Plains is a continuing educational and rewarding experience for all who participate. We can't do it alone. Please come out this spring and share in our Volunteer Community Workdays, Friday Lunch-time walks, Poetry and Teachers Training Workshops and other activities that are listed in this issue of the Meadowlark and posted on our website, <friendsofhp.org>. Not only will you enjoy the experience, but you will also be rewarded with knowing that you have helped save one of the best kept secrets and last native habitats on Long Island.

This year elections will be held for some positions on the Board of Directors. We invite you to consider serving and hope that you will let us know if you are interested. Contact us at 516-572-7570 or email us at info@friendsofhp.org to get more information about the Hempstead Plains and how you can be a part of our team.

Yours in Service,
Board of Directors
Friends of Hempstead Plains
At Nassau Community College

First Gala Fundraiser

In celebration of their fifth anniversary of operation, Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College held its first annual fundraiser cocktail party on September 22, 2005. They were proud to honor Stephen Hicks and the Hicks family from Hicks Nurseries, Inc. of Westbury and the Long Island Community Foundation for their generosity in supporting the management endeavors of the Friends.



From left, Honoree Stephen Hicks, Marilyn Hicks, TOH Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby, Karen Hicks Courts, Catherine Kelly (FHP President), Betsy Gulotta (Conservation Project Manager).

The Hicks family has been involved with the Hempstead Plains for many generations; Stephen's great grandfather, Henry Hicks, wrote the first botanical survey of vegetation on the Hempstead Plains in 1892. Fred Hicks, Stephen's father and former head of Hicks Nurseries, served as advisor for Friends of Hempstead Plains since its inception, and Hicks Nurseries donated funds for the attractive entrance sign at the site. Stephen Hicks has continued to support the Friends over the last five years. Long Island Community Foundation is also a generous supporter of the Friends,

Gala continued on page 2

Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College, Inc. offers educational programs to schools, community groups and the general public. We have many volunteer opportunities for those interested in helping with prairie restoration, development of a library, and giving programs. For extra newsletter copies, address changes, membership and volunteer information, please contact Betsy Gulotta, Conservation Project Manager, at 516-572-7570 or email info@friendsofhp.org

and recently awarded the organization a generous grant to carry out extensive management projects, including fence repair, mowing and other methods to remove nonnative species and restore the native habitat.



From left Wini Freund, LICF Director of Donor Services, Hazel Weiser, LICF Director of Foundation Advancement, TOH Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby, Amy Hagedorn, LICF Grants Chairman, Catherine Kelly (FHP President) and Betsy Gulotta (Conservation Project Manager).

The cocktail party was held at the Cradle of Aviation Museum, a fitting place for Friends of Hempstead Plains, which is committed to preserving and restoring the native plains habitat. Because of its flat rockless grassy terrain, the Hempstead Plains proved a perfect site for many early airplane flights, including the famous transatlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh and the "Spirit of St. Louis". Much of the history of early flights on the Hempstead Plains is exhibited in the Cradle of Aviation Museum.

About 50 people attended the event. Stephen Hicks attended with his sister, Karen Hicks Courts represented by Amy Hagedorn, Grants Chairman of the Grants Committee, Hazel Weiser, Director of Foundation Advancement, and Wini Freund, Director of Donor Services. Other dignitaries included Hempstead Town Councilwoman, Dorothy Goosby, Nassau County Legislators David Dennenberg and Frances Becker,



At the Gala, from left, FHP President Catherine Kelly, Nassau Legislator Fran Becker, FHP Conservation Project Manager Betsy Gulotta and her husband, former Nassau County Executive Tom Gulotta

former Nassau County Executive Thomas Gulotta, and Katie Schwab from Nassau County Planning Commission, representing Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi.

Thanks To Our Donors

Friends of Hempstead plains wishes to extend its utmost thanks and appreciation to the following donors who helped to make the event a success!

Executive Strategies, LLC, Thomas S. Gulotta
 Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund in Long Island Community Foundation
 Humes & Wagner, LLP, Clayton A. Prugh and Beverly J. Bell
 Reckson Management Group, Inc.
 The Nature Conservancy
 Shaw, Licitra, Gulotta, Esernio & Schwartz P.C.

Harriet Lewis	Frank Gulotta Jr.
John Falcioni	Shari Romar & Mitchell Zykofsky
Maxwell Wheat	Catherine Kelly
Tom O'Brien	Betsy and Tom Gulotta
Heather Amster	Fosters Meadow Heritage, Franklin Square
Doris and Stanley Shaw	Historical Society, Paul D. van Wie
Phyllis Kurland	City Bank Plaza Financial Center
Mary Jane Russell	Larry Swanson, Environmental Landscaping
Anna Marie Mascolo	and Design, Inc.
Richard Altomonte	Ashfaq and Iman Marghoob
Carol Kelly	Gary Hudes, Gennaro Jewelers, Inc.
Leders Jewelers	Secilia and Christopher Drury
Linda Velez	Kiera and Liam Lynch
Edward and Ruth Smits	Kurt I. Roth
Asbury Romar	Emil, Krey & Son, Inc.

and various projects, and Board member Richard Altomonte showed part of an educational video that he is producing about the Friends and their activities on the Hempstead Plains. An overflowing raffle table, full of generously donated gifts from local merchants was highlighted by an original painting of the endangered species, Sandplain gerardia (native to the Hempstead Plains) by Freeport botanical artist, Harriet Carotenuto. Harriet also designed the artwork for the invitations.

The Friends would like to thank everyone who worked on and participated in this event, including the honorees, Board members, Gala Committee and all the donors.

Interns Research Insects Summer Intern Research Includes Insect Survey Of Hempstead Plains

Erin Kiedrowski, Stony Brook University student majoring in Marine Science, participated in a summer internship at the Hempstead Plains in 2005. Her project was to do an insect survey and identify as many insects as she could find. In addition, she also helped Dr. Lisa Filippi from Hofstra University monitor the activities of Cypress Spurge Beetles. (see article on Biological Control Efforts... by Dr. Filippi in this issue)

Erin visited the Hempstead Plains at least twice a week and captured her insects in nets. After photographing and identifying them, she released them. She was able to identify over 10 species of grasshoppers, beetles, leaf hoppers and other insects. She hopes to continue her study next summer.

2006 SPRING EVENTS AT THE HEMPSTEAD PLAINS

FRIDAY LUNCH WALKS

12:00 PM (weather permitting)

Enjoy early blooming wild flowers on the Prairie
See the Birdfoot Violet, Nassau County's official
flower
Learn about our efforts to save this rare habitat

April 21
May 5 and 19
June 2 and 16
July 7

Bring your cameras, binoculars, and sneakers

WEEKEND VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY WORKDAYS

Help restore the native prairie
Remove invasive species

Saturday Workdays from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

April 22
May 6 and 20
June 3 and 17

Bring gloves, rakes, and clippers

Directions To Hempstead Plains At Nassau Community College

Meadowbrook Parkway to Exit M4, follow signs to
Coliseum and Charles Lindbergh Blvd. Turn right
into East Parking Area for NCC. See Hempstead
Plains entrance at first intersection.

SPRING POETRY WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 6, 2006 (shine or rain)
At the Hempstead plains at N.C.C.

With Long Island Naturalists/Poets, Maxwell Wheat and
Edgar Carlson
Professors of Biology, Betsy Gulotta and Vincent Puglisi

The Hempstead Plains provides a resource for new poetic language for poets. Modern American poetry is characterized by words and combinations of words that express emotion. Poets are turning to nature for their language now more than at any other time in American poetry history. They are finding in the life histories of animals and plants and in the technical and popular terms used for habitat description, words and combinations of words that express not only their own reactions to nature, but that give them language with which to write about the human condition. Timed with the blooming of the historic Birdfoot Violet, this Workshop will surely be an inspiration to all who attend.

PROGRAM

- 9:30 Welcome and Introductions
- 9:45 Presentation: Hempstead Plains Natural History
- 10:00 Walks led by naturalists
- 11:15 Human History of the Hempstead Plains
- 11:30 Writing Session
- 12:00 Lunch, during which you can read your works in progress (bring bag Lunch; refreshments served)
- 1:00 Continue Writing Session and Sharing
- 2:00 Conclusions and Announcement about next Habitat Poetry Workshop

\$5.00 for Members; \$10.00 for Nonmembers;
become a member for \$25.00

Registration necessary: call **516-572-7570** or email
info@friendsofhp.org

For more information, contact the Friends: 516-572-7570; info@friendsofhp.org

Outdoor Workshop

Teachers Learn How To Use The Hempstead Plains As An Outdoor Classroom

On June 4, 2005, eleven teachers and educators from Long Island middle and high schools, Nassau Community College, Long Island Children's Museum in Garden City and the Science Museum of Long Island in Plandome attended the Spring Teachers Training Workshop sponsored by Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College. The Workshop, made possible by a grant from Independence Community Foundation, was designed to show teachers how they can use the Hempstead Plains as an outdoor museum for hands-on learning about Long Island's natural environment and field experience for their students.

Following the format of the very successful first Teachers Training Workshop held last October, 2004, this Workshop included a half day session of lectures and demonstrations on the general history, geology, ecology and social history of the Hempstead Plains from the time it was formed by glacial deposits, covering 60,000 acres across Nassau County, to its present day status, comprised of fragments totaling only about 60 acres. Presentations were given by Dr. Lisa Filippi, Professor of Ecology at Hofstra University, Vincent Puglisi and Betsy Gulotta, Professors of Biology at Nassau Community College. Dr. Catherine Kelly, Professor of Biology at Nassau Community College and President of Friends of Hempstead Plains introduced the Workshop. The afternoon session included field activities and demonstrations on orienteering, observation skills, plant and insect study, bird watching and identification, habitat quadrat

Thank You To Our Friends And Supporters

Friends of Hempstead Plains wishes to express our thanks and appreciation to the following donors for their support of our restoration and education programs and for believing in us.

Charles B Wang Foundation
Hicks Nurseries, Inc.
Independence Community Foundation
Long Island Community Foundation
Nassau Community College
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
The Nature Conservancy
United States Department of Agriculture

Welcome New Members

Thank you to our new members and donors since fall 2005

Joanne Delprete	Long Island Children's Museum	Charlene Pilipshen
Scott Emmons	Hempstead Public Library	Carol Ann Renderos
Timothy Godan	David Nemschoff Family	Sunni Stewart
Lyn Hasler	Virginia Memoli	David Stolarz
Christina Kenny	Laura Memoli	The Wheatley School
Patricia Larussa	Barbara Meyers	Virginia Williams
Janet Matthews	Tara O'Brien	

Friends of Hempstead Plains T-Shirt For Sale

Buy a t-shirt with our beautiful logo. Available in sizes Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large.

Please send a check for \$10.00 plus \$2.50 shipping to Friends of Hempstead Plains, (specify size: S,M,L,XL) at Nassau Community College, Inc., Department of Biology, Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York 11530.



studies and soil surveys. The above-noted faculty were assisted by Ralph Foster, a dedicated Friends member and volunteer, in the afternoon session.

As a result of the Workshop, eleven teachers and educators learned valuable information about the history and ecology of the Hempstead Plains and how to use the Hempstead Plains as an outdoor

classroom for their students. The knowledge they gained will be passed on to scores of students in their classes. In the words from one of the participants, "It was a pleasure to hear such informed and dedicated people. The field exercise is a reinforcement of how hands-on experience brings understanding alive."

Management News

by Dr. Lisa Filippi

Biological Control Efforts to Control a Nasty Invasive of the Hempstead Plains

Aphthona flava (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae), also known as the copper leafy spurge flea beetle, is a tiny, and pretty beetle, smaller than a sesame seed. Although its primary host is copper leafy spurge, an invasive villain of the grazing pastures in the Midwest, it also feeds on cypress spurge, an insidious and ever-expanding invasive plant on the Hempstead Plains, and has been reported to have significant impact on the spread of this invasive in other areas. Because cypress spurge is threatening to take over the habitat of our lovely, and globally endangered, sandplain gerardia, we initiated a biological control program in 2002, using *Aphthona flava* as our biological control agent.

The beetles have a double whammy effect on their host plants. First, adults emerge from the soil in July to mate, and feed on the cypress spurge leaves. Reduction of leaf biomass from this feeding results in lower production of food for the whole plant, and should weaken the plants. Then, after mating and feeding, females go underground and lay their eggs on or near the roots of the plants; developing larvae feed on the roots and root hairs and emerge from the ground as adults the following summer. This feeding should also weaken the plants by usurping the nutrients they are storing there. Although the beetles don't actually kill the plants outright, we are hopeful that they will weaken them enough to control and eventually even halt their spread.

In both 2002 and 2003, we released about 500 beetles at each of two expansive patches of cypress spurge, one of which is encroaching onto a fenced-off patch of sandplain gerar-

dia. I have been monitoring the expansion of the beetle population, and eagerly looking for signs that the cypress spurge is weakening. The beetles are clearly increasing in number, as they feast on this very abundant host. In one plot, the plants appear a bit weaker, but in the other they seem to be increasing along with the beetles! This is a long-term bio-control method, and it should be a few more years before we see a notable effect. Until then, let's hope the beetles have a grand Thanksgiving everyday, feasting on our nemesis, oblivious to their vital role in this crucial conservation effort.

Management Efforts On The Plains

by Betsy Gulotta

Management efforts on the Hempstead Plains this past year focused on preservation of the endangered species, Sandplain gerardia, and removal of nonnative invasive plant species that are encroaching onto the native habitat.

Sandplain gerardia, *Agalinis acuta*, is a globally endangered species that grows in about a dozen sites in only five states in North America. During its blooming time in late August to early September, the bright pink flowers are easy to see and add an unexpected splash of color to the prairie already dressed in yellows, oranges and whites of the late summer blooming wildflowers.

Discovered on the Hempstead Plains in 1986 by The Nature Conservancy, Sandplain gerardia's growth is monitored each year. Every single plant is counted in the two plots on the 19 acre Hempstead Plains site on the campus of Nassau Community College, as well as in the site across Charles Lindbergh Blvd. belonging to Nassau County. Totals are recorded by The Nature Conservancy and combined with data from the other

sites on Long Island.

This year was not a good year for Sandplain gerardia on the Hempstead Plains. Only 276 plants were found. Other sites on Long Island fared slightly better, although the numbers did not come close to the record year set in 2003, when over 3000 plants were found on the Hempstead Plains. It is unclear what causes annual fluctuations in population numbers, but may have something to do with the amount of moisture during the growing season. Sandplain gerardia is an annual and depends on seed dispersal for its survival.

Other management efforts focused on repairing the fence and habitat restoration projects, supported by a grant from Long Island Community Foundation. One area of focus was removal of the invasive species, Mugwort, *Artemisia vulgaris*, that has heavily invaded the western and southern borders of the Hempstead Plains. Efforts to remove this plant by weeding, herbicide treatment and mowing continued. Board member Ralph Foster (featured in Meadowlark, Vol. 3, issue 1) continued to work on his project covering 10 by 10 meter plots of Mugwort with canvas tarps in early spring. After 2 to 3 months, the tarps were removed, revealing no live Mugwort sprouts. As the growing season continued, many other species sprouted rapidly and filled in much of the area before Mugwort had a chance to recover. Although Mugwort was not eliminated, plots that were previously covered with tarps supported a greater variety of species of wildflowers including Common Milkweed and Indian Hemp than they did before.

The Hempstead Plains Preserve is open to visitors by appointment. If you would like to see and tour the Hempstead Plains, call 516-572-7570 to make an appointment.

Workshops Inspire Poets

Poetry Workshops At The Hempstead Plains Continue To Inspire Long Island Poets

Since our first successful Poetry Workshop last fall, 2004, two more poetry workshops have attracted writers to learn how to incorporate nature in their poems, assisted by Long Island nature poet, Maxwell Wheat along with Edgar Carlson, a former student of Maxwell's. On May 14, 2005, timed to coincide with the blooming of the historic Birdfoot violet, nearly 20 people gathered at the Hempstead Plains to observe spring wildflowers, and set about

creating beautiful poetry. The Workshop was repeated on September 9, coinciding with the blooming of the globally endangered Sandplain Gerardia. Participants received a guided tour of the site as well as instructions and written materials on poetry writing. A few more poems that resulted from the workshops are printed here. Please look for news about our Spring Poetry Workshop in May 2006.

Plains Heritage Trail

On June 16, 2005, Friends of Hempstead Plains was honored to sponsor a lecture program on the Hempstead Plains Heritage Trail by historian Paul van Wie, president of Franklin Square Historical Society. Dr. van Wie, who also teaches social studies at The Wheatley School in Old Westbury, and history and political science at Hofstra University, spoke on the history of the Hempstead Plains and gradual development of the land and communities along Hempstead Turnpike over the years. The talk was

Heritage continued on next page



Dr. Paul van Wie, speaking on Hempstead Plains Heritage Trail



Edgar Carlson and Maxwell Wheat leading Poetry Workshop in May

On Teresa's Eyes

by Edgar Carlson

*A leftover cloud
Last night's thirty-second hurricane
Faded in the northeast on silkworm wings.*

A perfect beach day

*I left early
The parkway was a carpet ride
Then a helicopter appeared due south
A second audible in the north
The ocean traffic stopped
I turned inland
To the Hempstead Plains Restoration*

*Goldenrod
Switchgrass
Broomsedge
Spikelets of small yellow flowers
On the turkey claw racemes
Of Big Bluestem*

*On the linear leaves
Of endangered Sandplain Gerardia
A chrome raindrop
In its white walls a blue skyscraper
Blue granite
Bedrock*

*Andropogon gerardia/Big Bluestem/
Turkey Foot*

Plains

by Megan Kelly

*An ocean stretches before me,
A sea free of water.
A sea which will not be,
Sopped up by time's sponge.
The dry waves of switch grass,
Are an unsealed time capsule.*

*The present is a constant whir,
A harmony
To the ancient melody
Of the switch grass.
An invisible line,
Sits somewhere between,
These times.
So that they blur together,
And the scared language,
Of the mocking bird,
And the familiar roaring modernity,
Of the car,
Become one.*

Poem Written for My Mother as I Stand on the Hempstead Plains On This May Morning 2005

by Ginger Williams

*If we lived on a prairie
I'd have learned of bird's foot violets,
Switchgrass, winged sumac
From tramps across the grasslands.*

*You'd have pointed them out like
Our local dog-toothed violets, or trillium
In the springtime of our Connecticut woods.
I'd have memories of you kneeling*

*To show a prairie primrose
Instead of the bright green
Of early skunk cabbage. Clutching
Notebook and pen, I'd stand in*

*Your footprints, to write your words
Here: in woodlands, on prairie,
Marsh, desert, tundra, anywhere
I could follow you.*

..... *Heritage* from prior page

based on his book, "The Hempstead Plains Heritage Trail; a Journey through 350 Years of American History".

The Hempstead Plains Heritage Trail reflects the important role that the Hempstead Plains played in history. It runs from Floral Park to Bethpage, encompassing Jericho Turnpike and Tulip Avenue in Floral Park, Garden City, and parts of Hempstead Turnpike further east. Historical facts presented by Dr. van Wie included: "the first organized horse race in this country occurred on the Hempstead Plains in 1673; Alexander Stewart purchased the section of Hempstead Plains from Stewart Manner to Bethpage in 1869 to build the village of Garden City; the bank credit card was developed in Franklin Square by Franklin Square National Bank that was established in 1926 and flourished until 1974; and the Nassau County Court House was the first building constructed by Nassau County in 1899".

Dr. van Wie, historian, teacher and author, all in one, is a lifelong resident of Franklin Square. He has been Franklin Square Village Historian since 1979 and is a founder of the Franklin Square local Village Museum. He is also Landmarks Preservation Commissioner for the Town of Hempstead. He has written two books on the history of Franklin Square; "History of Franklin Square and its Environs", and "The German Settlement of the 19th Century Long Island".

Scouts Help To Preserve The Plains' Future

Girl Scouts Collect Native Seeds

On Monday, October 17, 2005, Girl Scout Troop 825 from Rockville Centre visited the Hempstead Plains and collected seeds from the native grasses. They were assisting in one of the restoration projects at the Plains to reintroduce native plants in areas where they have disappeared. The 15 fourth grade girls were Junior Girl Scouts, accompanied by Troop leader Heather DeTommaso and Maggie Gray from Long Island Children's Museum. This activity enabled the girls to receive their Eco-Action badge, and demonstrated that the girls were "doing things for the environment that will help people, animals and plants stay healthy and that the air, soil and water will stay clean". The girls were thrilled to be part of the preservation of native Nassau County.

Each fall, Hempstead Plains' native warm season grasses offer their hundreds of thousands of seeds to the wind to disperse and regenerate their own kind. Little Bluestem, Switch grass and Broomsedge grass are the most abundant species. Their seeds are easy to collect, although it is a time consuming process. One person can collect about a pound an hour. Many pounds of seed are necessary to cover only a small patch of land. Therefore volunteers are most welcome to help in seed collection.

One might inquire, "Why not purchase prairie grass seed from one of the many seed sources?" The answer has to do with genetic variations. Hempstead Plains' grasses have evolved in this part of the country for thousands of years, and their genotype is no doubt unique and different from that of grasses in any other part of the world. Even prairie habitats have subtle genetic differences, depending on their location. Purchasing genetic varieties from other sources could prove harmful by introducing unwanted or harmful genes or even genes prone to disease. That is why great care is being



taken to preserve native grass seed and reintroduce only traditional Hempstead Plains' species, as part of the restoration process.

Boy Scouts Remove Woody Shrubs And Trees

Boy Scout, Kevin McDonald from Troop 689 in Seaford, completed his Eagle Scout project at the Hempstead Plains in May 2005 by cutting woody

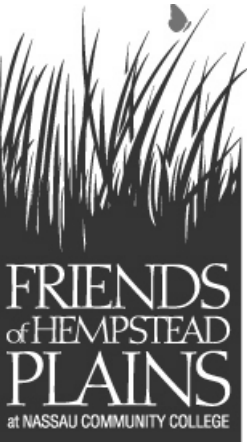


shrubs and clearing litter. After visiting the site several times to plan his project, Kevin and about 20 boys from his troop gathered on the Hempstead Plains on May 15 and 22. They cut down many of the woody shrubs and trees that continuously sprout on the prairie, and dragged the branches to the gates where they were later removed from the site.

Removing unwanted woody vegetation from grassland areas like the Hempstead Plains is an ongoing process. Friends of Hempstead Plains is grateful to have community volunteers like the Boy Scouts to help in our management projects.

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ABOUT THE FRIENDS

Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College, Inc. is an organization dedicated to prairie habitat protection and to enhancing community awareness and involvement. We look to our friends and neighbors interested in wildlife and environmental protection to help get us started. With your assistance and caring we can realize our highest aspirations in protecting this very special habitat.

JOIN THE FRIENDS

PROTECTOR OF THE PRAIRIE	\$1000
SUPPORTER	\$ 500
FRIEND	\$ 100
FAMILY	\$ 40
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP	\$ 25
STUDENT MEMBER	\$ 5

All members will receive the Friends newsletter, program updates, and invitations to programs, field trips and other events. Donations are tax deductible with 100% supporting the Friends mission of preservation, restoration, and education.

If you are interested in learning more about the Hempstead Plains and/or would like to become a member, please contact us by email: info@friendsofhp.org

Phone: 516-572-7570

Fax: 516-572-7762

Please clip & return this part with your check payable to:
Friends of Hempstead Plains, and mail to:
Dept. of Biology, Nassau Community College,
Garden City, NY 11530

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