



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

December 2024 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

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HOW TO CONTACT ...

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HFCA WINS FAIRFAX COUNTY 2024 ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD!

Submitted by the HFCA Board of Directors

At the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting on 19 November, Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw, in his role as the Chair of the Board's Environmental Committee, announced that Hickory Farms Community Association was the winner of the Fairfax County 2024 Environmental Excellence Award in the 'Business/Organization' category. To let us know of this upcoming announcement at the Board Meeting, Kelly Zitzer, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination, wrote the following in an email:

"Dear Melissa and the Hickory Farms Community Association:

On behalf of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, we thank Robert Cosgriff for nominating you for this year's Environmental Excellence Award. EQAC received many nominations and, after careful consideration, has awarded you with this year's award.

EQAC was very impressed with your dedication and commitment and wanted to commend your passion for and dedication to environmentalism.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will be honoring winners who have dedicated personal time and expertise beyond their normal civic, fiscal, or professional responsibilities and who have consistently demonstrated leadership as role models for others, as you have done.

EQAC is grateful to have leaders like you working in our community. Your efforts ensure that county residents and visitors can continue to enjoy a healthy, safe, vibrant, and beautiful natural environment for years to come."

In his remarks to the Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Walkinshaw cited the many initiatives and accomplishments of HFCA to include removal of invasive plant and tree species, planting over 100 native trees and shrubs as well as two wildflower gardens, maintaining a bluebird trail and a martin colony, and our efforts to restore Rabbit Run to a more natural state. He also cited the fact that the HOA has a master planning and budgeting process to ensure stewardship of our natural environment. He was clearly very proud of the fact that a community association in Braddock District was selected by EQAC to receive this prestigious award. To watch Supervisor Walkinshaw's announcement, go to https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/3599?view_id=7&redirect=true and fast-forward to the 1:55:19 time-mark.

A formal recognition ceremony will be scheduled for some time in 2025.

All Hickory Farms residents can take pride in this recognition. It exemplifies years of support by numerous HOA boards, the efforts of the Common Areas Committee, and the work of a great many volunteers who have pitched in over the years to help enhance our beautiful common areas. Most of all, it recognizes the vision, energy, dedication, and contribution of hundreds of volunteer hours by Melissa and Jarrett Stark that have transformed our common areas into the beautiful habitat that will be enjoyed by all Hickory Farms residents well into the future.

HICKORY FARMS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT DUE JANUARY 31, 2025

By Judy Deng, HFCA Treasurer

The amount of the Annual Assessment (dues) is set each year by the Board of Directors and affirmed by the homeowners. At the October 15, 2024 Annual Meeting the community voted to set the Annual Assessment to **\$290**. Annual assessments are used to cover the costs of operations and contribute to the reserve fund which is used for repairs and upgrades of HFCA assets.

Your **\$290.00** Hickory Farms Annual Assessment is due by **January 31st, 2025**. Detailed payment information will be included in the January newsletter and can always be found at: <https://hickoryfarms.org/annual-assessment>.

RABBIT RUN REMEDIATION PROJECT UPDATE

By Bob Cosgriff
HFCA Rabbit Run Project Coordinator

Good news! The long-awaited Rabbit Run Remediation project is officially underway! On 20 November, I spoke with two employees of the civil engineering firm, McCormick Taylor, while they were taking initial measurements of the depth of the Rabbit Run streambed in various locations. This company is the County's consultant for the design phase and will also oversee the actual construction which will be performed by another contractor. They mentioned that the design phase typically takes longer than the construction phase. They will be back on site a few more times in the weeks to come, as will surveyors, to continue to gather data and develop the plan.

I also learned that Ken Trinh, who was the project manager for the Rabbit Run project, is moving to another position in the County. His replacement is Paul Reynolds. I have reached out to him and hope to get the chance to meet with him in person soon along with HFCA board members and the Rabbit Run Project Committee as available.

At some point in the early stage of design, there will be a community meeting which will give residents a chance not only to hear first-hand about what to expect but also to ask questions and give input. The County will also create a website specifically for Rabbit Run. So stay tuned for more information as it becomes available.

HOLIDAY HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST

- **Voting will be open December 14-21.** An online link for voting will be sent via email in December.
- **Decoration Categories:** Holiday Heavyweight, Most Holiday Spirit, Most Colorful, and Most Classic



Starting at 4357 Harvester
Farm Lane

HICKORY FARMS HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Saturday December

21

6:30-8:30pm

Hot cocoa & Coffee
neighborhood lights walk

Voting for holiday lights:
Dec 14th-21st

Winners announced:
Dec 22nd

THE BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By Bob Cosgriff

In November, the bird that most people think of is turkey—the domesticated kind that is the staple of Thanksgiving dinners. This tasty fowl derives from the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) which is native to North America and was domesticated by native peoples although the progenitor remained wild. While a true Wild Turkey has never been spotted in Hickory Farms, they are resident in Fairfax County. We have seen them at the Mason Neck State Park, Occoquan NWR, alongside I-66, Route 50, the Fairfax County Parkway, and at GMU. So perhaps one will show up here in the neighborhood. In the meantime, we can all enjoy the derivative bird! In honor of Thanksgiving, our Bird of the Month is the Wild Turkey. Go to <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search> and type in “Wild Turkey” to learn more about this impressive native bird.

In terms of birds which we can see around the neighborhood this time of year, two migratory species come to mind: White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) and Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*), one of the many forms of the Dark-eyed Junco. We spotted our first White-throated Sparrow on 5 November, which is right in the ballpark. Our first backyard junco was seen on 14 November, which is a bit later than in previous years, although I had seen a single junco in the cemetery in the first week of November. So for both birds, 1 November is a handy reference date to start looking for them.

Both birds come readily to backyard feeders. Both prefer to feed on the ground, scratching in the leaves for seeds. I recommend white millet or safflower. They will also take seeds from platform feeders. Speaking of birds that showed up in our yard in November, on 6 November, we picked up year bird #61, Northern Mockingbird. This is a species that is a year-round resident here and we should have seen one much earlier in the year. They don't visit our yard as much as they formerly did. I suspect it is because our backyard is not as open as it used to be. Mockers like to hang out in trees and hedgerows and feed in short grass where they flush insects. However, they will eat suet as well. Finally, on 11/24, two female and one immature male Purple Finch (PUFI) showed up on our platform feeder. We usually see them in the springtime heading north, but have seen them one time before in the fall going in the other direction. Since we had already logged PUFIs as yard year bird #41 on 7 April, this sighting did not increase our species count. Another repeat bird was Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). A year-round resident, they are more common during breeding season, but do show up from time to time in the late fall and winter. One more unexpected visitor showed up on 21 November, namely, Pine Warbler (*Setophagus pinus*). This beautiful yellow bird with grayish wings and two white wing bars is a year-round resident in Virginia but until 15 April, 2019, we had never seen one in our yard. (We did record this species in mid-April of 2008 and 2009 in the lower and upper common grounds, respectively. But April is when you would expect to see a Pine Warbler. Their melodic, languid song is a welcome sound in early spring.) Our second yard sighting was in January, 2021 and several days thereafter. It was attracted to our suet feeders. So this year's bird is only our third yard record.

If you are interested in attracting winter birds (which include year-round residents), here a few simple hints:

1. Buy black-oil sunflower seeds, safflower, millet, and split peanuts. Don't waste your money on "wild bird mix" or "patio mix" or other such blends. Much of the mixture is not going to be eaten by our birds and will just go to waste.
2. Start small with one or two feeders, perhaps a tube feeder for the split peanuts and a hanging platform feeder for the sunflower and safflower seed. Scatter the millet on the ground near bushes to attract sparrows, doves, and juncos. Mount your feeders on poles with raccoon guards to prevent raccoons, squirrels, and chipmunks from climbing up the poles and eating up all the seed.
3. Augment the seeds with suet. Again, mount the suet cage on the poles with the birdseed so that squirrels will not get to it. If you would like to mount it elsewhere, be sure to use suet that has red pepper blended in. I guarantee you that the squirrels will take one bite and never return. (There is also bird seed that has red pepper flavor in it. Birds do not taste it but squirrels and other mammals do and they definitely don't like the "burn.")
4. Provide water. If you use a concrete bird bath, you will need a heating element. It must be connected to a ground-fault interrupter circuit. Use a heavy-gauge extension cord. Never handle the heating element when it is plugged in. If you don't have a big bird bath, you can buy circular hard plastic containers used for flower pots that make perfectly functional 'bird baths' (19" is a good size). Just fill with water to within ½" of the lip. If the water freezes, pour hot tap water over the ice to melt it. Most days in our winters are above freezing so that should suffice to keep your water supply free of ice.

In closing, winter birding can be very interesting. If you like waterfowl, Occoquan NWR is a great place to see large rafts of various duck species. Mason Neck State Park has areas where Tundra Swans can be seen. Blackwater NWR on the Eastern Shore is a great place to see thousands of Snow Geese and other waterfowl, as well as Bald Eagles and the occasional Golden Eagle. So get on out there, whether in our common areas or further afield and enjoy the many birds not only of Hickory Farms but of the larger region.

Check back in January for further bird news. Best wishes for an enjoyable holiday season. Hint: bird feeders and bird food make great Christmas presents!

P.S. To follow up on the article regarding the Environmental Excellence Award, birds played a role in our achievement. The bluebird trail and Purple Martin colony were featured in the submission, along with the wildflower gardens and native trees and shrubs planted over the last five years that provide vital food and cover for birds. Our common areas, including the Rabbit Run Resource Protection Area, are a tremendous asset. Inasmuch as they belong to each and every homeowner in common, everyone has the right to enjoy our parklike grounds but also bears the responsibility to continue our decades-long, award-winning stewardship of our natural environment here in Hickory Farms.

BRADDOCK DISTRICT NEWS FROM THE WALKINSHAW ADVISORY

Source: [November 14, 2024: Issue](#)

On Wednesday, December 4, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. in Braddock Hall (9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke), the [Braddock District Council](#) and I will be hosting our annual Best of Braddock Awards Ceremony and Reception.

The reception is open to the entire community and will kick off with hors d'oeuvres and desserts, and a chance to mingle and network with community members from across the Braddock District.

Then, join me and other community leaders for an awards ceremony to recognize the individuals and organizations who have put in the work to make their neighborhood or broader community a great place to live, work, and play.

The Virginia Railway Express's popular [Santa Trains](#) will return on December 14! Kids will have the chance to ride a VRE train to meet Santa and friends, learn about rail safety, and receive candy canes and coloring books from Santa's helpers.



This is one of my family's favorite events of the year and is a great way to kick off the holiday season!

You can buy tickets for the Burke Centre Santa Trains in-person on Monday, December 2, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at Kings Park Library (9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke), one of the [in-person ticket sales locations](#). Online tickets will go on sale on Tuesday, December 3 at 10:00 a.m. Visit the [VRE website](#) for more information.

Home-Heating Assistance Available

The Fuel Assistance Program helps eligible households in meeting their energy needs by supplementing the cost associated with their primary heat source. The Crisis Assistance Program is designed to help households overcome energy emergencies that cannot be met by other resources.

If you or someone you know needs help with home heating costs during the coldest months of the year, apply to the Fuel Assistance and Crisis Assistance programs [online](#) or by calling 833-5-CALL-VA ([833-522-5582](#)).

[Learn More about Energy Assistance Programs](#)

JOIN OUR LISTSERV!

Don't miss any news! There's no better way to stay in touch than through our Hickory Farms email listserv. Visit <https://hickoryfarms.org/>, click "Email Listserv" in the "For Residents" menu and follow the instructions.

STUDENT YELLOW PAGES



Lily Bucher
Kiera Stark
Cedar Batz

Lrbucher4@gmail.com
commonareas@hickoryfarms.org
571-398-1467

Babysitting/mother's helper, pet sitting
Pet sitting
Dog walking, dog sitting

If you offer services such as those listed above, or others such as tutoring, etc., and wish to be included in future listings, please email the Newsletter Editor at newsletter@hickoryfarms.org.

HFCA BOARD MEETING NOTICE

HFCA Board Meetings are held via Microsoft Teams. Unless otherwise notified or due to an unforeseen change, HFCA Board Meetings will be held the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.

For further information, contact any HFCA Board Member or hfca@hickoryfarms.org.

NEWSLETTER ITEM DEADLINE AND DISTRIBUTION NOTICE

Newsletter items are due the 25th of the month, for the next month's issue. Please send submissions to newsletter@hickoryfarms.org.

Newsletters are distributed via the HFCA listserv and posted on the HFCA website. All are encouraged to access the digital newsletter via the listserv or the HFCA website.