



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter

January 2021



*Photo by Ellen X. Silverberg*

## Learn About the Sligo Stewards Program, and How to Join, on January 28



*Left: Longtime Sligo Steward Ross Campbell works in his section of the park near the golf course.*

This year, Friends of Sligo Creek is revitalizing and strengthening its Sligo Stewards program. Learn more about this key aspect of FOSC's dedication to the ecological health of the park.

Join our Zoom meeting about Sligo Stewards on Thursday, January 28, at 7:30pm. To receive the invite and link, email [stewards@fosc.org](mailto:stewards@fosc.org).

Sligo Stewards serve as the boots on the ground and the voices of FOSC in each of their communities. For example, stewards host our popular "Sweep the Creek" cleanup sites in their neighborhoods every fall and spring.

Stewards have many different options for helping FOSC in their sections of the Park. Depending on their interests, Stewards can help organize volunteers to report water pollution (through our Water Watchdogs

program), participate in invasive plant removals (utilizing Weed Warriors certified

by the Montgomery Parks), engage with stormwater projects, do outreach and educational initiatives, and participate in natural habitat improvements. What any one steward focuses on depends on his or her passions and abilities. If you might consider becoming a steward in your local portion of the park, let us know at [stewards@fosc.org](mailto:stewards@fosc.org).

The Friends of Sligo Creek will actively support stewards so they'll have what they need to be successful. The Zoom meeting on January 28 is for all current and prospective stewards and anyone interested in learning and discussing more about our stewards. To receive a Zoom invite and link for the meeting -- even if you just want to listen in -- send an email to Ed Murtagh at [stewards@fosc.org](mailto:stewards@fosc.org).

-- Ed Murtagh  
Sligo Stewards Coordinator

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## Fish Diversity Up Again in Sligo

Sligo Creek was home to 16 species of fish in 2020, continuing a steady growth in diversity that Montgomery Parks has recorded almost every year since 2000.

Regular sampling in the creek last year (at a site near the Carroll Avenue bridge) showed an increase of one species from the 15 found in 2019 and well past the mere seven found in the first survey at that location in 2000. *Northern Hogsucker (Project Noah photo)*



See the fascinating graph below and more images and information from the presentation at this [page](#) on our website.

An important species, found only since 2016, is the **Northern Hogsucker** (above), noteworthy because of its intolerance of pollution, a strong sign that the creek's water quality is improving.

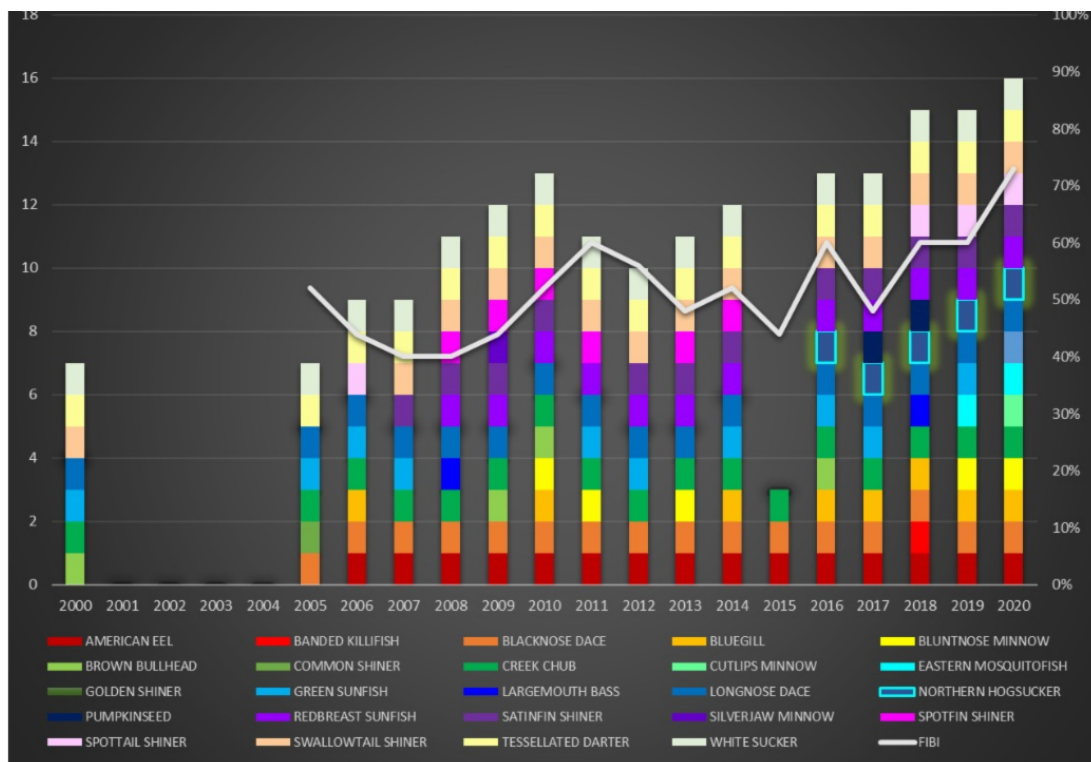
Hogsuckers rely on ample "riffle" habitat -- shallow, fast-moving water over a pebbly substrate -- with high levels of dissolved oxygen. Only with relatively cool creek water can dissolved oxygen reach levels sufficient for these fish. Such low temperatures, in turn, depend on preventing warm stormwater from draining directly into the creek from roads, parking lots, and other sunny impervious surfaces.

The fish data were presented during an online FOSC Water Quality event in December by Rachel Gauza, principal natural resources specialist with Montgomery Parks. Her talk was part of an excellent program organized by the FOSC Water Quality Committee that featured committee members reporting on recent findings and initiatives from chemical testing, pollution reporting, macro-invertebrate monitoring, and flood-control plans for Wheaton Branch. You can watch Rachel Gauza's presentation on Sligo fish, and the rest of the program, [here](#):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYa5cHbtqbY&feature=youtu.be>

Thanks to committee chair Pat Ratkowski for organizing this ambitious and well-attended event, with 70 people on hand through Zoom. For more information,

## Fish Diversity in Sligo Creek 2000-2020



Each color represents a different species. The boxes for Northern Hogsucker are outlined in blue. The jagged pale line shows the Index of Biotic Integrity, a measure of habitat health. The drastic decline in 2015 was probably due to a moderate rainstorm following a long dry spell and the subsequent flow of street chemicals into the creek, which caused major fish and salamander kills at several locations along Sligo. (Figure courtesy of Montgomery Parks; reflects provisional analysis, rev. 12/17/20.)

## Thank You, Generous Donors

Thanks for all of your donations to Friends of Sligo Creek in 2020.

Your support will enable us to do the following:

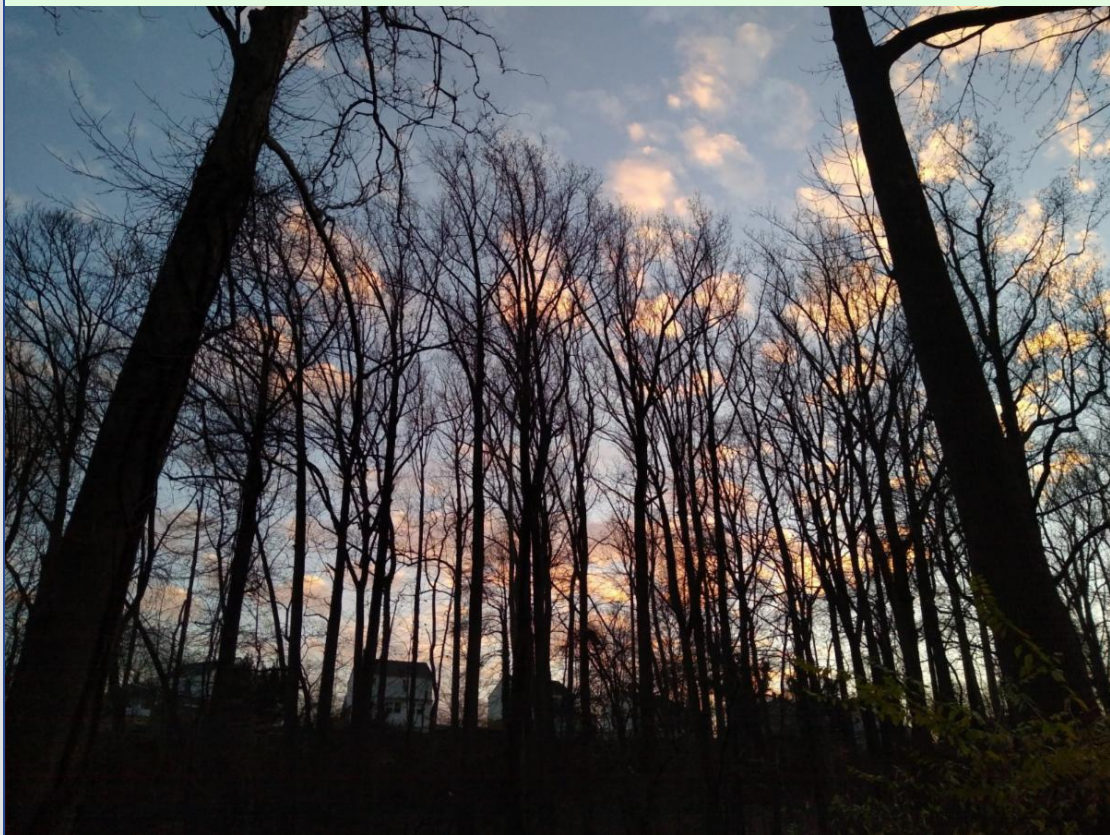
- Reduce litter in the Park
- Remove non-native invasive plants
- Seek solutions to reducing stormwater runoff
- Track down pollution in Sligo Creek through water quality testing and the Water WatchDogs program
- Advocate for the Creek and watershed
- Explore and share the natural wonders of Sligo Creek Park

Best wishes to all for a Happy 2021!

Mike Smith

President, Friends of Sligo Creek





*Winter sunset in Sligo (M. Wilpers photo)*

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## Nature Sightings in December



A Great Blue Heron snags a Brown Bullhead (catfish) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 12 (S. Davies photo)





Isabella Tiger Moth caterpillar (above) near Arcola and Hoyt on Dec. 12 by anonymous. Virginia Wild Rye (right) in the powerline meadow on Dec. 19 by M. Wilpers



Red-tailed Hawk (above) by D. Treadwell on Dec. 11 near the Beltway ponds. Red-shouldered Hawk (right) by S. Davies on Dec. 20 at the Wheaton Branch ponds. Crows chase off ("mob") the hawk at right.



White-cheese Polypore mushroom (above) at Sligo Creek near Greenbriar on Dec. 29 (by anonymous). Witches'-butter mushroom (right) near the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 29 (by M. Strecker)







Black Vulture (above) on Dec. 22 and Pileated Woodpecker (right) on Dec. 18 at the Wheaton Branch ponds (by S. Davies)



Asters (left) still flowering Dec. 12 at the New Hampshire Ave. bridge. Arrowwood viburnum (above) re-flowering on Dec. 12 just east of NH Ave. (by M. Wilpers)



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (left) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 12 (by S. Davies). Northern Two-lined Salamander (above) near Sligo Creek and Wayne Ave. on Dec. 24 (by M.

Greene).



White-throated Sparrow (above) and Merlin (right) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 23 and 27 by S. Davies.



All photos, dates, locations, and names taken from the iNaturalist project titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed."

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fauna-and-flora-of-the-sligo-creek-watershed>

## Support FOSC

We rely on your donations in order to monitor, measure, report, plan, and advocate for the Creek and its wildlife.



Your support is greatly appreciated!

## Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

Invasive Plants (Jim Anderson): [invasives@fosc.org](mailto:invasives@fosc.org)

Litter (Patton Stephens): [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org)

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*Friends of Sligo Creek is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.*

**Join FOSC**