



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter February 2017



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Learn to Identify Trees in Winter Feb 5

Learn to identify some of our common trees in their winter state - without the help of leaves - in a walk led by Emily Ferguson just upstream from Colesville Road on Sunday, February 5, starting at 2:00 pm.

The outing will focus on oaks, hickories, maples, and other Sligo regulars by looking at their bark, twigs, buds, and fruits. You'll also see how habitat can be a helpful clue to tree ID, as some trees and shrubs specialize in growing on stream banks, wet floodplains, or dry uplands.

Meet at the first parking lot along Sligo Creek Parkway upstream (west) of Colesville Road, near Dallas Ave. The group will proceed upstream from there.

Emily Ferguson developed her interest in our region's flora and fauna while living in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Charlottesville. When a career move relocated her to Northern Virginia, she reestablished that nature connection through the Arlington Regional Master Naturalist course and the Tree Steward course.



American Sycamore is a common tree along Sligo's stream banks.

This walk is for adults and teens interested in learning basic tree identification skills. It will last about an hour and a half, depending on the interests of the group. If you own binoculars, a hand lens, or a favorite field guide, bring them along. In the case of steady rain, sleet or snow, the outing will be postponed until the following Sunday, February 12 at 2 pm.

For more information, email pat_ratkowski@hotmail.com.

How to Care for Your Trees Feb 21

Learn how to plant and maintain trees on your property from urban forester Andy Driscoll of Montgomery Parks on Tuesday, February 21, at 7:30 pm.

The talk takes place at the Silver Spring Civic Building on Ellsworth Drive in downtown Silver Spring. Parking is free after 7 pm in the county lot across the street. Come at 7:15 for refreshments and conversation.

In this talk, Andy will discuss proper tree-care methods, from planting techniques to the preservation of mature and aging trees. He will cover



mulching, watering, and pruning.

Andy Driscoll is certified as an arborist and tree risk assessor through the International Society of Arboriculture. He has over ten years of experience in urban forestry, including utility and municipal street tree management. Andy is currently an urban forester for Montgomery Parks. For more information, contact Kit Gage at advocacy@fosc.org.

Water WatchDogs: Feb 27 Talk & Mar 4 Tour of Pollution Hot Spots

Late winter offers two opportunities to learn about water quality in Sligo from one of the mid-Atlantic's leading experts, Lori Lilly.

On Monday, February 27, at 7 pm, Lori addresses the Environment Committee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board in a public event at the Silver Spring Civic Building on Ellsworth Drive.

Lori will introduce to the committee and attendees simple techniques for identifying pollution sources on streets, at other urban sites, and along the creek. Come early to enjoy refreshments and meet other folks interested in the water quality of our creek. The Citizens Advisory Board is appointed by the county executive and advises the county on a range of local issues.



Lori Lilly leads water quality outing in Sligo.

On Saturday, March 4, at 8:30 am, Lori leads a tour of water pollution hotspots in downtown Silver Spring and shows where the water runoff enters into Sligo Creek. Meet at the home of Anne Vorce, 618 Bennington Drive.

Lori will start with a look at some "outfalls" in Sligo -- large pipes opening near the stream that drain storm sewers as far as a half-mile away -- before leading the group to downtown. There the group will look at storm drains, alleyways, dumpsters, and other sources of water pollution that enters the creek. As part of the March 4 program, you will learn how become a Water WatchDog and report pollution to the county through an easy email system. Preregistration is required before noon on March 3 by emailing avorce@aol.com.

Both of these events are made possible by the Water WatchDog program of the Friends of Sligo Creek through a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, funded through the water quality protection program of Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection.

Sligo & the Bay Cleanup under Trump

In these anxious times for everyone who loves and fights for the natural world, it's important to consider how the new administration could impact our own Sligo watershed and what can be done by those who care.

Sligo is one of many dozens of creeks and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay and which were implicated in 2010 when the EPA established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). This comprehensive "pollution diet" for the region's waterways required states to establish and enforce strict pollution levels across the Bay's 64,000 square mile watershed, which covers parts of six states and DC.



Chesapeake Bay watershed and its major river watersheds (NASA image)

The plan quickly drew lawsuits from developers and the American Farm Bureau, claiming federal overreach, partly out of fear that the mandate would inspire future plans for the Mississippi basin. As attorney general for Oklahoma, Scott Pruitt, Trump's nominee for Secretary of the EPA, filed *amicus* briefs in support of the lawsuits. Fortunately, the Supreme Court declined to take up the case, thus leaving the plan in place. Despite this history, Pruitt stated in recent testimony to Congress that, as to enforcing the bay cleanup plan as head of EPA, "I can commit to you that, in fact, I will do so." How aggressively is unknown.



Two-lined or Red-backed Salamander found in Sligo in 2008 (Wilpers photo)

FOSC's new advocacy coordinator Kit Gage offers her perspective on how things might develop from here and what you can do:

"The Bay cleanup is a court-ordered project, so Secretary Pruitt cannot undo it unilaterally. It's also an implementation of an Act of Congress -- the Clean Water Act of 1972, with subsequent extensions (1977 and 1987) -- so the House and Senate must be involved in any reductions. The Judicial Branch of the federal government will also slow down any attempts to curtail the Act.

"In addition, the EPA isn't the only party paying to implement the plan; the states do so, as well, and states like Maryland want to do this work and can continue to pay for it.

Finally, as any agency veteran can attest, there is strong support within EPA to keep things going. Staff scientists can slow any erosion of the plan from within the agencies.

"That said: We, the people of Friends of Sligo Creek, must work together with all our partners on all levels (federal, state, and county) and apply pressure on all branches of government, to keep the pressure on to implement the Bay cleanup policies. That will have an impact, and must have an impact. We are starting to see progress locally and regionally in pollution reduction and cleaner, clearer water and healthier life in our waterways. We can't go back."

For more information, contact Kit at advocacy@fosc.org.

Bee Expert Sam Droege Speaks at "Inspiration Works" March 21

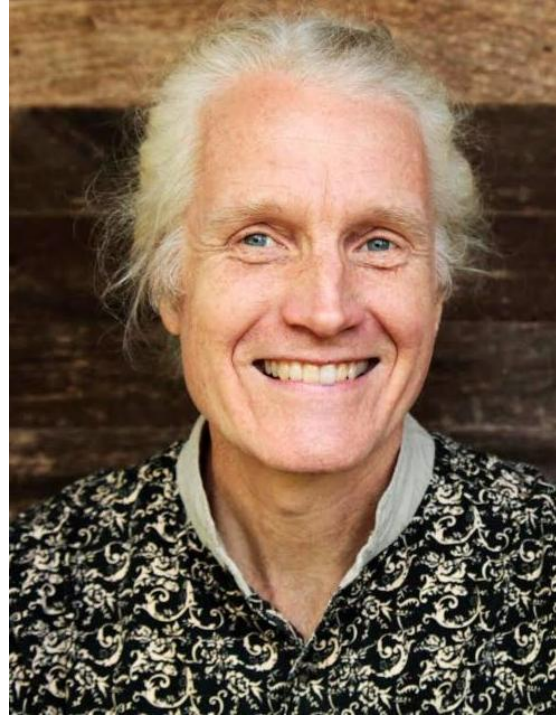
Native bee biologist Sam Droege will be the featured speaker at our annual "Inspiration Works" event on Tuesday March 21, starting at 7:30 pm at the Dennis Avenue Recreation Building

As always, the evening will include displays by the FOSC committees on invasive plants, stormwater, natural history, and water quality. Munch on sandwich wraps and enjoy the all-important opportunity to meet or reconnect with other Sligo residents who care about the ecological health of the watershed.

Sam will talk on "Bees of the Burbs: The Many Native Bees that Live in Your Yard and the Suburban Wildlands We Keep Around." He'll provide an overview of our native bee surveys in 2013 and 2014 in the Pepco meadow and a Sligo woodland, which his lab helped complete.

A Hyattsville native, Sam is a long-time biologist with the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (part of the U.S. Geological Survey), where he has pioneered an inventory and monitoring program for native bees along with online identification guides for North American species.

For more information, email outreach@fosc.org.



Need to Reach Us?

President (Corinne Stephens): president@fosc.org

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

Litter (Patton Stephens): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

Natural History (Bruce Sidwell): naturalhistory@fosc.org

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@fosc.org

Water Quality (Pat Ratkowski): waterquality@fosc.org

Outreach (Sarah Jane Marcus): outreach@fosc.org

Treasurer (Dee Clarkin; asstnt treasurer Sherrill Goggin): treasurer@fosc.org

Newsletter Editor (Michael Wilpers): editor@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.

