



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter January 2017



*Ellen X. Silverberg photo*

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## Talk on Caring for Your Trees Feb 21

Learn how best 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 Montgomery County," Andy explains, "72.9% of the urban forest canopy is located outside of parkland, much of it on private property. It is vitally important



that everyone takes care of the trees on their land to preserve our urban tree cover."

In this talk, Andy discusses proper tree-care methods, from proper 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 a bachelor's degree in biology and environmental studies from Warren Wilson College. He has over 10 years of experience in urban forestry, including utility and

municipal street tree management. Andy is currently an urban forester for Montgomery Parks, where he specializes in tree preservation during construction projects.

For more information, contact Kit Gage at [advocacy@fosc.org](mailto:advocacy@fosc.org).

## How Can We Improve Our Web Site?

Friends of Sligo Creek

About Us  
Calendar  
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Action Log  
Advocacy  
Invasive Plants, RIP  
Litter  
Plants & Animals  
Stormwater  
Water Quality  
Photo Gallery  
Sligo History  
Sightings  
Schools Activities  
Links to Allied Sites  
Report Problems  
Contact Us  
Sligo Questions?

**News & Updates**

- ✓ **Sligo Water Quality**  
Pat Ratkowski, our Water Quality chair, supplies the latest monitoring of 5 sites along Sligo.  
- posted Jan 4
- ✓ **Coliform Data Measurements**  
Pat Ratkowski, our Water Quality chair, posts the amount of fecal bacteria present at several different locations in Sligo Creek for December 2016.  
- posted Jan 4
- ✓ **Detergent Discharge into Sligo, Part 3**  
Pat Ratkowski continues his investigation into the source of the detergent discharge into Sligo Creek at Maple Ave. Pat is joined underground in his quest by DEP Environmental Supervisor Steve Martin, DEP Environmental Specialist Alex Torrella, and Greg Harless of Stormwater Maintenance & Consulting.  
- posted Jan 3
- ✓ **FOSC Website Survey**  
To help us evaluate our current website and plan for improvements, please take our short **four-question survey**. Read our **December Newsletter** for more information about the survey.  
- posted Dec 20
- ✓ **Our December Newsletter**
  - New FOSC President Corinne Lackner Stephens
  - Claire Gorman Steps Down

Find us on Facebook  
Join Us

Don't forget to complete the quick survey about our Friends of Sligo website. Link to the survey [here](#).

We'd like to get all responses gathered by the end of January. It takes only about 60 seconds to complete.

Your answers to four simple questions will help us to decide which features should be most easily accessed and to prioritize those sections most in need of improvement.

Portion of our current FOSC homepage

Our new content management system will make the site more friendly to hand-held devices and also more secure. If you have any questions, contact [outreach@fosc.org](mailto:outreach@fosc.org)

## Thanks to Outgoing President Kit Gage

After three years at the helm, Kit Gage has stepped down as sixth president of Friends of Sligo Creek, leaving the organization and the watershed in better shape for all her many efforts.

Her contributions to FOSC over that time are too numerous to list here (such a list would have to note prominently that she continued as president despite her successful cancer treatments at the very start). As she memorably noted about staying on at the time, "I need something to get my mind off of this!"

Board members expressed special gratitude for her vigilant monitoring of the court-ordered sewer line work carried out by WSSC (Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission) and her relentless letter-writing and testifying on environmental issues before the county.

Kit's commitment to diversity led to her recruit Delia Aguilar to the board and to have FOSC collaborate with the first Festival del Rio Anacostia. Kit's leadership also led to our hiring a part-time paid database manager to improve communication with more than 1,000 new and existing members.



*Kit (with granddaughter) receives award from the county's Department of Environmental Protection.*

"Kit has been a true stalwart working steadfastly on many fronts," wrote one board member, "both publicly and behind the scenes on behalf of Friends of Sligo Creek." Another wrote, "Kit has been an outstanding leader of the organization. Her knowledge of environmental and stewardship issues is second to none. Her openness to ideas and her search for diversity for the board of directors is very notable."



Kit "provided energy and great ideas to remedy festering organizational design flaws," noted another board member, "the transition of management of the website, working with WSSC to see that damage to the park was minimized, and overall strong leadership during a time of growth."

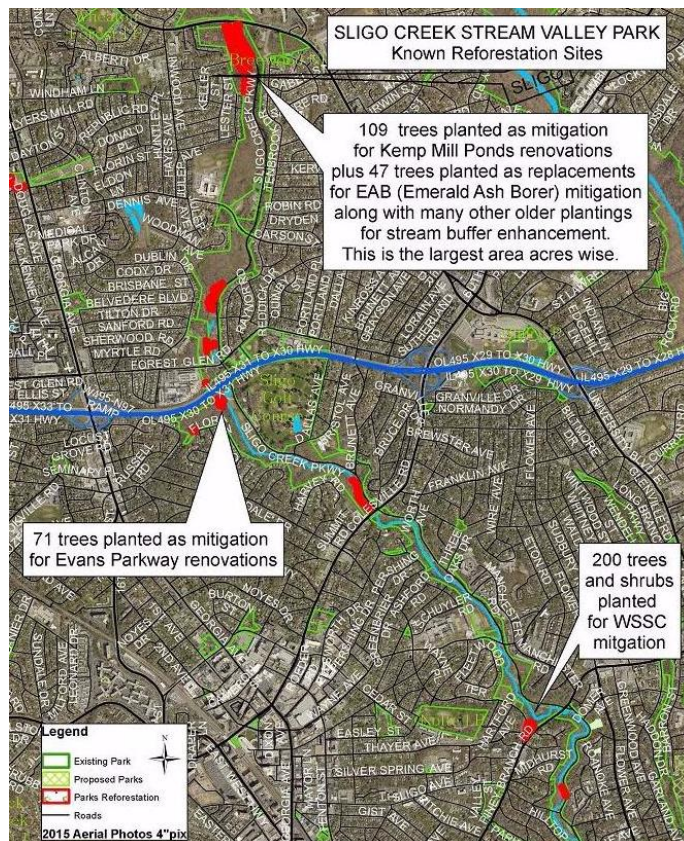
"She has been a one-woman force, with her imprint on just about all our operations," wrote yet another board member. "She has been an incredible source of support and facilitation for others helping to further the work of FOSC. She has also reached out beyond the white, middle-aged population. And she has spoken to school and scout groups, helping develop the next generation of environmental stewards."

Everyone in Friends of Sligo Creek thanks Kit Gage for serving our park and watershed so well in the last three years. Thank you, Kit!

## Adopt One of Sligo's Reforestation Projects

More than 150 trees and shrubs were planted at three Sligo sites in 2015 and 2016 by Montgomery Parks as mitigation for the loss of trees from major sewer repairs, park renovation projects, and the emerald ash borer (an invasive non-native insect that kills ash trees).

Two of the largest tree planting areas need a volunteer "Woods Warriors" to help monitor the deer cages and keep away invasive vines. If you are now a certified Weed Warrior, or willing to take the required Weed Warrior training, please consider adopting one of these newly reforested areas.



*Three largest reforestation projects in Sligo  
(Map created for FOSC by Montgomery Parks)*

**To find out more, contact Norma Kawecki at her email address [here](#).**

Woods Warriors act as caretakers of the tree plantings by visiting their site twice a year, cutting non-native invasive vines, keeping the fence-cages upright and

lashed to their supports, and taking photos and completing surveys for the Parks Department.

One of the sites lies between the creek and the intersection of Piney Branch Road and Dale, where one Woods Warrior has already volunteered but a second is needed. Two hundred trees and shrubs were planted here in 2013 as mitigation for trees cut during nearby sewer work by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). The sewer upgrades were mandated by consent decree in 2005 under the Clean Water Act.

Another site looking to be adopted is situated just downstream from the Beltway, along the paved trail. Seventy-one trees were planted there as mitigation for trees lost during the renovations to Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park.



*Young saplings planted in 2016 (in gully at right) and older trees from earlier plantings (foreground and left) just downstream from University Boulevard. (Wilpers photo)*

A third major site in search of a Woods Warrior is located just upstream from Colesville Road. (See the center of the above map.) In 2013, 46 trees were planted, with another dozen added last year. Please consider adopting this site and becoming its Woods Warrior!

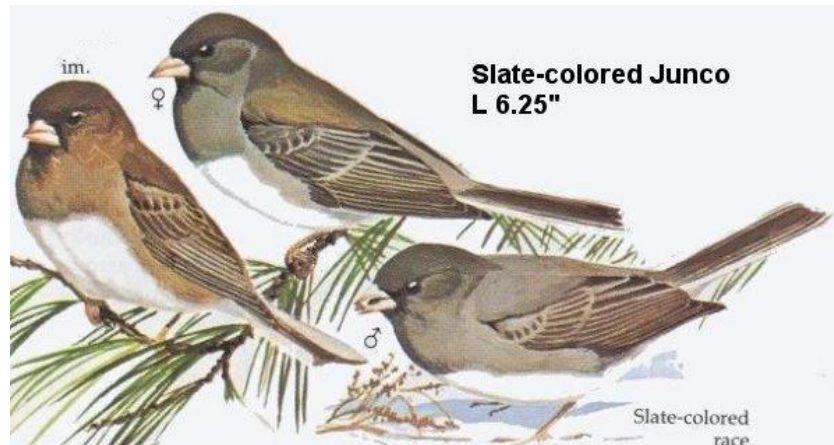
To see how beneficial a Woods Warrior can be, look at the 156 trees added to a stretch of the park in upper Sligo, between University Boulevard and the first playground downstream (between the Parkway and the creek). This ten-acre site constitutes the largest area in Sligo designated for reforestation. From late 2015 and summer of 2016, these trees were planted. Thanks to the Woods Warrior, all of the deer fencing is in good repair and none of the trees is threatened by invasive vines.

## **Why Are Most of the Juncos in Sligo Males?**



Through most of its vast winter range, Slate-colored Juncos congregate in flocks which are either mostly male (in the north) or mostly female (in the south). Only within a narrow east-west band along the Virginia-North Carolina line, and westward, are the junco flocks balanced between males and females.

Sligo's flocks were about 60 percent male in the 1970s, according to research by a team at Indiana University. In the Deep South, males made up just



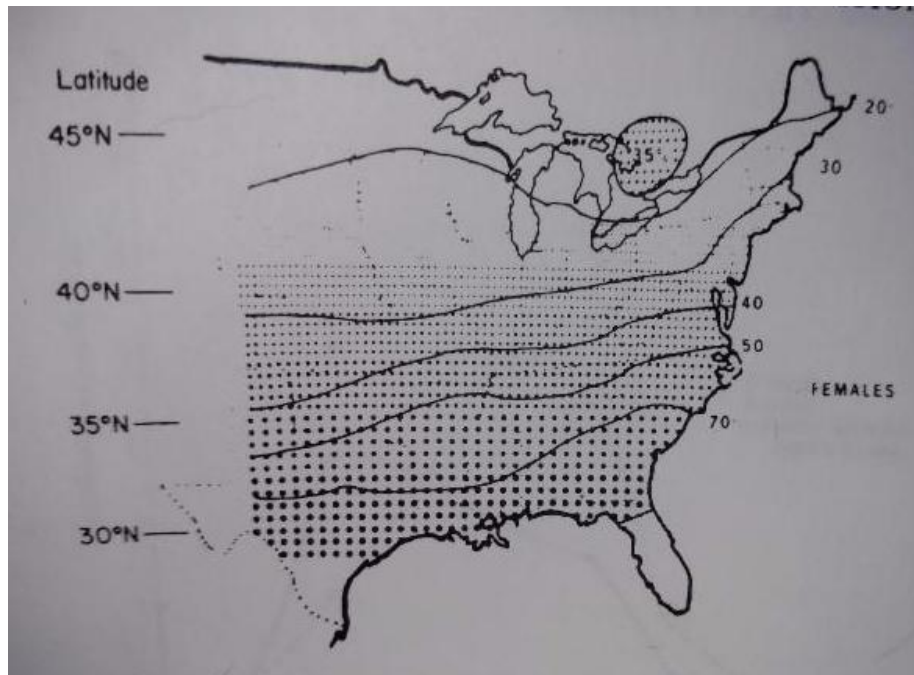
*(Image from paulnoll.com)*

30 percent of flocks (or less) while, from Maine through the Upper Midwest, males formed at least 70-80 percent of the flocks. Warming temperatures since then may have moved the mix in Sligo closer to half-and-half.

Researchers have concluded that a number of factors are at play in this north-south gradation of sex ratios. Males are more successful at establishing their breeding territories (spread throughout Canada) if they spend winters close by. Males are also known to possess higher tolerance for fasting, which is a common condition in the frigid north.

Females, in contrast, don't need to arrive at breeding range until after males have established their territories, so females juncos can afford to spend more time getting there. Females are also more successful in feeding when they don't have to compete with males. Both sexes suffer mortality as a result of their choices: males in the north because of the cold and shortage of food and females in the south due to the long migration back north.

So next time you spot a group of juncos in the Sligo watershed, you'll know why the males seem to be in the majority.



*Percentage of females in winter flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos as it varied with latitude in the 1970s. From Ketterson and Van Nolan, *Ecology*, 57 (1976). [Dark-eyed Juncos in the U.S. are now divided among six races, including the Slate-colored Juncos of the eastern U.S.]*

For more information, see Ellen Ketterson and Van Nolan, "Geographic Variation and Its Climatic Correlates in the Sex Ratio of Eastern-Wintering Dark-Eyed Juncos," *Ecology* 57 (1976): 679-693.

## Need to Reach Us?

President (Corinne Stephens): [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)

Advocacy (Kit Gage): [advocacy@fosc.org](mailto:advocacy@fosc.org)

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

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): [stormwater@fosc.org](mailto:stormwater@fosc.org)

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

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

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Find us on Facebook!



*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.*