



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter August 2019



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Next Invasives Pull is August 17

Help remove invasive mile-a-minute vines from Sligo this Saturday, August 17, with an enthusiastic group of new and experienced volunteers.

The team will meet at 8:00 am in the soccer field parking lot across from the Sligo Creek Golf Course or in the golf course's own lot. Given the early hour, it should be obvious which location the



Mile-a-minute vines will be the focus of our invasives pull on August 17.

the fruits are consumed by birds, ants, chipmunks, squirrels, and deer, all of which spread its seeds. The floating fruits also travel along our waterways.

In an effort to develop a biological control of the vine, biologists studied herbivorous insects that feed on it in Japan and China, identifying more than 100 species. The USDA selected the beetle *Rhinoncomimus latipes* because it feeds on no other plant. Since 2012, more than 500,000 larvae of this weevil have been released in twelve states, including Maryland, and have proven to be somewhat effective in reducing mile-a-minute infestations.

If you have any questions, email Jim Anderson at invasives@fosc.org.

Save-the-Dates: Sweep the Creek and Fall Bird Outing

Mark your calendars! Our next litter cleanup and invasives removal, "Sweep the Creek," is September 21 and 22, with our annual fall bird outing the next weekend, on Saturday, September 28.

The fall Sweep starts at 9:00 am on September 21 and at 1:00 pm on

group has chosen.

Work will be done around the perimeter of the soccer field and the nearby stormwater ponds, which are often very active with bird life such herons, night-herons, kingfishers, and blackbirds. We plan to wrap up about 10:30 am.

Be sure to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and closed-toe shoes and bring your own water. FOSC will provide gloves and tools as necessary. This activity is for teens and older.

Mile-a-minute also goes by such names as tear-thumb, devil's tail, giant climbing tear-thumb, and Asiatic tear-thumb.

The species is native to East and Southeast Asia and became established in the eastern U.S. in the 1930s. It can grow 30 feet per year and

September 22. As usual, the watershed will be divided up into sections over the two days to cover Sligo Creek Park and its tributaries -- Long Branch and Wheaton Branch -- as well as possibly Takoma Woods. Full details will be provided in the September issue of the newsletter and, of course, on our website as soon as they are worked out. You can also inquire by emailing our Sweep coordinator, Patton Stephens, at litter@fosc.org.



Trash removed from Sligo during a recent Sweep the Creek event

Ornithologist David



Killdeer at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on July 1 (Treadwell photo)

Blockstein and local birder Mary Singer will lead our annual fall bird outing on Saturday, September 28 from 8 to 10 am.

Meet in the parking lot on Sligo Creek Parkway just north (upstream) from Forest Glen Road. The lot is near several stormwater ponds that protect the creek and provide valuable wetland habitat.

The outing will go forward in a sprinkle but will be cancelled in case of steady rain. The group will look for year-round residents and migrants passing through on their way to wintering grounds further south.

For further information on the bird outing, contact Ross Campbell at this [email address](#).

Sligo Stream Restoration Project

If you notice heavy equipment and large building materials just upstream from Colesville

Road, that's because Montgomery Parks is conducting a creek restoration project and replacing a pedestrian bridge over Sligo Creek.

The work is taking place between Brunett Avenue and Dallas Avenue. It started in June and will wrap up this fall.

The project will repair erosion caused by runoff from dense development within the watershed, allow easier movement for fish (we have 17 species, at last count), increase oxygen levels in the water, and diversify habitat within the stream for aquatic insects and other animals by creating more varied environments (quiet pools, fast-moving runs, and undulating ripples).



Netting across Sligo will keep fish from work areas during stream bed restoration.

Among other things, the work involves removing two old grade-control structures and installing rock cross-vanes, J-hooks, and rocky riffles.



During this work, the stream water is being pumped around the site through 18-inch black piping. Nets upstream and downstream from the site will prevent fish from entering the area. Before work began, biologists utilized electro-fishing to capture and relocate fish to other parts of the creek.

The project will include the realignment of the trail and installation of a new bridge. Trails will remain open throughout construction but work crews will occasionally need to interrupt and direct traffic. Use caution around the worksite. Once complete, the project will provide both safer access for Park users and improved ecological functions within the creek.

Black plastic pipes will divert creek water around the restoration site during the work. (Wilpers photos)

-- adapted from information provided by Douglas Stephens, Principal Natural Resource Specialist, Montgomery Parks

Corinne Signs Off as President



After serving more than two years as the sixth president of Friends of Sligo Creek, Corinne Stephens has stepped down, in keeping with the two-year terms of the office.

"I started volunteering with FOSC 2011, served on the Board since 2013, and became President in January 2017," she notes. "Since our presidential terms last for two years, I am now stepping down."

"But, don't worry, I'm not going far! I plan to continue volunteering, and my new paid position is very close by at Brookside Gardens! Please stop by to smell some flowers, visit the turtles in the ponds, and say hello!"

"During my tenure on the FOSC board, we accomplished so

much! Our board is more diversified, as is the larger group we call, the Roundtable, made up of our most active volunteers. Now both groups are more representative of our culturally and age-diverse community. I'm delighted that FOSC continues to pursue this important initiative!"

"We've taken on more grants than I can count, as both the grant applicant/recipient and as the fiscal agent for many smaller groups. We've added bacteria among the many factors we track in the creek and our social media presence is more robust and effective. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Friends of Sligo Creek."

"I am excited to pass FOSC's presidential reigns to Mike Smith and know he'll be a fearless and productive leader."

-- Corinne Lackner Stephens

Mike Smith and I have served with Corinne on the FOSC board since 2011 so we have worked collaboratively and have developed tremendous respect for her. That now makes us the 'old timers' -- with lots of new people on the board now.

During that time, the board worked to diversify the organization, make efforts to do more outreach to different communities, do some more systematizing of the organization, and make it more professional while maintaining its very committed volunteer nature.

Over the last years, Corinne facilitated these efforts and worked to be a model for younger volunteers who will be taking FOSC into new technologies and outreach mechanisms. Among her directing efforts: a new website is almost live, more Facebook and Tweeting, and better technologies for recording water quality and sightings. We will miss her strong and yet jocular direction, and will try to figure out how to rope her in on other FOSC projects. All the best, Corinne!

-- Kit Gage, board member

Dramatic Hunt by Osprey in Sligo

Sligo birder and photographer Bob Cantor caught this dramatic scene at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds on the morning of July 25. As he noted, "It happened so fast, I didn't have time to switch to a faster shutter speed, so that's why the pictures aren't any higher resolution as they might be."

For readers interested in photography, Bob took these photos manually (i.e., not with a motorized shutter) using his Canon EOS Rebel T3 and a Sigma 18-250 mm zoom lens (27-375 equiv for a 35 mm camera).





The first eBird report of an Osprey at these ponds came in 2012. Bob reported seeing two there on June 4, 2017. According to eBird's "bar charts", Osprey are sighted at the ponds infrequently from late March through October.

The 2010 Breeding Bird Atlas of MD and DC indicates that the closest nesting areas are along the Anacostia River near the District line. This year, Osprey nests have been spotted at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. Osprey have increased in abundance and distribution dramatically in Maryland since DDT was banned in the 1970s. As further testimony to the availability of fish in these ponds, Bob observed on the same day a Great Blue Heron, a Black-crowned Night-Heron, and two Green Herons, all of which eat fish.

For more information, contact naturalhistory@fosc.org.

Need to Reach Us?

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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.