



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter December 2019



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Next Invasives Work December 7

Join weed warrior supervisor Jim Anderson and other volunteers to help remove English ivy and Bush Honeysuckle in Long Branch-Wayne Local Park on Saturday, December 7, from 9:00 to 11:00 am.

The group will gather on Glenville Court, which is located between East Wayne Avenue and Langley



*Bush Honeysuckles is an East Asian shrub
invasive throughout our area.
(easttennesseewildflowers.com photo)*

Drive, just off University Boulevard.

Work will focus around a stand of trees near the covered picnic tables.

Be sure to wear long sleeves and pants and sturdy shoes. Bring your own water and gloves, pruners, and loppers, if you have them. The leaders will have extra gloves and tools for those who need them.

Students may receive community service credit. Volunteers age 14 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult; students 15 and under may use weed wrenches and pick up litter; students 16 and older may use all tools approved by Montgomery Parks (wrenches, pruners, loppers, and saws).

We will work in light rain, but if there is a heavy downpour, we will reschedule the event at the same location on the following Saturday, December 14, 9:00-11:00 am. Our monthly invasives events in the Sligo watershed have been very successful; we look forward to seeing you there!

For more information, see this [Parks website](#). To ask questions or check on the weather plan, contact Barbara Francisco at bfrancisco81@yahoo.com.



Woodland at the playground area of Long Branch-Wayne Local Park (Montgomery Parks photo)

Eminent Domain a Key to Opposing Beltway Expansion

One of the many unknowns about Governor Hogan's plans to widen the Capital Beltway is whether the State of Maryland can claim eminent domain over park lands owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

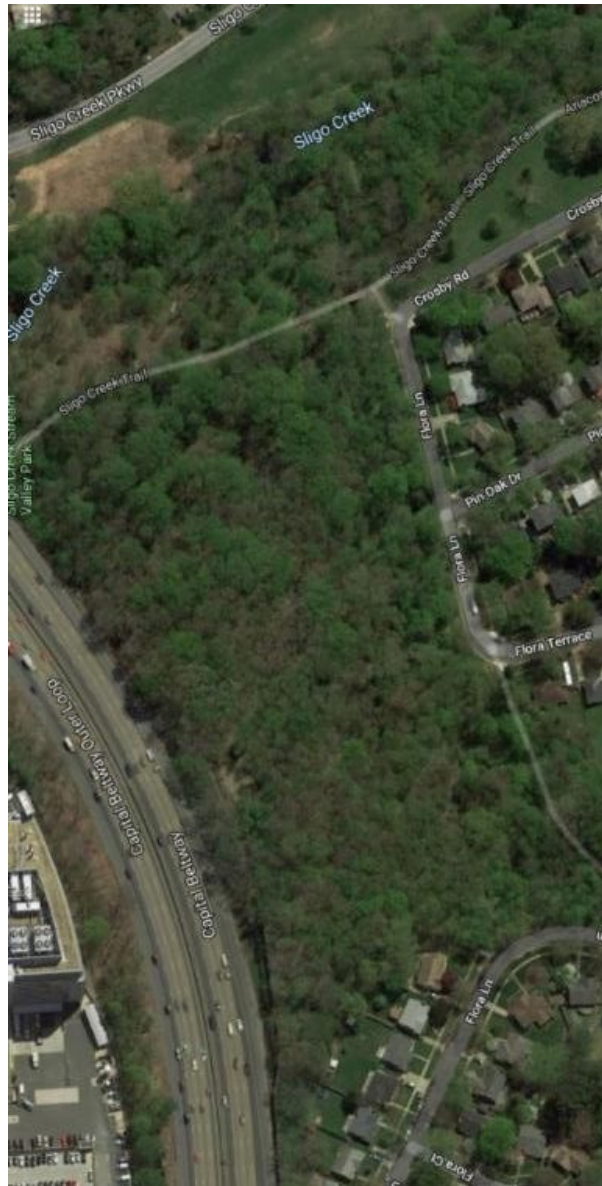
"I feel very confident we have a strong legal position that they are utterly without legal authority to take our land," said Montgomery County Planning Board Chairman Casey Anderson at a meeting on November 20 when questioned by a *Washington Post* reporter about the state's powers of eminent domain over Montgomery Parks property.

"That's among the many issues we may have to fight about in court," he told the *Post*. "It's crystal clear that we own a lot of land that they need, and our willingness to part with it is a big issue to be addressed."

Land managed by Montgomery Parks is protected under the Capper-Crampton Act of 1930. As the M-NCPPC noted in its June 12 letter to the State Highway Administration and the Federal Highway Administration:

"Much of the land that may be needed for the project was acquired with federal funding appropriated under the Act. Congress passed the Act to provide for the acquisition of land in Maryland and Virginia for development of a comprehensive park, parkway, and playground system in the National Capital area.

"A subsequent 1931 Agreement between the National Capital Park and Planning Commission ('NCPC') and the M-NCPPC provides that 'no part of any land purchased for park or recreational purposes with the funds provided [under the Act], in whole or in part, shall at any time be conveyed, sold, leased, exchanged,



Widening of the Beltway (at left) would probably destroy the woodland along the Flora Lane Tributary (at right), among other habitat areas.

or in any manner used or developed for other than park purposes by the [M-NCPPC], and the development and administration of said lands shall be under the [M-NCPPC] but the development thereof shall be in accordance with plans approved by the National Commission, or the necessary approval of the Congress of the United States." (The full letter is available [here](#).)

These lands include Sligo Creek Park, which would lose several natural habitat areas were the widening to go through. These include lushly planted bioswales, extensive native tree plantings, wildlife-friendly stormwater ponds, and a mature woodland across from Holy Cross Hospital. Within that woodland, the Flora Lane Tributary supports fish species found nowhere else in Sligo.

Our Advocacy Director, Kit Gage, sent a letter on October 26 on behalf of the FOSC board to the Maryland Board of Public Works (Governor Hogan, Comptroller Franchot and Treasurer Kopp) in advance of its meeting on December 18, when another vote on the Beltway plan is scheduled. The letter objects to the process proceeding without the relevant data having been made available to county officials, advocacy organizations, or residents, as is currently the case. To receive a copy, email advocacy@fosc.org.

-- Michael Wilpers (editor@fosc.org)



Bioswale installed by Montgomery Parks alongside the Beltway at Sligo Creek Parkway (Wilpers photo)

Medical Group Joins FOSC and Parks for Invasives Removal

The Friends of Sligo Creek thanks Global Medical REIT and their staff who

devoted a long, productive day to removing non-native invasive plants from Sligo Creek Park on October 26.

Corinne Stephens, Weed Warrior Coordinator for Montgomery Parks, noted in her thanks to them, "Working for hours to remove non-native invasive plants is not an easy task, nor is it one that the average person is typically happy to volunteer to do. Please know that your work helps to protect and preserve our natural habitat areas for the future, and we appreciate you."

Leading the event from the FOSC side were invasives removal veterans Greg Odegarden and Jim Anderson. We are grateful to Brandon Cole and D'Atra Montgomery of Global Medical REIT in Bethesda. Three of their executives and ten staff members took part.



Volunteers from Global Medical REIT, Friends of Sligo Creek, and Montgomery Parks pose with the giant Oriental Bittersweet vine that they removed. (Montgomery Parks photo)

Sligo Nature Sightings in November

Bird sightings and photos were plentiful for November, thanks to the diligent camera work of Dan Treadwell and the many reports



and photos on ebird.org by several local birders.

You can send your sightings and photos to naturalhistory@fosc.org.

At the stormwater ponds near University Boulevard, Dan photographed a well-hidden Red-tailed Hawk on November 25 (at left) and a Red-shouldered Hawk that blended with its background on November 22 (his photo below).

Red-tailed Hawk near the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds Nov. 25 (Treadwell photo)



Red-shouldered Hawk at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on Nov. 22 (Treadwell photo)

At the always-active Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds (near Dennis Avenue), reports on

ebird.org were many.

On November 26, Robert Cantor reported a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (see his photo at right), a Hairy Woodpecker, and thirteen American Goldfinches. Three days earlier, he noted two Field Sparrows, two Turkey Vultures, and three Dark-eyed Juncos.

On the 18th, he witnessed six Black Vultures circling high above and to the north of the ponds as six more joined them and they drifted south together before breaking off and soaring away to the east.

At the same ponds, Mandrake Sumners spotted a Cooper's Hawk on November 24, a Pileated Woodpecker and two Field Sparrows on the 23rd, and a Winter Wren on November 9. Michael Brown noted a Bufflehead on November 9.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the Wheaton Branch ponds Nov. 26 (Cantor photo)

Manoli Strecker spotted three Hooded Mergansers there on November 9 (his photo below), a Chipping Sparrow and a Bald Eagle on November 16, and on the 29th a Great Blue Heron, Eastern Bluebird, Red-tailed Hawk, and Belted Kingfisher.



Hooded Mergansers on the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds Nov. 9 (Strecker photo)



Barred Owl between Wayne and Dennis Avenues on Nov. 23 (Sumners photo).

Along the trail between Dennis and Wayne Avenues, Mandrake Sumners photographed a Barred Owl on Nov. 23 (at left) and Ann Hobbs reported three Chipping Sparrows on Nov. 6. Two more Barred Owls were noticed by Patricia Wood along Sligo November 8 between Wayne and New Hampshire Avenues.

Your newsletter editor spotted a few interesting plants in November. Strawberry bush (a native viburnum) is usually browsed heavily by deer, but one of six stalks escaped foraging on a shrub near the Flower Avenue playground long enough to produce its spectacular fruits.



Strawberry Bush between Flower and Carroll Avenues on Nov. 11



Wild Yam along the east side of the Parkway between Maple and Piney Branch on Nov. 3



American Witch-hazel flowers on Nov. 28 near the Carroll Ave. bridge

Wild Yam was in spring-green foliage in early November along the east side of the Parkway between Maple and Piney Branch. American Witch-hazel is always a joy to see in late fall, with its spindly yellow petals. This one blooms reliably next to a footbridge just downstream from the Carroll Avenue bridge. It was not discovered until the late '90s (by Bern Heinrich) that Witch-hazel is pollinated by a kind of owlet moth that overwinters as an adult.



Late fall and winter is a great time to admire our native grape vines, which are much more visible after leaf drop and can grow to impressive size. Probably the largest of these vines in Sligo is this one growing between the hiker-biker trail and the creek just downstream from Dennis Avenue. It hangs from a Black Cherry tree and, higher up, drapes over Red Maples.

*Giant native grape vine near Dennis Avenue
(all plant photos by Wilpers)*



One of our late-blooming asters between Maple
and New Hampshire on Nov. 11

This aster was still flowering on Nov. 28 near
the intersection of the Parkway and New
Hampshire Ave.

It's remarkable that some of our native plants in the aster family continue to bloom into November, when flying pollinators are so few, but these two species were still flowering in the last few weeks. The latest blooming of our asters is the aptly named Frost Aster (*Symphiotricum pilosum*), which these may be.

-- Michael Wilpers, Natural History Committee (naturalhistory@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.

