



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter January 2020



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

Contents

MLK Day of Service at Hillwood Manor

Talk on Microplastics Pollution Feb. 18

New Sligo Page on iNaturalist

Nature Sightings in December

Need to Reach Us?

MLK Day of Service at Hillwood Manor Jan. 20

Join other Sligo and Takoma Park residents in a trash cleanup and invasives removal during the traditional Day of Service in honor of the Martin Luther King, Jr., birthday on Monday, January 20.

The effort runs from 10 am to 12 noon at Hillwood Manor Park,



*Sligo Creek near Hillwood Manor Park in
January 2020 (X. Courouble photo)*

collaborative effort between Montgomery Parks, Friends of Sligo Creek, and the City of Takoma Park, in support of Hillwood Manor, a community within the Sligo Creek watershed.

For questions or to sign up, contact Greg at gregar@nih.gov or Xavier Courouble at xavier.courouble@yahoo.com.

located in Takoma Park just downstream from New Hampshire Avenue on 13th Avenue. Meet in front of the FOSC kiosk at the footbridge over the creek. The event will go forward, rain or shine.

Volunteers can choose between picking up trash and debris along the hiker-biker path or removing non-native, invasive plants with certified Montgomery County Weed Warrior Greg Odegarden.

Be sure to wear long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy, closed-toe shoes. Gloves and tools will be available to borrow if you don't have your own. No power tools or machetes are allowed.

This workday is pre-approved for Student Service Learning hours by Montgomery County Public Schools. Volunteers under 16 are not permitted to use tools. Volunteers 14 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult. The event is a

Learn About Microplastics in Local Waterways on Feb. 18

Learn about pollution from small pieces of plastic in the Chesapeake Bay watershed at a talk on Tuesday, February 18, at the Silver Spring Civic Building, located at the corner of Fenton and Ellsworth. The event begins



Typical sample of microplastics from a waterway in the US (American University photo)

at 7:30 pm, but come at 7:00 to meet and talk with other Sligo residents. Parking is free after 6:30 in the county garage across the street on Ellsworth.

Our featured speaker is Jesse Meiller, a marine ecologist and environmental toxicologist at American University. She and her team are studying the prevalence and impact of microplastics from the breakdown of bags, bottles, and other plastic trash in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and their tributaries.

Her studies have found microplastics in the water and sediment of Nash Run, a tributary of the Anacostia, both

upstream and downstream from trash traps in the creek. She has also found them in the intestinal tracts of fish in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Read about her work in this brief 2019 [article](#).

She will be joined by Kathy Michels, a Sligo resident, neuroscientist, and long time advocate for better water quality in Sligo. She will talk about microplastics in the artificial turf that has been installed at several schools in the Sligo watershed and at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park. She will also address a plastic synthetic turf carpet proposed by developers as part of a renovation of the Ellsworth Drive pedestrian mall in downtown Silver Spring. More information about pollution from synthetic turf is at <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/synthetic-turf>.

During the new Maryland legislative session in Annapolis, a bill is being proposed that would eliminate subsidies for playground surfaces made from plastics and tire waste. Already, the City of San Francisco Recreation and Parks department has banned crumb rubber infill, frequently used for synthetic turf fields. NOAA has defined crumb rubber as a microplastic that "can be harmful to our ocean and aquatic life." The European Commission is considering a ban on rubber infill.

For more information about this event, contact waterquality@fosc.org.



Developer's proposal for a plastic synthetic turf carpet along Ellsworth Drive in downtown Silver Spring (artwork from thesentinel.com)

New iNaturalist Page for Sligo



Violet-toothed Polypore mushroom in Nov., reported on iNaturalist by M. Strecker

You can now follow an abundance of nature sightings in Sligo thanks to a new page dedicated to our watershed on iNaturalist, the online social network for naturalists and scientists that collects nature reports from all over the world.

This new "project" within iNaturalist collects reports from hundreds of individuals who have posted sightings, on their own iNaturalist pages, of plants and animals they have observed within Sligo. New postings are added almost daily. This project was created by Stephen Davies, whose bird photos are often featured in this newsletter.

Thanks to a map created by the Washington Metropolitan Council

of Governments (view it on our website [here](#)), he was able to delineate the boundaries of our watershed directly onto a map in iNaturalist. The project is titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed" and is located [here](#).

More than 1,200 species are already listed (both native and introduced), with reports from 457 observers and identification help from 1,036 people online. You can view the reports as either a "grid" (with large photos) or as a compact "list." Using "search," you can hunt for individual species (such as "Monarch butterfly") or groups of organisms (such as "butterflies") or click on pre-established "filters" for various types of plants or animals.

Among the species so far listed for Sligo are 526 plants (native and introduced), 400 insects, 138 birds, 90 fungi (mostly mushrooms), 36 arachnids (spiders), 13 mammals, nine fish, seven reptiles, and six amphibians.



*Red Fox near Forest Glen Rd on Jan. 9
reported on iNaturalist by S. Davies*

You can get to the project page by going to the iNaturalist home page ([iNaturalist.org/home](https://www.inaturalist.org/home)) hovering your cursor over "Community" in the top menu. Choose "Projects," and type in "Sligo Creek watershed." Or use this full web address for the Sligo project: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fauna-and-flora-of-the-sligo-creek-watershed>.

To learn more about using iNaturalist generally, attend the next monthly meeting of the Maryland Native Plant Society on Tuesday, January 28, at 7:30 pm at the Kensington Park Library. More information is [here](#).

-- Michael Wilpers
Natural History Committee
naturalhistory@fosc.org

Sligo Nature Sightings in December

As usual, the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds were especially attractive to our winter birds last month, many of them in large flocks typical of the cold months. These ponds are located on the south side of Dennis Avenue, between Inwood Ave. and Georgia Ave.

Perhaps most notable were a Merlin (a small falcon), spotted by Stephen Davies on December 21; a Winter Wren he reported on December 23; and two Bald Eagles noted by Robert Cantor on December 7. These and all other bird sightings below were reported on eBird.

On December 28, Stephen spotted sixteen Mallards, 14 Blue Jays, and 32 American Robins, along with eight Fish Crows, four American Goldfinches, three Eastern Bluebirds, two Hairy Woodpeckers, and a Northern Flicker.



One of three Eastern Bluebirds spotted on Dec. 28 at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds



Winter Wren at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 23

Bald Eagle passing a Tulip-tree at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on Dec. 7

On December 24 at the same ponds, Robert Cantor reported seeing no fewer than 125 Canada Geese and 14 Dark-eyed Juncos, as well as a Red-shouldered Hawk. The same day, Stephen noticed 15 Common Grackles and a Red-winged Blackbird. On December 23, Robert observed two Black Vultures. Stephen noted a Belted Kingfisher on December 19 and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on the first day of the month.



*Hermit Thrush at the stormwater ponds upstream from University Boulevard on Dec. 21
(All bird photos by Stephen Davies from ebird.org, used with permission.)*

Almost as busy were the stormwater ponds in Kemp Mill upstream from University Boulevard, where Stephen Davies spotted a Bald Eagle on December 7. Another highlight, on December 28, was a Brown Thrasher noticed by Benjamin Plume, who on the same day saw 14 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, seven White-throated Sparrows, five Dark-eyed Juncos, four Eastern Bluebirds, a Great Blue Heron, and a Belted Kingfisher, among others.

A week earlier, on December 21, Stephen Davies spotted a Chipping Sparrow, a Hermit Thrush, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Earlier on the month, he reported two Cooper's Hawks and a Northern Flicker on December 14 and, on December 7, a Hairy Woodpecker.

To follow bird sightings at these ponds, go to <https://ebird.org/region/US-MD-031/hotspots?yr=all&m=> and scroll down to location numbers 25 (Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds) or 84 (Sligo Creek Park -- north end to Dennis). Or start at <https://ebird.org/home>, select "Explore," type in "Montgomery, Maryland," choose "Hotspots," and scroll down to those same locations.



Seedbox in Long Branch Park just upstream from Carroll Ave. on Dec. 28



Leaf-shelter, probably for cocoon of a giant silk moth using Willow Oak leaves, near Kennebec Ave., on Dec. 24 (Wilpers photos)

Your editor noticed unusual box-shaped seed cases (above left) on dried plant remains in a wet area of Long Branch Park, near Maplewood. A generous soul on iNaturalist identified it as Seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*), a member of the Evening Primrose family. It has been documented in only two sections of Sligo.

Between Maple and Piney Branch, a planted Willow Oak had an interesting leaf-shelter (above right) that was (according to lepidopterist Rick Borchelt) probably built by a *Cecropia* or *Polyphemus* moth caterpillar for its over wintering cocoon. Titmice and Downy Woodpeckers love to puncture these cocoon's and eat the moth pupae inside, so the disguise is important.





These two natives in the carrot family were reported on December 8 on iNaturalist. At left is Aniseroot (*Osmorhiza longistylus*) at Heffner Park; it is known in only two sections of Sligo. At right is Honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*) at Takoma-Piney Branch Park. It is found in most sections of Sligo.

Michael Wilpers
Natural History Committee
naturalhistory@fosc.org

Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): 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): treasurer@fosc.org

Webmaster (vacant): webmaster@fosc.org

Newsletter Editor (Michael Wilpers): editor@fosc.org



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.