



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter May 2017



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Bird Outing May 6

Join Sligo ornithologist David Blockstein and birder Mary Singer to look for spring birds on Saturday, May 6, from 8 to 9:30 am.

Meet in the parking lot near the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway and Dallas Avenue. The outing will go forward in a sprinkle but will be cancelled in case of steady rain.

We'll be on the lookout for the many birds that have recently arrived to nest in Sligo, after spending the winter further south, as well as our year-round residents.

David Blockstein is a Sligo resident and a long-time FOSC member. He is also senior scientist and director of education at the National Council for Science and the Environment. Mary Singer has lived in the Sligo watershed for ten years and is a member of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

For further information, contact [natural history](#).



*Scarlet Tanager seen in Sligo in May 2016
(Mangin photo)*

Nature Outing en Espanol May 20



*Jorge Montero leads nature walk for Friends of Sligo Creek in 2015.
(Hoffnar photo)*

Caminata en el Bosque de Sligo Creek en Espanol con Jorge Bogantes Montero
Sat, May 20, 9:30 - 11:30 am.

Maple Ave y Sligo Creek Parkway.

Por primera vez, estaremos ofreciendo una caminata guiada en español acerca de la ecología de Sligo Creek (el Arroyo Sligo), los participantes podrán aprender acerca de las plantas y animales que habitan los bosques protegidos de este arroyo urbano. Jorge Bogantes Montero de la Anacostia Watershed Society será el guía de esta caminata.

Se puede llegar al punto de partida de la caminata por medio de los buses Ride-On 12, 18 y 25.

(English: Stroll in the forest of Sligo Creek in this Spanish-language tour led by with Jorge Montero. Meet at the corner of Maple Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway. For the first time, we will be offering a guided tour in Spanish about the ecology of Sligo Creek. The participants will learn about the plants and animals that inhabit the protected forests of this urban creek. Jorge Montero of the Anacostia Watershed Society will be the guide for this walk.)

Information: [email](#).

Weed Warrior Training May 17 in Silver Spring



Carole Bergmann discusses Chinese wisteria for Weed Warrior trainees.

Learn how to identify non-native invasive plants and begin the process of becoming a certified Weed Warrior at the next nearby training on Wednesday, May 17, 3:30-5:30 pm, in Silver Spring.

The class location will be sent to those who register before it fills up. Register at this [website](#).

Once you complete this evening class and a subsequent field training and online component, you'll be authorized to remove non-native invasive plants in your favorite Montgomery County parks on your own schedule.

The May 17 training will be led by Montgomery Parks' forest ecologist, Carole Bergmann, who will teach plant

identification and removal techniques.

If you miss this one, the next training is on Wednesday, June 21, in Rockville,

and one training is scheduled each month around the county through October. For more information on the Weed Warrior program, contact Tenley Wurglitz at her [email address](#) or at 301-962-1357.

Second Sligo Bike Ride June 4

Join a guided bike tour of Sligo Creek Park and beyond and explore some of its natural treasures on our second "Bike Ride for Clean Water: From the Headwaters of Sligo Creek to the Anacostia" on Sunday, June 4. (In case of rain, the ride will be postponed until Sunday, June 11.)

The ride starts at the headwaters of Sligo Creek, where Channing Drive meets Sligo Creek Park, near Arcola Elementary School. Our route follows the paved hiker-biker trail as well as sections of the Parkway closed to automobile traffic during the ride. It continues on the Anacostia Trail Tributary System to Bladensburg Waterfront Park, where cyclists can enjoy refreshments and light fare, a brief expert talk on our watershed, and a scenic pontoon boat ride on the Anacostia River (free).

We'll then lead returning riders back up the trail by bike. You can also arrange your own return transportation. (The West Hyattsville Metro is about one mile north of Bladensburg Park.)



Bikers on the June 2016 ride stop to hear about Sligo's history and natural features from co-leader Kathleen Samiy. (Vorce photo)

Advance registration is required by emailing [Bike Ride](#) no later than June 1. Registrants will receive a route map and guide, event details and logistics, and priority sign-up for the guided boat tour.

Help us celebrate the Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds (just around the start

of Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week) by experiencing how Sligo Creek links to the Anacostia River, which ultimately drains into the Bay. This event is made possible by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust through the Water Quality Protection Charge Program of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

For more information, email [Bike Ride](#).

More than 400 Spring Sweepers Brave Rain to Pull Trash

"Ain't no sunshine . . ." That was our theme song for Sweep the Creek on Saturday, April 22, but it didn't keep away our singing Sligo Creek watershed residents!

We also had a good crowd for the more sunny event on Sunday, April 23, bringing our total to about 410 volunteers who helped clean up our creek. These committed neighbors picked up about 252 bags of trash and 60 bags of recycling.

Some sections leaders were pleased at how much cleanup work Montgomery Parks has done this spring, noting some particularly problematic areas.

"This is probably the first time in years that we cleaned the park of all the trash," reported one enthusiastic volunteer. Another happy camper found his own basketball that he had lost in his backyard last week. Our winner for irony this year went to the recovery of an improperly disposed photo showing children playing in what appears to be a clean creek.

Groups continue to be a big part of our effort, this time including Takoma Park Cub Scouts Pack 33 and Pack 275, Community Bridges, Blue Heron Yoga Studio, Montgomery County Youth Action Committee, Daisy Troop 34024, Girl Scout Troop 2260, the Glenhaven Elementary School PTA, the Saint Luke Lutheran Church children's group, Good Shephard Episcopal youth groups, Ritchie Ave Citizens Association, and Park Hills Civic Association



One of our young volunteers brings a nice haul ashore.



Volunteers from Daisy Troup 34024 prepare for work between Piney Branch and Wayne.

During this Sweep, several volunteers between Maple and Piney Branch tried out the new Litterati App, which catalogs the types of trash picked up in order to help with advocacy and policy making. Check out this article for more details of how it works and how it has been used: [litterati](#)

We were sorry to have a cancellation of the Section 8 cleanup due to a race on the Parkway in that section on Saturday, and we missed having Jane Barrett return from Baltimore as honorary guest co-leader between Dennis and University.

Twice a year, Sweep the Creek is a collaborative effort made possible by many, including our Sweep section leaders, those who work at the tables, he who reprints our banners, the FOSC Outreach Team, kiosk marketers, photographers, webmaster, and, of course, our volunteer Sweepers. Thank you to everyone! A special welcome to Linda who stepped in to cover lower Sligo (below New Hampshire), our newest addition to the team. We greatly missed Bennett, our former tabler between Dennis and University, and coordinator of our banner printing, who passed away

several weeks ago.

A special thanks to our friends at Montgomery Parks, who provide our gloves and bags, pick up the trash bags, help advertise the event, take photos, and serve as our sponsoring organization for SSL hours.

As our number of sweep sites and related volunteer count grows, we keep upping the number of orange bags we need, but Montgomery Parks never fails to provide! We were also happy to get more of the small gloves for kids ages 3-6, thanks to Parks' efforts to get a grant to purchase those.

Our next Sweep is set for the weekend of National Public Lands Day, September 30 and October 1, 2017. Stay tuned for more information on our website in late August.

Patton Stephens
Sweep the Creek Coordinator



One Sweep volunteer goes beyond the call of duty at Piney Branch Road.

Meadow Gets 350 More Plants

About 30 volunteers joined staff from Montgomery Parks to plant 350 native grasses and wildflowers in Sligo's new meadow on April 13. A total of 23 species were planted, including grasses, milkweeds, mints, and asters.

The meadow is located across Sligo Creek Parkway from the golf course, between the soccer fields and the Beltway.

Even though Montgomery Parks is creating meadows in a few other county parks, the department's plant ecologist Carole Bergmann says there is "nothing like this one" elsewhere in the Parks



Carole Bergmann (right) oversees planting at the Sligo meadow in April.

Watch the meadow grow this spring and summer as you drive down the Parkway, play on the soccer fields, or park your car for a round of golf!

system, by virtue of its size and the opportunity to plant it with so many natives.

Thanks to our tireless allies at Montgomery Parks who provided plants, expertise, and their guidance that day, including Carole, Rochelle Bartolomei of Pope Farm Nursery, and Weed Warrior coordinator Tenley Wurglitz.

The species we planted included three grasses (broomsedge, deer-tongue, and Indian grass), two mints (clustered mountain mint and germander), two milkweeds (common milkweed and butterfly weed), and a variety from the Aster family (wingstem, white snakeroot; blue mist flower; hyssop-leaf thoroughwort; boneset; hollow Joe Pye-weed; cutleaf coneflower; brown-eyed susan; early, grass-leaf, and wrinkle-leaf goldenrods; calico, late purple, and hairy white oldfield asters; and ironweed).



Tenley Wurglitz with plants destined for the Sligo meadow (Wilpers photos)

Wetland Takes Shape in Kemp Mill

A new stream channel and wetland are taking shape in the

Kemp Mill portion of Sligo Creek Park, thanks to the advocacy efforts of local citizens and quick work by the county Parks Department.

The project is located along the paved path that connects the main hiker-biker trail to Ladd Street.

Last fall, Kathy Michels and Dana Best alerted Parks to serious erosion caused by runoff from the shopping mall's parking lot and Arcola Ave. Their site visit with Parks, joined by Kit Gage, led to the development of the new plan.

Crews graded the site in late February, removing stilt grass and other non-native invasive plants. At the same time, they dug a new meandering tributary channel to create a slower, more natural route for runoff. Logs of recently cut ash trees were installed as mini-dams to slow water flow.



*Matt Harper of Montgomery Parks inspects the many tadpoles in the new stream channel.
(Wilpers photo)*

By early April, the refurbished tributary was filled with American Toad tadpoles, an encouraging sign that amphibians approved of the improvements. Dana recently spotted a Green Heron at the site.

On April 30, volunteers and Parks staff planted 218 seedlings to kick-start the re-vegetation of a wet meadow. The 13 species were fox sedge, common rush, deer tongue grass, Virginia wild rye, wild bergamot, mountain mint, common milkweed, blue mistflower, boneset, late-flowering thoroughwort, white snakeroot, grass-leaved goldenrod, and cutleaf coneflower. They'll complement the widespread Jack-in-the-Pulpit, which was already coming up.

Thanks to Park's staff members Andy Frank, chief engineer on the project; Matt Harper, who helped with the site limits and design; George Brehm, who oversaw the construction; Rochelle Bartolomei of Pope Farms Nursery; Henry Coppola, who coordinated with the public and FOSC; and Carole Bergmann's team, which facilitated the planting effort.

Large Trees Lost to Rare Storm Event

About a dozen mature trees came down in a narrow section of Sligo and Long

Branch during a brief but powerful storm on April 21.

On either side of the Carroll Avenue bridge, high winds felled five or six big trees, including a large Tulip-tree, American Sycamore, White Oak, Northern Red Oak, and Box-elder, closing the Parkway and the hiker-biker trail. In Long Branch, between Jackson Avenue and Becca Lily Park, the storm took down four or five big Tulip-trees along the steep east bank.

Local media reported that the winds, along with golf ball-sized hail, were caused by a "supercell" storm, in which a high-velocity down-draft spreads winds at tremendous speeds outward near ground-level (the opposite of a tornado). Such supercell storms are common in the Plains states but rare in the Mid-Atlantic. A thorough analysis of the storm's formation (with lots of photos, video, and computer graphics) is at this Washington Post [web page](#).

Arborist Michael Slabodnik of Montgomery Parks says that fallen trees in woodland areas are not typically removed, so those in Long Branch will be left in place for now, as they do not cross a paved trail.

At least six more trees fell along residential portions of Jackson Avenue west of Sligo, causing one minor injury and damaging a vehicle.



Mature Tulip-trees downed in Long Branch Park on April 21 (Wilpers photo)



The "supercell" storm as seen from a roof-top on April 21 (Mike Wish photo)



Trees downed on upstream side of Carroll Ave bridge April 21 (Gage photo)

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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.