



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter September 2018



*Ellen X. Silverberg photo*

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## Fall Sweep the Creek Sept. 29-30

Our next "Sweep the Creek" takes place on Saturday, September 29, from 9 to 11 am, and on Sunday, September 30, from 1 to 3 pm.

We welcome individuals, groups, families, and students, who can receive service-learning credit for their work (we provide the forms and signatures). Friends of Sligo

Creek brings gloves, bags, water, and guidance on what kind of help is most needed in each section. All you need to bring is your community spirit and a willingness to get a little wet and dirty!

If you want to bring a group or have questions, please contact the Sweep Coordinator ahead of time at [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org). Last spring's Sweep attracted more than 500 volunteers who collected hundreds of bags of trash, recycling, and invasive plants. Everyone is advised to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes to avoid contact with poison ivy and barbed plants such as greenbrier.



*Some of our youngest volunteers at the Sweep last fall*



*Einstein High School students at our fall 2015 Sweep*

The cleanup covers Sligo Creek Park from the powerline corridor (between New Hampshire Avenue and East West Highway) to the headwaters near Channing Drive and Blueridge Avenue (above University Boulevard), as well as Takoma Woods (between Darwin and Oswego Avenues) and the entire lengths of Long Branch and Wheaton Branch.

To see which sections will be cleaned on Saturday and which on Sunday, along with

meeting locations, visit the [Sweep page](#) on our website, which will be updated soon. We look forward to sharing the task of stewardship with you during this fall's Sweep the Creek, and we thank you in advance for your partnership in this wonderful event.

-- Patton Stephens, Sweep Coordinator (email: [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org))

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## Turn "Trash to Cash" at Folk Fest

Help out at the Takoma Park Folk Festival while earning valuable funds for Friends of Sligo Creek on Sunday, September 16.

The festival "trash team" (which handles litter and recycling) is led, once again, by former FOSC president Jim Baird. He's looking for 22 volunteers to fill five two-hour shifts between 10:00 am and 8:00 pm. In return for these efforts, FOSC is designated a "beneficiary organization" of the festival, receiving a portion of its proceeds. We usually earn \$500 or more each year this way for our budget.

The festival runs from 10:30 to 6:30 at Takoma Park Middle School. The trash team's two-hour shifts begin at 10, 12, 2, 4, and 6. Volunteers will staff the recycling stations (showing folks how to separate their items) or rove the grounds collecting other items.

As Jim says, "It's fun and it's outside, so you can hear the music. We have gloves and water and granola bars. Everyone is greatly appreciative of what we do, so it's wonderful advertising for Friends of Sligo Creek!"

To volunteer, contact Jim Baird at [bairdj64@gmail.com](mailto:bairdj64@gmail.com).



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## Next Champion Trees Tour Oct. 20

Mark your calendars for our next bike tour of the Champion Trees of Sligo Creek Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. The ride will be Saturday, October 20. Meet at the Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, at 9:20 for orientation and departure at 9:30. The ride will visit 18 trees and



*Huge Willow Oak visited on a previous champion tree outing in Sligo*

species just east of Sligo), a rare native Umbrella Magnolia, and a newly documented Southern Red Oak with a fifteen-foot circumference.

In addition, bikers can pay their respects to some old champions like our Yellow Buckeye, Shingle Oak, and Yellowwood.

If you're running late, the first visit is to a White Pine near the building to the right of the Schweinhaut Center. The second stop is in a wooded area of the park, but the third and fourth trees are at 1400 Dennis Ave. and 1715 Dublin Drive.

A champion tree is one whose combined height, trunk diameter, and crown-spread is greater than any other known specimen in a county, a state, or the entire country. (For more detail on how champion trees are determined and a complete list of Montgomery County champions, see [Montgomery County Forestry Board](#).)

For questions, contact the event organizer at his email here: [Pat Ratkowski](#).

cover about ten miles, returning to the senior center around 12:30.

As usual, the tour will be led by long time Sligo resident Joe Howard, a member of the Montgomery County Forestry Board and a retired elementary and middle school teacher. Joe is the founder of the champion trees registry for Montgomery County and is Sligo's preeminent champion of champion trees.

Our upcoming tour will visit the newly documented biggest tree in the Sligo watershed: a native Willow Oak with a massive circumference of 18 feet. We'll also meet a new champion Loblolly Pine (a native



*Joe Howard will once again lead our tour of the champion trees of Sligo.*

# New Study Finds 15 Fish Species in Sligo

Fifteen fish species were found in Sligo Creek during the latest survey by Montgomery Parks biologists in August, the most in a single survey since major stream restoration work began in Sligo in the mid-1990s.



*Banded Killifish (wildlife.ohiodnr.gov)*

The survey revealed the first instance of Banded Killifish, as well as the continued presence of Northern Hogsucker, a fish that is highly sensitive to water pollution.

"Our annual surveys of lower Sligo Creek show a significant increase in diversity over time," reports Dave Sigrist, senior natural resources specialist and aquatic ecologist with Montgomery Parks. Only three species were found in 1988, according to data (on our website) from the Council of Governments. By 1999, eleven species had stable populations.

"The Northern Hogsucker is sensitive to environmental disturbance, and it was formerly listed by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as a species 'In Need of Conservation,'" he noted. The county's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) lists this fish among three that are "highly sensitive" to pollution. Two more of Sligo's fish are ranked as "sensitive" by DEP: American Eel and Longnose Dace.



*The Northern Hogsucker was a welcome find because of its sensitivity to environmental disturbance. (wikipedia.org)*

"This is the first year we have encountered Banded Killifish in our records for Sligo," he added.

The total counts were 128 Blacknose Dace, 50 Longnose Dace, 30 American Eel, 19 White Sucker, 15 Creek Chub, 15 Redbreast Sunfish, 11 Swallowtail Shiner, 10 Satinfin Shiner, 7 Bluegill, 6 Northern Hogsucker, 4 Pumpkinseed, 3 Spottail Shiner, 3 Tessellated Darter, 2 Banded Killifish, and 1 Largemouth Bass.

"The work done by multiple groups in the area has definitely had an impact in reversing the trends of diminishing water quality that began in the 1960s and 70s," Dave added.

Sligo Creek is monitored for fish as part of Montgomery Parks' biological monitoring program, which tracks the ecological health of waterways throughout the county. The data are collected according to biological stream survey protocols developed by the Maryland DNR. The information is shared with the county DEP and combined with their monitoring data to help understand stream conditions across the county.

More information on Sligo's fishes is at [fosc.org/Fishes](http://fosc.org/Fishes).

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## 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)

Treasurer (Dee Clarkin; asstnt treasurer Sherrell Goggin): [treasurer@fosc.org](mailto:treasurer@fosc.org)

Webmaster (Sherrell Goggin): [webmaster@fosc.org](mailto:webmaster@fosc.org)

Newsletter Editor (Michael Wilpers): [editor@fosc.org](mailto:editor@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.*