



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter Jan-Feb 2019



*Ellen X. Silverberg photo*

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## Learn about Beltway Expansion Issues February 21

Hear about the many environmental concerns surrounding the governor's proposal to widen the Capital Beltway in our program on Thursday, February 21, at 7:30 pm at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

Two staff members with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will speak, attorney Carol S. Rubin (Special Project Manager, I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study) and Jai Cole (Chief of the Park Planning and Stewardship Division of the Department of Parks).

The building is located at the intersection of Fenton and Ellsworth Streets. Parking is free in the county garage on Ellsworth beginning at 6:30 pm. Come at 7:00 for socializing with other concerned residents.



*Sligo Creek Parkway (top to bottom) and areas next to the Beltway including woodlands along the recently restored Flora Lane Tributary (lower left), two stormwater ponds (center), and mature trees at the golf course's north boundary*

According to the state's timeline, the draft environmental impact statement will be completed later this year, followed by public hearings and a final decision in late 2019 or early 2020. At this [link](#) is Carol Rubin's detailed memo to the Park and Planning Commmission outlining many of the issues.

In December, Maryland's Board of Public Works awarded a \$90 million contract to Maryland Traffic Relief Partners (a joint commercial venture) to study the planning, design, and construction of the added lanes.

Frequent updates from the current state legislative session are being posted by Citizens Against Beltway Expansion through their [website](#), email list, and Facebook page. For more information, see this detailed [website](#) of the county Planning Department.

At the talk on February 21, our speakers will give an overview of the Beltway expansion proposal and the input their departments have given to the State Highway Administration.





*This juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron visited the stormwater ponds at the Beltway in 2018. Sligo Creek Park is one of very few breeding areas for this species in Maryland. (Treadwell photo)*

They will outline the process they go through to protect parks, including Sligo. Lastly, Carol will discuss what residents can do to make an impact.

Several habitat restoration and stormwater management projects have been installed immediately adjacent to the Beltway in the last twenty years. They include two stormwater ponds, a three-year invasive plant removal project, a planting of 50 native trees, a new wetland to treat stormwater, and stream restorations of Flora Lane Tributary and the creek that crosses the golf course.

For more information on this event, contact Kit Gage at [advocacy@fosc.org](mailto:advocacy@fosc.org).



*Turtles sun themselves in the stormwater ponds on the south side of the Beltway in 2018. (Treadwell photo)*

# Help Boy Scout with Bat Project



*A bat house installed under the eaves of a house (thegreenhead.com)*

Would you like to host bats in your yard this year, increase animal diversity in Sligo, and help control insect pests in your garden? If so, you can partner with Eagle Scout candidate Jonathan Andersen to get a bat house installed on your property.

Jonathan, a senior at Blair High School, will build the bat houses and distribute them to homeowners (or install them himself ) in Takoma Park near Sligo Creek or Long Branch during the month of March.

Bats consume vast quantities of insects, including such nemeses of the vegetable gardener as cucumber beetles, stinkbugs, leafhoppers, and

the adult moths of caterpillars like potato worms, cutworms, corn borers, and tomato hornworms. Bats also eat some mosquitos, flies, and wasps.

In urban and suburban areas, bats are losing their natural habitats. To help alleviate the problem, the organization Bat Conservation International ([website](#)) promotes bat houses. Bats use the houses to "roost" (rest) during the daytime hours and to raise their young during the summer months.

Priority will be given to homes that meet the following criteria for a successful bat house: a location for mounting the bat house that is at least 12 feet directly above the ground or shrubs, receives at least six hours of direct sun each day, faces southeast or southwest, is 25 feet or more from the nearest tree branches, and is within a quarter-mile of Sligo Creek or Long Branch (since bats feed mostly over water). These standards were developed by Bat Conservation International after ten years of testing, with results that are summarized [here](#).



*Jonathan Andersen is building bat houses in Sligo for his Eagle Scout project.*

If you're interested, contact Jonathan at (301) 270-1089 or this email [address](#).





*Young Eastern Red Bat, a species confirmed in Sligo (Texas A&M photo)*

Sligo Creek Park is home to about eight species of bats, according to a list prepared by FOSC in consultation with Rob Gibbs, former wildlife specialist with Montgomery Parks (see this [web page](#)).

For more information on this project, email Jonathan (at above address) or [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto:naturalhistory@fosc.org).

## Pepco to Plant Natives along Sligo

Pepco will plant one hundred native trees and shrubs along Sligo Creek this spring as mitigation for 60-some trees cut along the powerline last fall.

The plan resulted from on-site meetings with members of FOSC and representatives from Pepco, Prince George's County Parks, and habitat restoration specialist Jorge Montero of Anacostia Watershed Society. Thanks to Pepco's Cody Hesseltine for his generous assistance in shepherding along this mitigation project.



*Some of the trees cut by Pepco at the powerline near Sligo Creek (Wilpers photos)*

The trees were cut according to Pepco's restrictions on tree growth near powerlines. Pepco agreed to leave snags (as habitat for fungi, insects, and birds), though they're much shorter than FOSC expected. The sixty downed trees included seven oak species as well as red maple, black cherry, American beech, black gum, and black locust.

As mitigation for the tree cutting, Pepco offered to plant trees nearby. At FOSC's request, the planting will be done along the creek within the powerline, which currently lacks the kind of riparian tree cover that is typical of creeks in our region. Pepco agreed to double its usual height limit from ten to twenty feet, because of the low elevation of the creek

bank.

FOSC provided Pepco with a plan for five groupings of trees and shrubs

(developed by Kit Gage) and a detailed planting diagram (by Xavier Courouble), which Pepco will use for the installation.

The taller trees will create some much-needed shade for the creek water (as cooler temperatures are better for fish) and will add fall leaf-litter, which forms the basis of the creek's food web. The plants should also provide food, nesting sites, and cover for wildlife.



*Making a site visit to the powerline along Sligo are Jorge Montero (Anacostia Watershed Society), Kit Gage (FOSC board), and Xavier Courouble (FOSC neighborhood organizer).*

FOSC has worked with Pepco since 2008 to reduce mowing in the powerline and allow a shrubby meadow-grassland to develop. Some of the 60-some native plants found there occur nowhere else in Sligo. It also supports 89 native bee species and has attracted nesting pairs of American Kestrels and Indigo Buntings. The project is certified by the Wildlife Habitat Council, which works to encourage large-scale landowners to manage their properties for wildlife habitat.

For more information on this project, email [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto:naturalhistory@fosc.org).

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## Welcome New Board Members!

Friends of Sligo Creek welcomes two new members to its board of directors to help guide the organization as it confronts future challenges with litter,



stormwater, water quality, natural history, and advocacy.



*Paul Chrostowski with a Douglas-fir at Point Reyes National Seashore, CA (Pearsall photo)*

Paul Chrostowski is a semi-retired environmental scientist. He has a Ph.D. in environmental science and engineering and he is certified as a Qualified Environmental Professional.

Paul adds, "I was on Takoma Park's Committee on the Environment. Since my term ended, I've been helping Pat Ratkowski (FOSC water quality chair) with some sampling and analysis questions regarding Brashears Run, whose exit pipes into Sligo are near Maple Avenue. In addition to my professional credentials, I am an avid nature lover and walk the Sligo trail frequently, so I know and appreciate parts of the watershed very well."

Julien Katchinoff has been a resident of the Sligo watershed for about five years. He adds, "My wife and I live in Carole Highlands, along with our two boys. I'm a self-professed water nerd, having spent the majority of my career at the Department of State doing work on a whole gamut of transboundary water issues. I'm also, as you can imagine, a big fan of Sligo Creek. I bike the path twice a day, and I can't shake the feeling that there's a ton of work to be done in restoring and appreciating this fantastic place."

Julien currently serves as the transboundary water specialist and negotiator in the Office of Canadian Affairs at the State Department, where he oversees the implementation of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between the United States and Canada. Julien has also developed and implemented U.S. foreign policies on drinking water and



*Julien Katchinoff in Sligo*

sanitation, water resources management, and transboundary water issues for South East Asia, with a focus on the Mekong River.

For more information about the FOSC board, contact president Corinne Stephens at [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

## Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



*Hooded Merganser (right) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Nov. 20 (Bowen photo)*

On November 20, Michael Bowen spotted a **Hooded Merganser** (above) at these ponds.

Along the Sligo mainstem, Stephen Davies spotted three **Eastern Bluebirds** between Dennis and Wayne on Jan. 5, and a pair was also reported in Kemp Mill by Ann Hobbs on November 27. A **Bald Eagle** was noticed by Timothy Guida on December 30 between Wayne and New Hampshire, where he also saw a **Brown Creeper** (another rarely reported winter-only bird in Sligo). A **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen on January 11 on Aspen St, NW, near Blair Road.

An **Eastern Box Turtle** (below left) was crossing the parkway between Dennis and Forest Glen when Jim

Some interesting nature observations in Sligo have been reported recently on the websites for eBird, iNaturalist, and our own FOSC "Sightings" page ([here](#)).

At the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds (near Dennis Ave.), Bob Cantor photographed a **Barred Owl** (below) well hidden in dense English ivy. At the same ponds on October 31, Bob noted a pair of immature **White-crowned Sparrows** (very rare winter visitors to Sligo) and on January 6 a giant flock of **115 Canada Geese**. He saw three **hawks** there on January 14 (one Red-shouldered, two Cooper's).



*Barred Owl at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Dec. 1 (Cantor photo)*





*Box Turtle rescued from the Parkway by Jim Anderson on November 1*

Anderson encountered it on November 1. He wisely moved the turtle to the side of the road in the direction it was headed, as these turtles have territories and a homing instinct. Jim also spotted an **Eastern Red-backed Salamander** in the soil while uprooting an invasive bush honeysuckle near the first foot-bridge downstream from Wayne on January 4.

A dead opossum near Dennis Avenue attracted both **Turkey Vultures** and **Black Vultures** to the site (above right), where Dan Treadwell got some nice photos on December 1.

The most recent **Red Fox** report was on January 6, by Lucia Nisen, just upstream from the Adventist hospital (near Maplewood and Edinburgh). Finally, our native **Witch-hazel** (right) was caught blooming on November 11 near the second footbridge downstream from the Carroll Avenue.

To see other sightings posted on our website [here](#).



*Black Vulture (left) and Turkey Vulture at an opossum carcass near Dennis Ave. on Dec. 1 (Treadwell photo)*



*Witch-hazel blooming between Carroll and Flower on Nov. 11 (Wilpers photo)*

# 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)

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Outreach (Sarah Jane Marcus): [outreach@fosc.org](mailto:outreach@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.*