



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter July 2020



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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"Misunderstood Wildlife" is the Topic on July 21

Do you love nature but have second thoughts about bees, spiders, snakes, or even foxes? Do you feel a bit uneasy by their presence in Sligo even while supporting conservation of natural areas?



Biologist Kerry Wixted with one of her furry friends, a black bear cub tagged as part of a reproduction survey (MD DNR photo)

If so, then our next Zoom talk is perfect for you. Biologist Kerry Wixted, of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will discuss these critters and more on Tuesday, July 21, at 7:30 pm.

Kerry Wixted is an education and outreach specialist with the Wildlife and Heritage Service of DNR. She holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife and fisheries management from Frostburg State University and a master's degree in biology from West Virginia University.

In addition to giving talks all over the state (in person or by Zoom), Kerry also teaches the mammals course in the Natural History Field Studies curriculum for the Audubon Naturalist Society.

One snake species you may have seen in Sligo is the fairly abundant Common Watersnake (formerly called Northern Watersnake). It spends most of its time hunting fish and invertebrates in our creek waters or basking on exposed rocks in the warm sunlight. It can look a little like a copperhead, but its bite is not venomous.

We have at least 90 native bee species in Sligo, most of whom build solitary nests underground in our sunny fields or in the cavities of trees and shrubs. These bees do not defend a colonial nest and very rarely sting.

Red foxes are a fairly frequent sight around the watershed and they can become acclimated to eating cat food, which shouldn't be left out. They are omnivores, so their diet includes wild fruits and insects in addition to their favorite meal: mice.

We'll make two changes to the format for this meeting: First, we'll open the event at 7:00 for any kind of socializing people want to try before the 7:30 talk. (If we get a good



Young common watersnake found in the Kemp Mill area of Sligo Creek Park during a nature outing (Matthew

early turnout, we can break up into mini-groups.)

Cohen photo)

Second, we'll provide an opportunity for spoken comments and questions during the Q&A, as well as through the "chat" function as before. So come prepared to engage with our speaker and other Sligo residents in whichever way feels most comfortable.

Everyone who received this newsletter will get a Zoom "invitation" (with link) about a week in advance. For further information, contact naturalhistory@fosc.org.

Changes for Weed Warriors Unveiled by Montgomery Parks



Weed Warrior Supervisor Jim Anderson (with hat) and his team after cutting invasives in pre-COVID days (FOSC photo)

Montgomery Parks' Weed Warrior program, which allows residents to help control non-native, invasive plants in our parks, now offers two categories of certification in order to help address this ever-present challenge.

Corinne Stephens, the new Weed Warrior Volunteer Coordinator with the Vegetation Ecology and Management Unit of Montgomery Parks, outlined this new approach in an online event on June 23, presented jointly by Friends of Sligo Creek and Neighbors of the Northwest Branch. More than 80 attendees tuned in via Zoom.

Instead of a single certification for individual Weed Warriors (which has been in place since 1999), there are now two levels separating the most urgent need (vines killing our trees) from all of the others.

Level One provides a basic training for addressing the "first priority" vines while Level Two requires more advanced training on an additional twelve species of shrubs, trees, grasses, and the only herbaceous plant currently on the list: garlic mustard.

The Level One training allows certified individuals to remove the six vines that most often threaten our trees: English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, mile-a-minute, Oriental bittersweet, porcelain-berry, and winter creeper. To be certified for removing these plants, you must participate in two Weed Warrior workdays (see [the calendar](#)), complete two online courses, attend one classroom training, and

participate in a field training with Montgomery Parks staff.



A group of proud Weed Warriors with a massive Oriental bittersweet vine they removed in the Sligo watershed in fall 2019 (Montgomery Parks photos)

A more involved training for Level Two hasn't been announced, but it will allow new Weed Warriors to remove plants in the second, third, and fourth levels of priority.

"Second priority" covers five shrubs (autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, and wineberry), as well as garlic mustard (only when in flower and not in seed). Our most invasive grasses -- Japanese stiltgrass and wavyleaf basketgrass -- are considered "third priority," along with Bradford pear (seedlings only) and winged burning bush (*Euonymus*). The familiar kudzu vine (small infestations only) and the non-native wisterias are the "fourth priority" species.

Note that all Weed Warriors who were certified before 2020 will be grandfathered into the new system at Level Two and are thus allowed to control the entire list of eighteen plant species.

You can view all the powerpoint slides for the presentation on our website here: <http://www.fosc.org/Docs/Parks20200623.pdf>, which covers the overall vegetation plan for the county parks as presented at the online event by Ryan Colliton, the new Montgomery Parks Vegetation Ecologist. A separate slide on plant resources is here <http://www.fosc.org/Docs/PlantResources20200623.pdf>.

For further information on the new Weed Warrior levels, check their website regularly at www.weedwarrior.org or contact Corinne Stephens at corinne.stephens@montgomeryparks.org.

Welcome New Board Member Fran Rothstein



Fran Rothstein, our newest board member

Our board of directors has added a new member. Fran Rothstein, who was voted in by the board on July 2, brings a wide range of experience with non-profit organizations in the Washington area, from school and neighborhood associations to county-wide advocacy groups.

Fran headed the Takoma Park Middle School PTA and the Blair High School PTSA, which involved advocating for students with the County Council and Board of Education. She also served with the Jewish Council on Aging, Montgomery Women, and the Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club, including stints as president of the latter two groups.

As head of the Sligo Park Hills Civic Association, she pushed the county to institute traffic calming and rush hour restrictions on local roads. She was

also a member of the "greener county" working group for County Executive Marc Elrich's transition team. As a volunteer grant writer, she helped create the DownCounty Consortium and build the Takoma Park Middle School greenhouse.

In her professional career, Fran was a consultant to government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and think tanks on a range of issues (including a project on environmental education).

About Sligo, Fran says, "I've been a FOSC member since shortly after we moved here 17 years ago. At this point, knee replacements prevent me from participating in Sweep the Creek, but that is something I did during our early years in Silver Spring. I treasure our wonderful Sligo Creek Park, where I walk most days."

Welcome to the FOSC board, Fran!

Planning Board Approves Artificial Turf for Ellsworth

The Montgomery County Planning Board on June 18 approved a redevelopment

plan for the Ellsworth Drive pedestrian mall that includes synthetic turf opposed by Friends of Sligo Creek, the Stormwater Partners Network, Conservation Montgomery, and local residents.

Voting in favor were Casey Anderson (chair), Partap Verma, and Gerald Cichy. Vice Chair Natali Fani-Gonzalez abstained and the fifth board member, Tina Patterson, missed the oral testimony and was therefore not allowed to vote (she had expressed her opposition to the proposal).

A week later, on June 26, FOSC joined other groups in submitting a request that the Planning Board reconsider its June 18 decision. The submission notes, "We are making this request because new concerns and more detailed information regarding the decision and affecting the public's well-being have been raised since the Board's June 18, 2020 vote. These matters were not reflected or were not adequately addressed in the Staff Report or the Planning Board discussion and decision."

The Board will take up the request to reconsider this approval at its meeting on July 16. For more information, contact advocacy@fosc.org.

Nature Sightings in June

It was an especially good month for observations of insects in Sligo, as reported on iNaturalist. The known photographers are Stephen Davies, Dan Treadwell, Katja Shulz, and Michael Wilpers. You can follow sightings on iNaturalist by choosing the "project" titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed."



Zabulon Skipper on June 6 near the intersection of Hilltop and Parkside



Eastern Tailed-Blue on June 3 near the Wheaton Branch ponds



Unidentified insect on June 6 between Flower and Garland



Saddled Leafhopper ovipositing on Cordyalis on June 24 between Mississippi and Parkside



Mating pair of Red-shouldered Hawks on June 6 in the Kemp Mill area



Derbid Planthopper in the genus Cedusa on June 21 between Parkside and Mississippi



Unicorn Clubtail on June 8 at the Beltway stormwater ponds



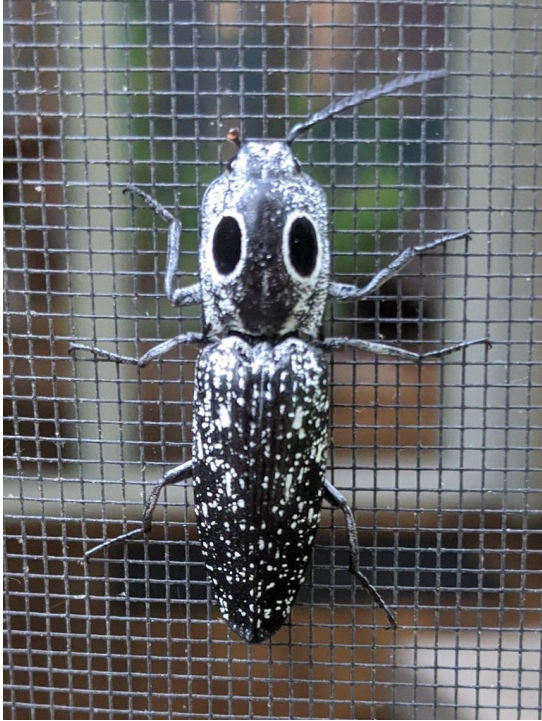
Silky Dogwood on June 9 below the Carroll Ave. bridge



Young Canada Goose on June 3 near the intersection of Lamberton and Arcola



Narrowleaf Sundrops on June 15 at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds



*Eastern Eyed Click Beetle on June 11
between Gude and Poplar*



*Balsam Ragwort on June 6 in the Pepco
meadow*



*Great Egret on June 25 at the
Wheaton Branch ponds*



*Green Heron on June 16 at the
Wheaton Branch ponds*



*Purpletop Vervain on June 21 at the
Wheaton Branch ponds*



*Killdeer in June at the Kemp Mill
shopping center parking lot*

*For comments and questions,
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Need to Reach Us?

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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.