



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter September 2021



*Photo by Ellen X. Silverberg*

## Fall "Sweep the Creek" Sept. 25-26

Mark your calendars for our next "Sweep the Creek," which takes place on Saturday morning, September 25, and Sunday afternoon, September 26.

Most sections of Sligo and Long Branch Parks will hold their Sweeps on Saturday, Sept. 25, from 9:00 to 11:00 am. These include all of the areas from University Boulevard to East-West Highway (except half of Piney Branch to Wayne) and Long Branch Park downstream from Piney Branch Road.

Three sections are doing their Sweeps on Sunday, Sept. 26, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm: Upstream from



University Blvd., half of the section between Piney Branch and Wayne, and, in Long Branch, upstream from Wayne Avenue East.

See below for information on separately organized cleanups at the Wheaton Branch ponds and near the county line in Hyattsville. To find the meeting place and supply table location for your section, see this list on our [Fall 2021 Sweep web page](#).

Volunteers with any group larger than a family must submit Montgomery Parks COVID-19 waivers, which can be obtained at this [Montgomery Parks link](#) (use the password "parks") or as a PDF directly from our Sweep Coordinator at [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org).

online, providing electronic signatures, or (b) print them out and hand deliver them to the FOSC supplies table in their section. Youth (17 and under) in groups use the same form but must obtain a **hand-written adult's signature** on a hard copy and either scan and email the form to [Valeria Espinoza](mailto:ValeriaEspinoza) at Montgomery Parks or deliver the hard copy signed original to the FOSC supplies table.

As always, we welcome individuals, families, youth groups, houses of worship, businesses, and everyone else to come help keep Sligo Creek Park the beautiful and inspiring resource it is for all of us. Post your photos on facebook with hashtag #FOSCSweeptheCreek. Or send in your photos to [webmaster@fosc.org](mailto:webmaster@fosc.org) and we'll feature them on the Sweep page of our website.

A related event, for trash collections and non-native invasive plant removal, will focus on Sligo Creek Park near the county line separating Montgomery and Prince George's on Saturday, September 25, from 9:00 to 11:00 am. Meet at the Parklawn Bldg., 1601 East-West Highway. Information is [here](#).

Another related event is a trash cleanup on Sunday, Sept. 26, from 10:00 am to noon, at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds just south of Dennis Ave. This site is not within Montgomery Parks and is being coordinated instead by the county Department of Environmental Protection, which manages the ponds.

For more information, contact Ed Murtagh at [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org).





*Masks are NOT required for the Fall 2021 Sweep but they were put to use by this team last spring between Piney Branch and Wayne, joined by county council member Evan Glass (at center in blue).*

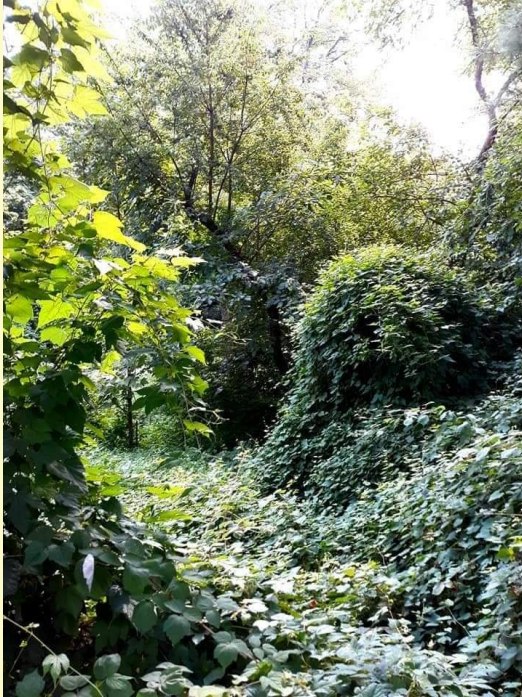
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## Weed Warriors Rescue Crosby Wetland

A dedicated group of Weed Warriors spent three very hot days in August clearing Porcelainberry and other non-native vines from the wetland along Crosby Lane (across the creek from the south end of the soccer fields).

This constructed wetland, installed by Montgomery Parks, extends about 200 feet along the paved hiker-biker trail and provides excellent habitat for a range of wetland plants and animals. By late spring, the highly aggressive Porcelainberry and other non-native, invasive vines had almost completely smothered the entire stretch of wetland, blocking sunlight and competing for water with the native plantings.





*Before: The Crosby wetland had become smothered by Porcelainberry, a non-native invasive vine. (Steve Warner photo)*



*After: Freed of the blanket of Porcelainberry, Common Arrowhead flourished again in the Crosby wetland. (M. Wilpers photo)*

This invasives removal effort was joined by Walter Mulbry, the new RIP (Remove Invasive Plants) Committee Chair for Friends of Sligo Creek, seen at right tackling Porcelainberry around some fenced shrubs planted by Montgomery Parks.

See Ed Murtagh's excellent video about this project on the FOSC YouTube channel here: [YouTube video](#).

If you'd like to become a Certified Weed Warrior, contact Corinne Stephens at Montgomery Parks at this [email address](#) to learn about the upcoming trainings and current requirements. All the parks in our watershed need more certified volunteers to keep non-native invasive plants under control!







*The team of Weed Warriors who rescued the Crosby wetland (left to right) Jim Anderson, Corinne Stephens (Montgomery Parks), Ed Murtagh, Steve Warner, Walter Mulbry, Ross Campbell, and Becky Reeve. They were joined on another day by Ann Wagner.*

## Welcome New Board Members!

We are very pleased to welcome two new members of our Board of Directors: **Betsy Proch** and **Tom Walton**.



As a long-time resident of Silver Spring living two blocks from Sligo Creek, **Betsy Proch** has spent many



Early in his career, **Tom Walton** conducted river and lake surveys for the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences and worked on water quality plans for Philadelphia and its surrounding counties with the

hours enjoying the beauty of the park and wants to give back to the community by joining the Friends of Sligo Creek Board of Directors and generously serving as treasurer.

Betsy raised her family in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia next to the Appalachian Trail, where she and the kids hiked and backpacked for many years.

After moving back to Maryland, Betsy's life has been enriched by local hikes such as Rachel Carson Greenway, Rock Creek Park, and, of course, Sligo Creek Park. Betsy recently retired from the federal government as a project manager for large cybersecurity projects.

In addition, Betsy has served on several boards, most recently the External Research Panel of Morgan State University based on her experience in cybersecurity. Betsy has an MBA and has managed budget and finances in her previous positions and will bring that expertise to the Board and to the position of treasurer.

Betsy loves hiking, gardening, and nature. She has lived near Dennis Avenue for a long time and loves traversing the park frequently.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Before joining the World Bank staff, he was lead planner for a water quality management project in the Gulf of Naples, Italy. With the World Bank, he worked on coral reef restoration in Asia and environmental and social safeguards for the Bank's projects in Africa. He later did consulting work for a wide range of international organizations and Asian governments.

Tom wrote, "My roots in the environmental field, going back some decades, are in ecological planning with a specialty in water quality management, and I like the idea of coming full circle back to where I started. It was work I particularly enjoyed. Also, having spent the last 30 years on projects scattered all over in Africa and Asia, doing something local is appealing.

"My wife and I have walked and cycled along Sligo Creek since we moved back to the US from Indonesia in 2003. We had the unique and thrilling experience last year of seeing baby Wood Ducks dropping out of their nest, scuttling over to the creek, and swimming away with their mother. We have also delighted in the population of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons."

**We are so glad to have both of you on the FOSC team!**

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## **Annual Fish Survey Finds Abundant Eels**

A total of fourteen species of native fish were found during the annual fish survey of the Creek on August 31 by staff with the Biological Monitoring Program of Montgomery Parks.

Among the many species found





was the much anticipated Northern Hognose (left), a fish that is intolerant of water pollution and has been found in Sligo every year since 2016.

The Northern Hognose is the only pollution-intolerant fish in Sligo, but its ongoing presence is an indication of progress in restoring the creek's habitats. The survey team also collected no fewer than 27 American Eels (below right), an indication that the creek provides plenty of food for these carnivores, who constitute the top predators in our creek waters.

Eels are among the four Sligo species that are moderately tolerant of water pollution, the others being Longnose Dace, Satinfo Shiner, and Spottail Shiner. Overall, most of our fish are tolerant of pollution, with only one percent of the individual fish collected being pollution intolerant (Northern Hognose), 37 percent moderately tolerant (eels and three minnows), and 62 percent tolerant (sunfish, sucker, darter, and other minnows).

The team of six Parks staff collected fish from a 75-meter stretch of Sligo Creek between Jackson Avenue and the Carroll Avenue bridge.

First they installed white mesh barriers at either end of this reach. Then they gathered at the downstream end and processed upstream in a line from bank to bank, using "electrofishing" devices to temporarily stun the fish, causing them to float to the surface, where they could be scooped up in nets. All but one of the fish species were transferred to a group of buckets for later counting and identification.



The abundant American Eels were deposited in separate containers (above right) because, being carnivores, they would otherwise dine on the smaller fish. In addition to many minnows and dace, the team found at least two species of sunfish (below right), which are pollution tolerant.



Parks staff will compile the findings and, combined with their spring survey of semi-

aquatic insects (and other macro-invertebrates), calculate the creek's Index of Biotic Integrity, a measure of Sligo's overall water quality for wildlife.

*Photos above by M. Wilpers.  
Photo below by Pat Ratkowski.*

Enjoy this [video](#) about the fish survey by Ed Murtagh, also accessible from our website's home page, using the YouTube link in the upper-right corner.



*The biological monitoring team from Montgomery Parks uses electrofishing and nets to collect fish along a 75-meter stretch of Sligo Creek just below Carroll Avenue on August 31, 2021. Left to right: Dave Sigrist, Geoffrey Mason, Jackie Hoban, Rachel Gauza, Megan Bolcar, and Doug Stephens.*

## Nature in Sligo

A selection of recent observations (with a few from summer 2020 recently published) from the iNaturalist project titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed" (photographers' names are those provided to iNaturalist)



*Ruby-throated Hummingbird at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 29 by Stephen Davies*





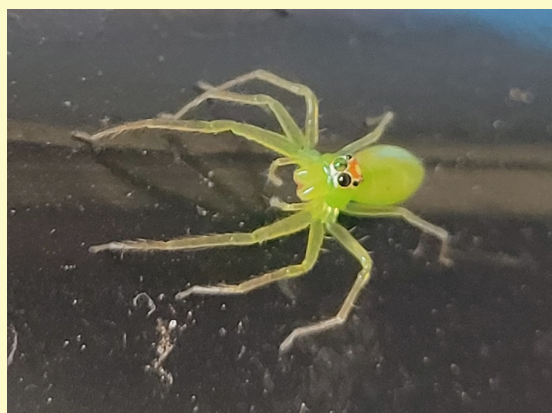
*Above: Purple Passion-flower on Long Branch near the library on Aug. 5 by M. Wilpers*



*Right: Pileated Inkcap mushroom on Green Holly Terrace on Aug. 3 by Manoli Strecker*



*Orange Assassin Bug near Grant and Darwin on July 27, 2020 (posted summer 2021) by Katja Schulz*



*Magnolia Green Jumping Spider near Maple and Sherman on July 26 by Bradley Simpson*



*Northern Watersnake near Sligo Bennington Park on July 27 by lauriedkr*





*Above: Chrysotus fly with prey (Dark-winged Fungus Gnat) on the Montgomery College campus on August 8, 2020 (posted summer 2021) by Katja Schulz*



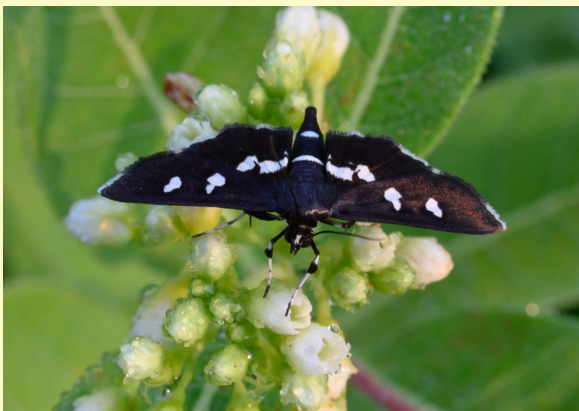
*Right: Great Egret with prey at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 28 by Stephen Davies*



*Shining Sumac flowers in the powerline meadow on July 31 by M. Wilpers*



*Male flowers (florets) of Eastern Gamma Grass in the powerline meadow on July 31 by M. Wilpers*



*Grape Leafroller Moth (on Hemp Dogbane) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 29 by Stephen Davies*



*American Dagger moth caterpillar near Dale and Deerfield on July 23 by marsrevolt*





*Green Heron at the Forest Glen wetland on July 29 by Dan Treadwell*



*Snowy Urola Moth at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 28 by Stephen Davies*



*Basilica Orb Weaver spider in Upper Portal Park on July 29, 2020 (posted summer 2021) by Katja Schulz*



*A pair of Black-crowned Night-Herons (female at left, male at right) at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 27 by Stephen Davies*

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## Upcoming Events

**Fall Sweep the Creek, Saturday and Sunday, September 25 and 26**  
See top article for details.

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## Support FOSC

**It's fast, secure, and funds FOSC activities**

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## Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

Invasive Plants (Walter Mulbry): [invasives@fosc.org](mailto:invasives@fosc.org)

Litter (Ed Murtagh): [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@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.*

**Join FOSC**