



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter June 2022



Photo by Ellen X. Silverberg

Celebrate Wildlife with FOSC at Takoma Park July 4 Parade

Join Friends of Sligo Creek in Takoma Park's Fourth of July Parade to help us celebrate our 20th anniversary of "Giving Nature a Chance."

We're asking paraders to represent one of their favorite animals or plants in Sligo with a sign, banner, or (if it's not too hot) a hat or light-weight costume.

The parade runs from 10 am to 12 noon and proceeds 1.25 miles from Takoma Junction to Maple and Ritchie. Parade



groups will gather around 9 am at a point of assembly near the Junction. Please email us at info@fosc.org for the exact time and location.

One of Sligo's iconic birds, a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, often seen at our stormwater ponds (S. Davies)

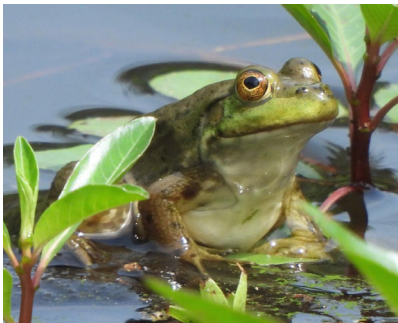
If you want to drive in and drop off paraders there, do so before 9:00 am when the main roads leading to the parade route will be blocked by police barricades. Neighborhood parking is restricted during the parade, so drivers will need to walk a few blocks to join their party. Plenty of free parking spots are usually available at the Takoma Metro station.

FOSC will provide ice and water to our group throughout the 45-minute parade walk. If it's sunny and hot, be sure to wear a hat and loose clothing.

If our group has lots of youngsters (12 and under), the Parade organizers will probably assign us to a spot near the front of the parade, so kids don't have to wait too long and so they can see most of the parade when they're done.

For more information about the Takoma Park Fourth of July Parade, visit <https://www.takomapark4th.org/>. Note that you do not need to register, as FOSC has already registered as a group.

A few of the Sligo plants and animals you can celebrate in the Fourth of July Parade!



Above: American Bullfrog, Eastern Cottontail, Spotted Salamander (Davies and Treadwell photos)



Above: Red Foxes, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Eastern Painted Turtle (Davies and Treadwell photos)



Above: Pin Oak, Bloodroot, Mountain Laurel (Katja Schulz, insa, and Wilpers photos)

Weed Warriors Tackle Long Branch

Intrepid Weed Warriors have logged more than 950 hours removing non-native invasive plants (NNIs) in Long Branch Park since Jan 2020, many of them under the leadership of our longtime Weed Warrior Supervisor, Barbara Francisco.

During that time, this group and a number of other Weed Warriors (WWs) have removed invasive vines from 1,042 trees in Long Branch, according to statistics kept by Corinne Stephens at Montgomery Parks.

The Weed Warrior Volunteer Program, administered by Montgomery Parks, empowers and trains community members to help its staff manage non-native invasive plants on parkland. Visit this [website](#) to learn more or email Montgomery Parks at this [address](#).



Barbara Francisco (right) on June 3 with (left to right) Ann Wagner, Kate Lofgren (Montgomery Parks), Becky Reeve, and Walter Mulbry

Since the start of COVID in March 2020, Barbara has teamed up at least once a week with various members of her group, including Lois Chalmers, Anne Keiser, Kris Knutsen, Ann Wagner, Jan Westervelt, Becky Reeve, Deidre Rye, Walter Mulbry, Kate Lofgren (of Montgomery Parks), and others at several locations within Long Branch.

Barbara reports that they have focused on the area north of the footbridge near the library, around the soccer field behind the Community Center, by the tennis courts, down the tennis courts hill to the creek, and along the nearby creek. They have also worked at the back edge of Long Branch-Arliss Park, beyond the playground, and behind the library.

"We've been meeting on Friday mornings," Barbara reports, "and Corinne Stephens at Montgomery Parks has recently been posting the work days. It expands choice for people from across the county who need experience credits to become Certified Weed Warriors and enables local people to connect with us in the park." See the calendar [here](#).

Barbara first tackled NNIs in 2006 with FOSC co-founder Sally Gagne, when they went out weekly during Barbara's year off from teaching.

"Several of us have been trying for years to get Garlic Mustard out of Long Branch between the community center bridge and Wayne," Barbara notes. "While walking in various areas of the park to attack it, we've taken out Bush Honeysuckle, Wineberry, Multiflora Rose, and English Ivy and removed Japanese Honeysuckle from Spicebush."

"I don't know how much difference we've made, but I think that there is much more Mayapple and Spicebush than there used to be, plus lots of native bedstraws, Spotted Jewelweed, and Hairy Sweet Cicely."

A great job by Barbara over so many years and hearty thanks to her team in Long Branch!



*Barbara clears invasives in an area that has seen a rebound of natives like these Mayapples.
(M. Wilpers photos)*

Bird Outings Garner Dozens of Species

Bird enthusiasts celebrated International Migratory Bird Day with outings near Dallas Avenue on May 14 and in the powerline meadow on May 15.

Organizer Ross Campbell reports that a dozen FOSC members joined leaders Mary Singer and David Blockstein on a misty morning near the stormwater ponds upstream from Forest Glen Avenue. The group was rewarded with 36 species, either seen or heard.

Many of the species were summer residents, but others were taking advantage of Sligo Creek's habitat to feed on caterpillars and other insects on their way to



breeding grounds further north.

*Birders train their sights near Dallas Ave on May 14.
(Ross Cambell photo)*

"Among the locals," Ross notes, "were Chimney Swifts (relentlessly flying in search of airborne insects), Red-bellied Woodpeckers popping in and out of nest cavities in dead trees, and a pair of Eastern Bluebirds defending their territory.

"A Baltimore Oriole showed that Sligo is not just Nationals territory, while a Scarlet Tanager taunted us with calls before finally revealing himself above the closed off Parkway. Resident Wood Thrushes serenaded the group throughout the morning; their eerie, flutelike song is

always welcome.

"Another loud singer, especially for such a small creature, was the Ovenbird, a diminutive warbler that hangs out on the forest floor and is difficult to spot. A species like the Ovenbird (that is, one more easily heard than seen) is good for testing birding smartphone apps such as Merlin, which can detect and identify sounds that the casual birder might miss."

Other species that some in the group identified via phone app—not David or Mary, who know the songs and calls quite well—included Northern Parula, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Eastern Phoebe. Additional warblers either on the move through Maryland or planning to stay awhile included Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

"Mary and David have proven themselves to be popular trip leaders over several years," says Ross. "The Friends of Sligo Creek, including the first-time and repeat customers on this trip, thank them for their contribution to our program calendar."

The group at the powerline meadow, led by John Stith, benefited from fine weather and recorded 39 species. Highlights were seeing Wild Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel (who appear to be nesting again), Cedar Waxwing (a flock in flight), Easter Towhee, Common Yellowthroat, and a pair of Blue Grosbeaks (who specialize in open habitats). They heard vocalizing by Brown Thrasher, Baltimore Oriole, Northern Parula, and Blackpoll Warbler. Earlier that morning, John also spotted Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and two Indigo Buntings.



American Kestrel was one of the highlights of the May 15 outing, photographed here on May 31 by Kristin Zimmer.



Another highlight in the meadow was a pair of Blue Grosbeaks. This male was photographed in the meadow on May 9 by John Stith.



Birds could be spotted in either direction at the outing on May 14 led by David Blockstein (in yellow) and Mary Singer (with white cap and coat). (Ross Campbell photo)

FOSC Engages Kids at Science Fair

Our Advocacy Director, Kit Gage, took time off from policy issues to represent FOSC at Sligo Creek Elementary School's S.T.E.A.M. Science Fair, introducing students to the watershed, its wildlife, and our work.

More than 650 students engaged with presenters on a range of topics, organized around the themes of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). The 13 fair presenters represented a mix of school parents and organizations, including Bethesda Green.

Farah Kanthor photos



Kit made good use of our gigantic, stuffed "Sally the Salamander," as well as two big Sligo watershed maps, our ever popular "fishing" box with its Sligo magnet lure and paper minnows, and our fun painted canvas with its secret doors hiding pictures of animals that live in Sligo Creek and its surrounding woodlands.

"Somewhat to my surprise," Kit reports, "even the older kids liked playing with the fishing box/pond. They had an easier time finding their homes on the Sligo watershed maps and putting stickers on them. (The kindergarten and first-grade kids mostly just put stickers on their hands.) I got to talk about our catadromous American Eels and other lovely fish and how we've got so many more kinds of them in the creek than 30 years ago. It was fun and fascinating. The kids were interested, involved, and eager."



Save the Date: FOSC 20th Anniversary Event September 18

Friends of Sligo Creek will celebrate its twentieth anniversary with a public event on the afternoon of Saturday, September 18, at the Argyle Local Park, located at 1030 Forest Glen Road, just east of Sligo Creek Parkway and north of the Beltway.

Details are forthcoming, but we are planning to provide live music and refreshments, honor those who launched the organization in 2002, and highlight how far we've come in protecting and restoring the watershed in cooperation with the county and others. We hope to see you there!

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Nature Photos from Sligo

A selection of recent observations from the iNaturalist public project titled
"Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed"

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fauna-and-flora-of-the-sligo-creek-watershed>

Photographers' names are those provided to iNaturalist.

Send comments or questions to Michael Wilpers via naturalhistory@fosc.org.



Spring Reflections

Common Raccoon at the Wheaton Branch ponds on May 31 (Stephen Davies)



New Life

Above: American Robin chicks on May 26 and June 4 near Dennis and Hayes (Ron Wertz)

Below left: Gray Catbird chicks near Bradford & Hartwell on June 3 (mitchgreene)

Below right: Wood Duck chick at the Wheaton Branch ponds on June 1 (S. Davies)



Above: Wood Duck family at the Wheaton Branch ponds on June 9 (S. Davies)
Bottom: Canada Goose family at the Kemp Mill ponds on May 26 (Dan Treadwell)



Predators and Prey at the Beltway Ponds

Above: Northern Watersnake (left) was first reported at these ponds on May 25, the same day as this photo of an American Bullfrog (right), one of its favorite meals, which it swallows whole and feet first.

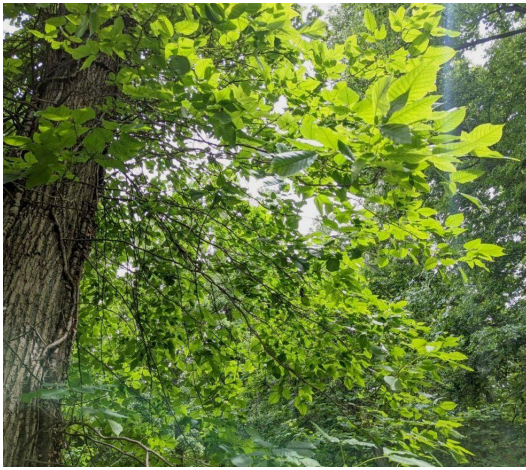
Below: Black-crowned Night-Heron snares an American Bullfrog at these ponds on June 8, deftly maneuvering it into position so it can be swallowed upside down and head first.



Below: A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron grabs a Red Swamp Crayfish on May 29. It specializes in hunting these animals. This type of crayfish is native to the south and southeast US and the Mississippi basin but is considered invasive in this area. (All photos by Dan Treadwell)



*Left: Mayapple with fruit in Long Branch near the library on June 33 (Wilpers)
Right: Black Cohosh, uncommon in Sligo, near Devon Court on June 8 (rutherp).*



Feeding Our Birds with . . . Poison Ivy?

Massively branching Poison Ivy in Long Branch near the library on June 3. The leaves host a leaf-mining insect caterpillar (center, from 2021) that birds like Chickadee and Titmouse probably excavate in summer (as they do other leaf-miners), while the fruits (right, also June 3) will mature to become valuable forage for birds come fall. (Wilpers)



Our Native Carrots

*Three of the five native plants in the carrot family found commonly in Sligo:
Left: Wild Licorice (June 3). Center: Black Snakeroot (May 10). Right: Honewort (June 3).
All taken between Maple and Piney Branch (M. Wilpers and herbal explorer)*



Indigo Bunting male at the Wheaton Branch ponds on May 28 (S. Davies)



Above: Broad-headed Sharpshooter near Elson & 16th Place on June 5 (Kristin Zimmer)



Above: Wolf Spider near Wayne & Cedar on May 27 (maragay)
Right: Wolf Spider with Yellow-striped Leafhopper (related to Sharpshooters), near Dale & Mansfield on June 9 (marsrevolt)





Drama in the Skies

Young Bald Eagle chased by an American Crow at the Wheaton Branch ponds on May 28 (S. Davies)

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.

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