



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter May 2023



Photo by Xavier Courouble

LITTER/STEWARDS

Sweep the Creek

Thank you to everyone who took part in Sweep the Creek events all along Sligo Creek, and parts of Long Branch and Wheaton Branch, over the 53rd Earth Day weekend!

Over 300 people collected almost 200 bags of trash and recyclables and many bulky items like bikes, car tires, a grocery cart and -- yes -- a vacuum cleaner. Invasive plants didn't escape either; FOSC Weed Warriors tackled them at Long Branch park and Section 7 over the weekend too.

Results

Many Sweep leaders reported that volunteers found less litter and bulk trash than in previous sweeps. Perhaps we are doing better at keeping litter out of our parklands. Or at least removing it faster. It seems the people who pick up litter when out walking in Sligo (known as “plogging”) are having an impact. At the two stormwater ponds where litter tends to collect and hamper the wildlife that depend on these ponds for food and shelter, FOSC has held additional cleanups between the spring and fall Sweeps. This seems to have made a difference as well. Still, some serious trash hotspots exist in our watershed, in Long Branch and at the Wheaton Branch Stormwater ponds.

The most prevalent type of trash

At the three "test" sites at the northern end of Sligo (the Wheaton Branch Stormwater ponds, Sligo Dennis Ave park, and at the cleanup site in Section 9) we sorted, counted and weighed what volunteers collected.

What was the most prevalent type of trash? Beverage containers. We collected over 1,000 plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and a few glass bottles at just these three sites. Lightweight and bulky, they filled many more large trash bags than the other types of trash collected.

Beverage Containers - plastic, metal, and glass		
Test Location	Count	Wt
Wheaton Stormwater Ponds	594	32 lbs
Section 7 and 8	321	13 lbs
Section 9	167	6 lbs
Total	1,082	51 lbs



Above: The shopping cart warriors from the Wheaton stormwater ponds (photo by Susan DeFord)

(See the [Sweep Photo page on the FOSC website](#) for other memorable finds from recent Sweeps.)



Above: the haul of beverage containers at Sligo Dennis park (photo by Ed Murtagh)

Below: Braving the rocky shoreline to get the....beverage containers (photo by Kit Gage)



Producer Responsibility for Packaging Materials

FOSC is submitting the trash data to Trash Free Maryland, which advocated for SB0222/HB0284,

the Statewide Recycling Needs Assessment and Producer Responsibility for Packaging Materials bill. That bill was signed by Gov. Wes Moore on May 8. It establishes an advisory council to "make recommendations regarding establishing and implementing a producer responsibility program in the State for packaging materials."

Locally, we will use our findings to:

- help identify the main sources of litter in our watershed,
- organize additional targeted sweeps in the park and in our neighborhoods to prevent litter from entering the creek, and
- educate people about the negative impact of littering on life in the watershed.

A very special thanks to all our Cleanup Site Leaders, our Sligo Stewards; to the Montgomery Housing Partnership for helping to organize the Long Branch Community Center cleanup; and to the Anacostia Watershed Society for organizing a cleanup in lower Section 1 in Prince George's County. By working together, we are making a difference!

--Ed Murtagh

OPINION

Earth Day cleanup lessons



April 30, 2023 at 5:45 p.m. EDT The Washington Post

Literature and philosophy love pithy phrases such as "I think, therefore I am" from Frenchman René Descartes. William Shakespeare in "The Tempest": "What is past is prologue." And, more recently, Alice Waters's book "We Are What We Eat."

After picking up trash on Earth Day, I suggest a grubbier summation: We are what we toss.

Litter is a mirror, and picking up trash can be like archaeology without the excavation. No digging is needed to eyeball what we discard on purpose. Friends of Sligo Creek assigned volunteers to pick up litter at a large storm water pond south of Wheaton. It acts like a kidney to cleanse surface water that flows into Sligo Creek and then the Anacostia River and Chesapeake Bay.

Signs at this storm water pond warn not to drink the gunky water and not to swim. Geese, egrets and even eagles don't seem to mind, which means plenty of food lives in that pond. Birdwatchers and photographers are attracted to this retention pond.

When we arrived on Earth Day, wearing muck boots and gloves, a longtime Friend of Sligo Creek leader seemed a bit worried that the area was perhaps too clean to justify a cleanup. Twenty volunteers filled that many trash bags. The biggest find, a mud-covered grocery cart, wouldn't fit in a bag.

The Earth Day trash certifies our craving for convenience and our hypocrisy. We say we don't like throwaway water containers. More than 1 million bottles of water are sold every minute around the world. Plastic water bottles were the No. 1 litter item we found on Earth Day. We say we've had it with plastic straws. I picked straws of every size and color. We know cans are recyclable. Two of our litter bags were filled with beer cans. We love convenience.

Like hypocrisy, there's enough irony to go around, too. A new item in litter inventory is something meant to protect us: the face mask.

We are what we toss.

Ken Klein, *Silver Spring*

Reprinted article courtesy of the Washington Post, April 23, 2023

Denis Hayes, the principal organizer of the first Earth Day in 1970, saw the above opinion piece in The Washington Post.

In response, he said that he considers litter pickups "as a true environmental sacrament that also does some practical good. A reminder that everything goes somewhere."



In Sligo, a blue heron with its beak tangled in plastic mesh, unable to eat. It later died. (photo by Dan Treadwell 2021)

The rule that “Everything must go somewhere” was originally formulated by Barry Commoner in 1971 as one of his “four laws of ecology” in *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology*.

The other three are:
(1) Everything is connected to everything else,
(2) There is no such thing as a free lunch, and
(3) Nature knows best.

It's a Clean Sweep for These Young Artists

The recent Sweep the Creek cleanup received an artistic shout-out from students at East Silver Spring (ESS) Elementary School. At FOSC's invitation, students in grades 1-4 created colorful, imaginative posters promoting Sweep the Creek and greater care for the local stream and surrounding watershed. The 51 artworks are on display in kiosks along Sligo Creek Trail through the end of May and in an online gallery on the FOSC website. Exuberantly colored fish and birds implore viewers "Please help us" and "Cheep Cheep Keep It Neat!" Another artist declares, "I Hate to Litter, Save the World."

Art Teacher Will Thomas said enthusiasm for the project quickly spread in his classes, adding "the students and families are very excited to see their art out in public!"

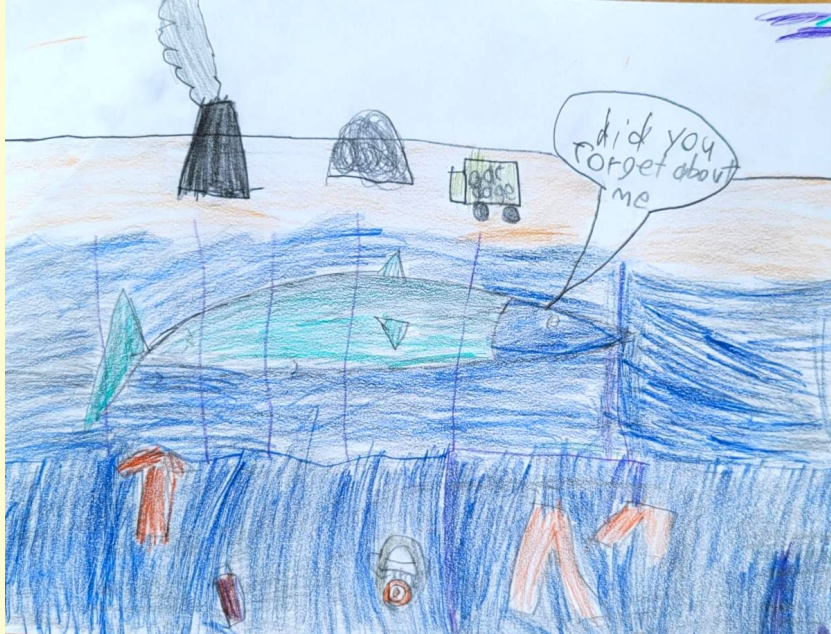


Kiosk in Section 9



Kiosk in Section 1

FOSC Newsletter readers can
[view the online gallery here.](#)



"Did you forget about me?" by Ellis

ESS Acting Principal Iraida Bodre-Woods called the exhibit a way "of sharing the talents of our treasures with the community." She added, "We look forward to continued collaboration with the Friends of Sligo Creek."

U.S. Rep Jamie Raskin (D-MD), a longtime friend of this hometown environmental group, praised the students' work in a Twitter post to his more than 774,000 followers, telling his audience, "these young artists know that environmental activism starts at home."

-- Susan DeFord

WATER QUALITY

Site 49 Biomonitoring

Using nets and buckets on a lovely spring day in April, seven volunteers waded into Sligo to sift through leaf debris and look under rocks for macroinvertebrates at "Site 49" in section 1 of Sligo Creek.

Midges, aquatic worms, mayflies, and several types of caddisflies were found. A hellgrammite ("the King Kong of Aquatic Insects", see photo) made a special appearance and thrilled the team. Despite Sligo's overall water quality rating of fair at this location, the presence of hellgrammites is encouraging as they tend to live in streams with a good or better water quality rating.



A hellgrammite (Corydalis cornutus) from Sligo Creek near Riggs Rd. It is

Macroinvertebrates lack a backbone and can be seen without a magnifying glass or microscope. Aquatic macroinvertebrates include insects that spend their nymph and larval stages in the water, as well as snails, worms, crayfish, and clams.

STORMWATER

Sligo Creek: The Good, the Bad and the... Needs Improvement!

FOSC is participating in a project with Nature Forward to compile a “State of the Streams” report for Sligo Creek. The report will highlight key stream health factors and threats by analyzing data on water quality, climate, biodiversity and habitat, as well as access to nature, to calculate an overall health score.

State of the Streams projects focus on selected streams and watersheds in MD, VA, and DC. Sligo Creek was chosen for 2023, along with Rock Creek (MD/DC), and Accotink Creek (VA). A pilot report in 2022 focused on three local watersheds: Northwest Branch, Oxon Run, and Holmes Run.

In contrast to other report cards, such as the Chesapeake Bay report card, this project's report card will incorporate social and human health impacts. For example, the Access to Nature score looks at these questions: How many parks and recreation areas, playgrounds, trails are there? Do residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park? Is there tree inequity in low-income neighborhoods near the stream? The score will help local advocacy groups like FOSC focus on key actions that residents and policymakers can take to protect water quality.

We are just getting started with the project. In the coming months, data will be analyzed and scores will be developed for the three watersheds. If funding continues, additional watershed scores will be calculated and updated.

To learn more, visit [Nature Forward's Story of Streams page](#).

--Elaine Lamirande

IN MEMORIAM

Ann Hoffnar Remembered

Founding FOSC board member and longtime volunteer
Ann Hoffnar passed away in April. Here we adapt a
tribute to Ann written by Laura Mol, another founding

member of the FOSC board, to wish Ann well when she moved out of Sligo in 2018 to the Riderwood retirement community in Calverton. We miss this spirited, dedicated friend, and were honored to have known her. May she rest in peace.

* * *

Ann Hoffnar was a stalwart member of Friends of Sligo Creek from its very beginning in 2001. She served on the interim steering committee that preceded even the founding board of directors, on which body she also served as it crafted bylaws and signed articles of incorporation in 2002.



For seven years, Ann was an active and essential part of the board, leaving in 2009. In the early years (2002-2004), she devoted lots of energy to the creation of strategic plans, which helped clarify options and directions for our young community nonprofit. She and Jim Baird served as co-presidents from 2004 to 2006, succeeding the first president, Sally Gagne. Sally says, "Ann's contributions were vital to the success of Friends of Sligo Creek -- from arranging for our handsome logo to providing refreshments for programs at which we would present a logo-adorned mug to the speaker. She was so generous with her time and talents."

As early as 2003, Ann discovered community outreach as her personal passion. Countless are the festivals, street fairs, and other big events for which she staffed the FOSC table and recruited others to join her. Fellow board member Bruce Sidwell recalls that Ann created the ever-popular "fishing pond" in a blue box, with a fishing "pole" whose hook was a magnet that "hooked" little photos of minnows and other fish species that are native to Sligo. Kids loved it, and the activity naturally drew in the parents. At one Takoma Park Arbor Day event, Bruce remembers, "Ann donned an owl costume and stood by the street waving at cars. Unfortunately, the costume was very hot and we had to insist she sit down in the shade to cool off."



Of its many iterations over the years, was there ever an outreach committee function without Ann's presence and experience? She hosted many, many board meetings and outreach committee meetings around her dining room table. For really big meetings, it was her living room. Ann's thoughtful, caring, and cheerful hospitality added so much!

All along, Ann offered a gentle persistence in maintaining progress toward agreed-upon goals, tracking who was doing what -- nudging more than nagging, given her style -- reminding, cajoling, covering what was missing so many times. She "held the center" for years in scheduling talks and outings and seeing that information was flowing among planners and members.

She not only helped create our history, she kept track of it. Every year from 2004 to 2013, she elicited summaries of our work and wove together the components of an annual list of accomplishments, not stopping until they were posted on our website.

As she readied her move from Hodges Lane in Takoma Park to Riderwood, in the Paint Branch watershed, Ann handed over valuable archives that she had built and maintained: CDs full of photos, files documenting important events, and a two-volume set of binders with every magazine and newspaper article about Friends of Sligo Creek from the last 18 years. It's a huge legacy and we're grateful beyond measure.

--Laura Mol

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming events



Italian Arum (photo by treegrow)

June 8 - The Invasion Curve -- Implications for recent invasive species in our region

**Zoom webinar with Sara Tangren on Thurs.
June 8 at 7pm, [link to follow](#)**

Sara Tangren will talk about the Invasions curve, the implications for recent invasions in our region, and the NCR PRISM project (National Capital Region -- Partnership for



Brown-belted Bumble Bee (photo by Kent McFarland)

June 21 - Ask a Bumblebee: A Community Science Project on Bumble Bee Floral Preference

**Zoom talk with Jenan El-Hifnawi on Wed.
June 21 at 7pm, [link to follow](#)**

Which flowers do bumble bees in Sligo Creek prefer? That's what the Ask A Bumble Bee (AABB) community science project is trying to figure out!

Regional Invasive Species Management) to coordinate the cross-boundary fight against invasives species in D.C. and surrounding counties.

Sara Tangren, Ph.D., is the Coordinator of the National Capital PRISM at the Dept. of Energy & Environment, District of Columbia government.

Join us on Zoom with AABB coordinator Jenan El-Hifnawi of the USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab as she presents the community science project looking at bumble bee floral preferences. She'll tell us about the program, how to get involved, and some preliminary results about what bees rank as their top plants!

June 14 - Gallery Show Opening

You are invited to the opening of longtime Sligo Creek photographer Julius Kassovic's show at the Takoma Park city building gallery on Wed June 14. Details are forthcoming - check the FOSC website homepage closer to the event date.

June 10 and June 24 - Green Streets project tours

Stormwater and native plant horticulturist Kit Gage is offering free tours of the Green Streets project in Sligo Park Hills and her own conservation landscape garden on Saturday, June 10 at 10 am and Saturday, June 24 at 10 am.

The Green Streets program installed neighborhood-wide stormwater-capture and soaking-in projects in street rights-of-way. These projects take stormwater from the streets, limiting flooding and capturing pollution. Many of them are planted up with native perennials, shrubs, and trees and so are lovely amenities for the neighborhood. Learn how they work at one of the tours. Each will last approximately an hour. There are gradual inclines on the streets, but no steps.

[**Register here**](#)

The meetup address will be sent to registrants a few days before the tour. These tours are offered through a grant-funded partnership with Nature Forward.

Aug 26 - Spanish-language Landscaper Training

Nature Forward is partnering with the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Program to offer a landscaper rain garden maintenance training to native Spanish-speaking landscape workers who work in the Sligo Creek watershed!

The training will be hands-on, using the rain gardens at Woodend, the Nature Forward headquarters in Chevy Chase, for the field training.

Thanks to grant funding, Nature Forward is able to offer full scholarships, plus \$200 participation stipends. Please apply, or share the flyer with your Sligo watershed neighborhood listservs and any eligible individuals you know or have worked with.

Apply for a Scholarship and/or the Stipend

Click on the flyer below

Once approved for a scholarship, Nature Forward (NF) will provide a coupon code to use for free registration. If someone registers before obtaining approval for a scholarship, NF will refund their fee. The stipends will be distributed after completion of the course.

Register here

CBLP CERTIFICADO DE GESTIÓN SOSTENIBLE DE BMP DE AGUAS PLUVIALES PARA TRIPULACIONES

La duración del taller es de un día. Programa de Certificación Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake (CBLP en inglés).

August 28th, 2023
8:30am - 2:30pm
Cherry Chase, MD

¿Jas usted un profesional del paisaje quien habla español y trabaja en el condado de Montgomery? Puede calificar para una beca completa, más un estipendio de participación de \$200 para esta capacitación. Por favor, rellene este formulario para aplicar: <https://forms.office.com/r/YTJGZMAGLU>

Diseñado para cuadrillas de mantenimiento y líderes de cuadrillas que aún no han completado la capacitación de Nivel 1 Certificación Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake (CBLP en inglés).

El programa educativo se enfoca en el compromiso, la interacción y el aprendizaje práctico. Los temas incluyen actividades de mantenimiento de Buenas Prácticas de Manejo (BPM), riberas y no nativos, identificación de plantas, plantas nativas adecuadas para BPM, identificación y manejo de plantas invasoras y desarrollo de un plan de mantenimiento. Se proporcionarán materiales de educación a todos los participantes.

Los participantes que completan la clase recibirán el Certificado Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake para Equipos de Campo (CBLP-CREWS en inglés).

[HTTPS://CERTIFIED.CBLPRO.ORG/CBLP-CREWS/](https://certified.cblpro.org/cblp-crews/)

Please be sure to view the entire newsletter including the Recent Nature Sightings by clicking on "View entire message" or similar text at the bottom of your browser.

OF NOTE

Following up

Neighborhood pollinator havens talk - The video from the May 10 talk is available on the FOSC website [Natural History main page](#) and on the [FOSC Youtube channel](#).

Sligo Garden Program - In case you missed it, the plant list for the Sligo Garden Program is available on the [Stormwater Resources page](#) on the FOSC website. Check it out!

FOSC STORE

FOSC T-shirts to Wear with Pride

Celebrate Spring with a beautiful FOSC T-shirt for yourself, family, and friends!

The tees are made of organic cotton and come in short sleeve and long sleeve, in 5 sizes, small to XL. Prices range from \$22 to \$27.

You can order the tees directly from the [FOSC store](#), now on its own tab on the upper right of the FOSC [homepage](#).

Each T-shirt purchased helps support FOSC's work on litter, non-native invasive plant removal, stormwater, water quality, natural history, and advocacy.



Above: Sligo resident Zia models the FOSC T-shirt (J. Kassovic photo)

Your support funds FOSC programs

You can give via this Donate button - it's simple and secure.



**Or send a check to the address at the very bottom of this email.
Thank you!**

NATURAL HISTORY

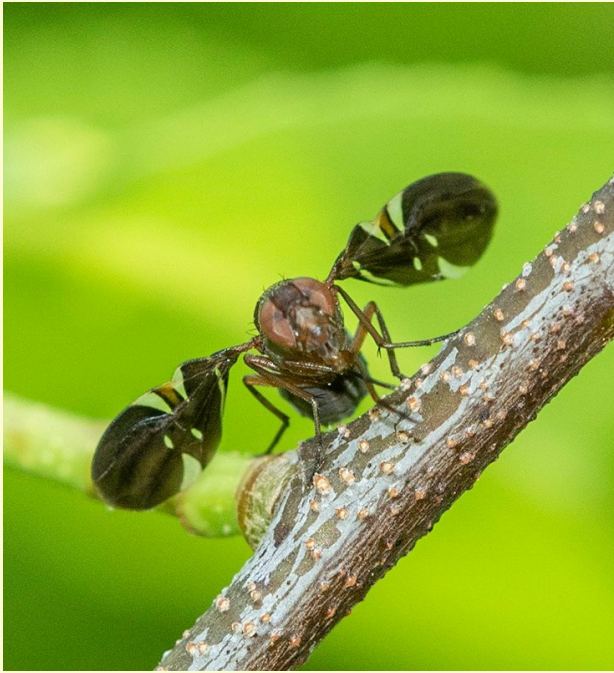
Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



Solomon's Plume along the Parkway near Park Valley Road on
May 5 (M. Wilpers)



Yellow Warbler at the
Wheaton Branch ponds on
April 24 (Stephen Davies)



Common Picture-winged Fly near Cedar and Wayne on May 12 (maragay)



Mottled Tortoise Beetle near Green Meadow Park on May 1 (M. Wilpers)



Tawny Collared Ant wrestling its prey (a horsehair worm) near Spring and Poplar on April 29 (Katja Schulz)



Left: White-jawed Jumping Spider near Spring and Poplar on May 17 (Adrienne van den Beemt)

Above: American Bullfrog at the Forest Glen wetlands on April 13 (Dan Treadwell)



Canada Geese near Amherst and Blueridge on May 7 (mmn_noriko)



Tree Swallow (left) and Eastern Bluebird in bird nest boxes at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on May 8 (left) and May 7 (D. Treadwell)



Green Heron at the Wheaton Branch ponds on April 24 (S. Davies)



Above: Black Willow in flower at the powerline meadow on April 29 (Kristin Zimmer)



Right: Eastern Poison Ivy in flower along the Parkway near Park Valley Rd. on May 12 (M. Wilpers)



Solitary Sandpiper at the Wheaton Branch ponds on April 29 (S. Davies)



Above: Broad-headed Sharpshooter near Spring and Poplar on April 29 (K. Schulz)

Right: Keeled Treehopper near Takoma Park Middle School on April 29 (A. van den Beemt)





Black-crowned Night-Heron at the Wheaton Branch
ponds on April 21 (S. Davies)

Photo selection by Michael Wilpers, FOSC chair of natural history. All photos taken from the iNaturalist project, "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed" ([Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed · iNaturalist](#)).
Photo credits reflect those provided in the iNaturalist system.

Need to Reach Us?

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Natural History (Michael Wilpers): naturalhistory@fosc.org

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@fosc.org

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organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.



Join FOSC