



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter August 2024



Photo by Xavier Courouble

In this issue:

Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities

Litter Hotspot Cleanups

Whizzing Along the Trail

Biomonitoring in Sligo

T-shirt or Ball Cap / FOSC Store

Donate to FOSC

Recent Nature Sightings

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities

**Takoma Park Folk Festival - Sunday Sept. 8 9:30am -
6:30pm**

Have fun, enjoy the live music and help out at the FOSC table on Sunday, Sept. 8. [Sign up here](#).

Join other FOSC volunteers at the FOSC table for a couple of hours between 9:30am and 6:30pm, letting people know about the park and creek, upcoming events like Sweep the Creek, and inviting people to join FOSC.

We'll have experienced FOSC members at the table throughout the day. Listen to the music, chat with people, or help run FOSC activities for kids.

[Sign up here](#)



Sligo Park Hills Green Streets & Garden Tour - Thurs, Sept. 19 from 6:30pm-7:30pm

See a fascinating selection of the different kinds of green projects that the county installed to capture stormwater from Sligo Park Hills streets.

We'll also tour a native plant 'specimen garden' with many different kinds of native plants in sun and shade. See what works where. *Part of a Nature Forward partner grant.*



*One type of stormwater
installation in
Sligo Park Hills*

Contact kgage@verizon.net for the meet-up location.

FOSC/ARK Fall Litter Hotspot Cleanups

This fall, FOSC will continue to tackle litter hotspots with 3 partners - Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK), One Montgomery Green (OMG), and Neighbors of the Northwest Branch (NNWB) - throughout in the Montgomery County part of the Anacostia River watershed.

Through this initiative we'll reduce litter and create detailed pollution-specific data to help educate Montgomery County residents and leaders about the litter problem, its movement via stormwater through our waterways, and what can be done to reduce its impact on local communities in the Anacostia Watershed.

Saturday, Sept. 14 10:00am – 12:00pm at White Oak Community Recreation Center (Northwest Branch Watershed)

Saturday, Sept. 14 1:30 – 3:30pm at Burnt Mills East Special Park (Northwest Branch Watershed)

Sat. and Sun. Sept. 28 & 29 - **FOSC's own twice-yearly Sweep the Creek** litter cleanup throughout the Sligo watershed -- see below

Saturday, Oct. 5 10:00am – 12:00pm at Burnt Mills West Special Park (Northwest Branch Watershed)

Saturday, Oct. 5 1:30 – 3:30pm at Long Branch Community Center (Sligo Creek Watershed)

Saturday, Nov. 2 10:00am – 12:00pm at Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds (Sligo Creek Watershed)

Saturday, Nov. 2 1:30 – 3:30pm at Long Branch Community Center (Sligo Creek Watershed)

Details will be posted on the FOSC website in early September; no pre-registration is required.

We are excited to be involved in this initiative and hope you will participate in the Sweep the Creek and some of the hotspot cleanups.

--Ed Murtagh, FOSC VP and Nick Clements, Litter Hotspot coordinator

FOSC Native Plant Sale - ordering opens on Sept. 19 and closes Oct. 3

This Fall, FOSC will again offer a sale of a variety of native plants in partnership with Howard Ecoworks' Seeds of Change nursery, which sold out last fall.

Beautify your space with plants from the FOSC Native Plant Sale for your garden, building grounds, or sidewalk "hellstrip"!

The order form will be emailed to all FOSC members and will be posted on the FOSC website on Thursday, Sept. 19. Anyone is welcome to order!

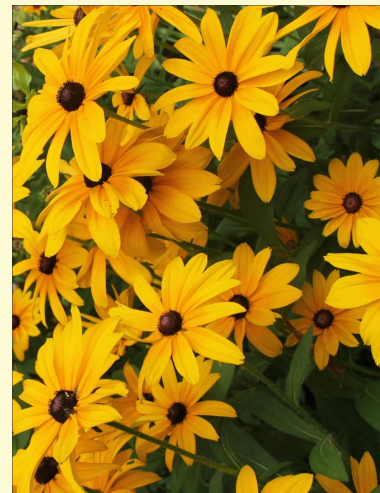
Plants will be available for pick up only.

Location: 7010 Woodland Ave, Takoma Park

Dates: Friday, Oct. 4 ,from 5pm - 7pm,

Saturday, Oct. 5 and Sunday, Oct. 6 from 9am - 5pm

To learn more about the many Howard EcoWorks programs and services, [see EcoWorks founder Lori Lilly's talk](#) on [FOSC's YouTube channel](#).



*Blackeyed susan
Rudbeckia hirta*

Sweep the Creek - Sat. Sept. 28 & Sun. Sept. 29 **in Sligo Creek, Long Branch and Wheaton Branch**

Since 1994, on the fourth Saturday of September, the nation's largest single-day volunteer effort has been held - National Public Lands Day. Friends of Sligo Creek will celebrate the day with **Sweep the Creek litter cleanups on Sat. and Sun., Sept. 28 & 29** throughout the watershed.

Check the [Sweep the Creek page](#) of the FOSC website in mid-September for the Sweep locations and schedule. FOSC volunteers will distribute bags and gloves for participants at each Sweep location. **We will send the schedule to FOSC members by email as well. Weed Warrior events may also be held too.** Stay tuned.

Continuing our #1 streak from 2023, FOSC volunteers have removed more litter this year than any other watershed group in MoCo.

Let's get out there to preserve and protect the ecological health of our watershed!



At the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds

- All ages are welcome.
- Register at the FOSC table when you arrive.
- SSL forms will be signed after a student's service is completed.

Tree Appreciation Tour & Native Tree Planting - Sat Oct. 5 10:00am - 12:00pm

Led by FOSC master naturalists Bruce Sidwell and Ross Campbell. With the FOSC checklist of common local native woody plants in hand, participants will tour around the meadow and nearby with Bruce and Ross to talk about the 20 native woody species growing there. The trees will be temporarily labeled for a time, perhaps through mid-October. We're also working on getting two native trees to plant as well.

Come out to learn about our native trees and lend a hand planting. No registration needed. (Weed warriors can get work credit for assisting with the planting.)

Meet at Sligo Creek Parkway at Dallas Ave, across the footbridge just beyond the kiosk at the playground and small meadow. Look for the FOSC table.



Tree planting in the golf course back in the day. Some of the trees we see today in Sligo Creek park were planted by FOSC volunteers more than 20 years ago

Litter Hotspot Cleanups

It takes a lot of effort to keep the Sligo watershed clear of litter. We thought we'd show you a few snapshots of volunteers in action at this summer's hotspot cleanups.

Thanks to everyone who came out to the cleanups, and to our ploggers, Adopt-A-Road volunteers, and Weed Warriors who collect many more bags of trash all along the watershed.

June 29 at Green Meadows Park in Hyattsville, lower Sligo

FOSC's newest Section 1 Stewards Jesse Johnson and Fatima Yousofi led the first-ever FOSC cleanup at Green Meadows Park in Hyattsville, close to the confluence of Sligo Creek and Northwest Branch. Litter masters Ed Murtagh and Nick Clements lent their experienced hands on what was a very warm and truly muggy Saturday!



Ed, Nick, and several of the volunteers after the Hotspot cleanup

The volunteers and leaders worked tirelessly for two hours cleaning up in the woods and along Sligo. When all was said and done we had removed the predictable dozens of the beer bottles, cans, and plastic beverage containers, and lots of trash - ten 50 gallon trash bags, two mattresses, plastic netting (particularly hazardous to birds and small mammals) and tarps.



Cleaning up with a litter-sniffing dog, perhaps?



Fatima and Jesse, the newest FOSC Stewards focusing on the PG County portion of Section 1

(Ed Murtagh and Nick Clements photos)

July 20 at Kemp Mill Stormwater Ponds in Upper Sligo

FOSC and One Montgomery Green co-hosted the July Hotspot Cleanup & Stewardship Day at Kemp Mill stormwater ponds in Section 9 near the Sligo Creek headwaters.

We had a great day thanks to our Litter Hotspot Coordinator Nick Clements, our Sligo Weed Warriors, and over 50 volunteers who collected 25 bags of trash. The weed warriors freed many trees from vines and removed many non-native invasive plants. Thank you everyone!



Nick and other volunteers at Kemp Mill stormwater ponds; 25 bags of trash and plastic fencing await Parks Dept. pickup. (Nick Clements photos)

August 10 at Long Branch Community Center

Ed and I (Nick) spent at least two hours cleaning up at the Long Branch Community Center and park. A Capital Bike Share bike as well as a lot of trash was hidden in the vegetation.



Just as I thought we were done, Ed suggested doing a sweep of the playing field in the back. It was there that I found tucked away behind a fallen tree dozens of beer cans! Quite the party!



(Nick Clements photos)

In another area I picked up close to 50 gallons of bottles and cans. Fortunately most were clean enough to recycle. Our total trash collected was 240 gallons plus 40 gallons that I had picked up earlier before Ed arrived. A solid two hours of work!

--Nick Clements

August 10 at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park

Friends of Sligo Creek, One Montgomery Green and Anacostia Riverkeeper held the first of the series of planned joint cleanups on Aug. 10 at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park along Sligo Creek. We worked just downstream of the Purple Line construction site where we pulled out a lot of construction-related debris.





ARK led the litter sorting into some of the 19 defined categories of litter using blue bins. Thanks to everyone who came out to this event! (*Ed Murtagh photos*)

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.

SLIGO TRAILS

Whizzing Along the Trail

You may have noticed during your walks through the park this summer that the paths can become filled with lots of highly diverse traffic – walkers, joggers, kids in strollers, kids on tricycles, walkers with dogs, motorized scooters, motorized bikes, racing and fat-tire bikes, rollerbladers, and even the odd unicycle.

As the MontgomeryParks.org website notes, the Sligo trail “is the heaviest-used facility in the stream valley park and provides recreation for persons of all ages and abilities.”

You may have also noticed that in many places the path is not wide enough to accommodate all that traffic.

Of greatest concern to those on foot are fast-moving bikes that come too close, at too high speeds. Bike riders need to recognize that some of those on foot may be hard of hearing, or busy concentrating on helping a child, or keeping their dog away from a hazard, or listening to a podcast

or talking on the phone.

In other words, a little caution and forethought by bicyclists would do a great deal to ensure that all who wish to enjoy the park can do so safely. Bike bells and calling out your presence in advance is a courteous and thoughtful approach, as is leaving the path so you are well away from pedestrians and dogs.



So many of us love Sligo Creek Park and value the way it enhances our lives. How we treat others when we use the Park can go a long way toward making sure we all feel, and are, comfortable and safe on the trails.

WATER QUALITY

BioMonitoring in Sligo

From an upper Sligo neighbor:

A biomonitoring crew from MoCo Parks was spotted on Tuesday at the Ladd Street bridge at the foot of Nicholas Drive in upper Sligo (Section 9). They had just completed a survey of creek life.



The Parks Dept. team (l to r): Matt Harper, John Merlo-Coyne, Hanna Bourcier, Carley Laue, and Dave Sigrist

Matt Harper, head of the Resource Analysis unit, explains:

"The sites we monitor from year to year are chosen based on a 5-year rotation of all the Parks-managed stream valleys in the county, pre and post-environmental restoration monitoring, targeted pollution/environmental impact investigations, Planning Department initiatives, and to track health within our designated Best Natural and Biodiversity Areas.

The site [at Ladd St. bridge] we were monitoring on Tuesday was targeted to evaluate the potential for future restoration opportunities."



A Parks crew electrofishing downstream of the Carroll Ave bridge in Aug. 2021.

Electrofishing uses a mild electrical current (see the backpacks, above photo) to temporarily stun fish, tadpoles, and other life forms, allowing the crew to net and record the species, their numbers, life stage and health, then safely release them. Certain species are more sensitive to pollution while others are more tolerant; the presence or absence of these species give an indication of stream health. (See [Parks' website](#).)

Data collected from aquatic insect and fish sampling and other parameters are analyzed to generate an Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) score and a rating of Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor.

In Sligo, the 5-year rotation site for annual August biomonitoring is in mid-Sligo just downstream of the Carroll Ave. bridge. Unfortunately, Sligo continues to receive a "Poor" rating.

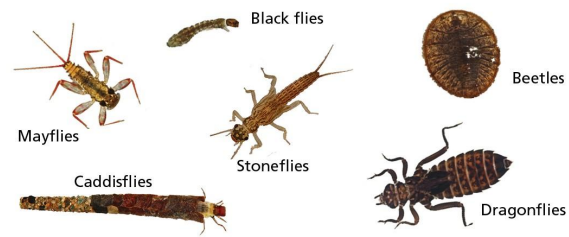
This year Parks is also monitoring two sites in Long Branch as part of a baseline study ahead of the Purple Line fish passage restoration project at Piney Branch.

Learn more about the IBI (and the BIBI and FIBI) at DEP's [Stream Health](#) and [Stream Conditions](#) webpages.

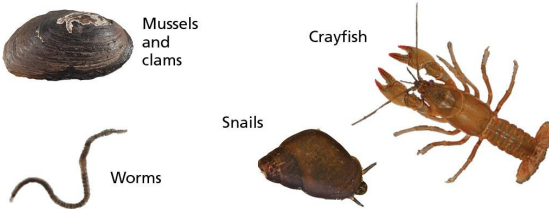
As readers may know, FOSC is a part of a macroinvertebrate testing team, along with UMD, Nature Forward, and other volunteers, that monitors macroinvertebrates 3x/year, most recently on July 21 in lower Sligo.

The results show a continued "Poor" rating based on the low numbers and low diversity of bug species, with pollution-tolerant species predominating.

Examples of insect macroinvertebrate larvae



Examples of non-insect macroinvertebrates



(graphic courtesy of the National Park Service)

What you can do to protect water quality:

Be a Water WatchDog!

See pollution in the creeks or heading into a storm drain? Email photo(s) and description to:
reportsligopollution@fosc.org

Include: location, time, and any details such as color, odor, sheen, muddiness, etc.



This summer alone, people have reported water main breaks, school cleanup put into the wrong drain, muddy construction runoff and project clean up, and a possible antifreeze spill - which have all gone into Sligo Creek. Based on your reports, we have tackled these problems in partnership with the County's Dept. of Environmental Protection and Montgomery Parks.

FOSC LISTSERV/FOSC STORE

T-Shirt? Ball Cap?

**Enter the Drawing or
Get It Now from the FOSC Store**

The next drawing for a FOSC t-shirt or ball cap will be in-person at one of the upcoming FOSC activities in late Sept. or Oct.

- If you are FOSC member, join the [main FOSC listserv](#) to be automatically entered for the drawing.
- If you are not yet a FOSC member and are reading this newsletter from your neighbor's

copy, please join FOSC [at this link](#)! You will also be entered in the drawing.



Ball cap or t-shirt:
your choice!

Want to get it now?

[Use this FOSC store link](#).

You can have your order mailed to you or opt to pick it up locally. *All sales support FOSC programs. Thank you.*



Ross Campbell, longtime FOSC member, selling (and wearing) t-shirts and ballcaps at a neighborhood event last Dec. Note his clever use of garden supplies to make the clothing rack.

DONATE TO FOSC

Your support makes FOSC's work possible!

You can give anytime and in any way that suits you:

Make a gift, set up a monthly gift, ask your friends to support FOSC on your birthday, make a gift in honor of someone, or a gift in memoriam.

Just use this link: [Donate to FOSC](#)

It's simple and secure.

Your gift is greatly appreciated - thank you.

If you prefer to write a check, please send it to:

FOSC, P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913

If you'd like information about planned giving, please contact donations@fosc.org.

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



Eastern Painted Turtle draws the attention of a Great Blue Heron at the Beltway ponds on August 10 (Dan Treadwell)



Yellow Passionflower along the paved Sligo trail near Jackson on Aug. 13 (wilpers)



Frost (Winter) Grape along the paved Sligo trail near Flower on Aug. 13 (wilpers)



Fairy Parachute mushrooms near Sligo Creek and Domer on Aug. 9 (marsrevolt)



Above and left:
Onion-stalk Parasol mushroom near
Sligo Creek and Devon Ct. on Aug. 9
(marsrevolt)



Green Heron at the Forest Glen wetlands on Aug. 13 (D. Treadwell)



Left: Squash Vine Borer moth near Elson and 16th Place on Aug. 11 (kristin-marie)



Above: Linne's Cicada near Chicago and Islington on Aug. 12 (Allen Browne)



Above: Green Cone-headed Planthopper near 17th and Avalon on July 7 (Tony Futcher)



Right: Inornate Pyrausta Moth near Browning Ave. and Ct. on Aug. 5 (Leaf Grabenstetter)



Eastern Mosquitofish at the Forest Glen wetlands on Aug. 10 (D. Treadwell)



Left: Question Mark along Sligo near Dennis on Aug. 6 (Kitty MacMahon)

Right: Great Spangled Fritillary near Harding and Kiriross on Aug. 9 (Kris Andtell)



Common Snapping Turtle (juvenile) in Sligo near Piney Branch on Aug. 13
(Hugh Rand)

Photo selection and captions by Michael Wilpers (questions or comments, naturalhistory@fosc.org). 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?

President (Elaine Lamirande): president@fosc.org

Invasive Plants/RIP (Walter Mulbry): invasives@fosc.org

Litter/Sweep the Creek (Ed Murtagh): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

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

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@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.

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