



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter March 2024

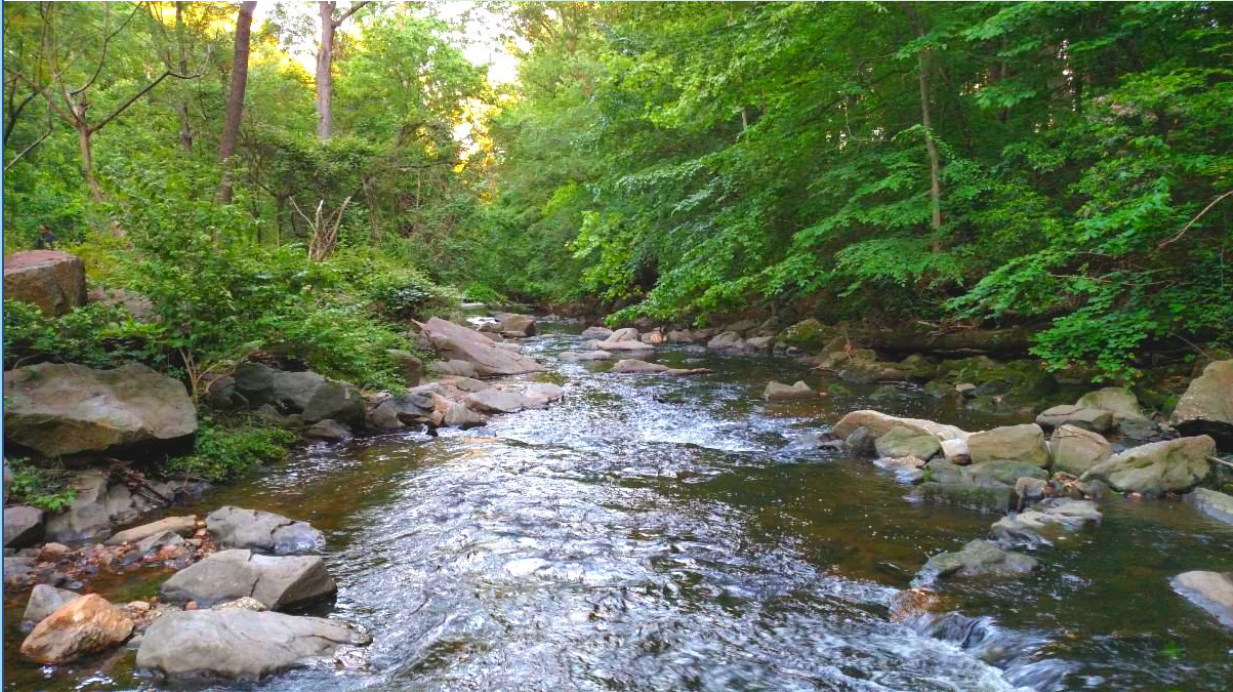


Photo by Xavier Courouble

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LITTER/STEWARDS

Hot Spot Cleanups Hauled Record Amount of Litter

Volunteers who joined the “Mini-sweeps” at 3 trash hotspots on President's Day hauled a truly impressive amount of trash from Sligo Creek. **Altogether, 101 volunteers hauled 118 bags of trash, 8 bags of recyclables, and a really large number of bulk trash items such as shopping carts, bike frames and wheels, ladders, paint cans, furniture (especially chairs), lumber, a mattress, tires, a dog crate, fencing, etc.**

Thank you to Ed Murtagh and Nick Clements for coordinating the events, to the stewards who planned and led the cleanups - Susan DeFord at Wheaton Branch ponds (Section 7), Lyn Hardy and Kristin Zimmer at Sligo and Rt. 410 East/West Highway (Section 1), and Chris Richardson at Piney Branch and Sligo (Section 4) - and to all the volunteers who came out on a beautiful day to do a lot of good!

For more photos, check out the [Home page article under News & Updates](#).



A family taking a "We are Mighty" moment after contributing to the mega-pile of trash collected in Section 1.



Wheaton stormwater ponds just before the Mini Sweep.



Surveying some of the trash from the Wheaton stormwater ponds.



A record number of people came out to tackle litter at the Wheaton SW ponds.



More than 20 volunteers at the Section 4 Mini Sweep pulled a wide assortment of trash and bulk items from the Creek including lumber and heavy pieces of brick and concrete.

LITTER/STEWARDS

Sweep the Creek Watershed-Wide on Earth Day Weekend Sat, April 20 and Sun, April 21

The upcoming Sweep the Creek event is a time when neighbors across the Sligo watershed descend on the parklands around the creeks to clear litter of all kinds.

Plan to spend some time - whether it's a couple of hours or just half an hour if that's what you've got - helping to protect the ecology of the creeks in Sligo, Long Branch, Wheaton Branch, and their tributaries.

- No need to register.
- Sign in when you get there so we know how many people volunteered.
- We provide the gloves, trash and recycling bags, and

some grabbers to use as well.

- The event is eligible for student SSL hours.
- For more details, visit the [Sweep the Creek page](#) of the FOSC website.



Sweep the Creek Spring 2024

Sat, April 20 and Sun, April 21

Supply Pick Up Times and Locations

By Date and Section

Section 1 Saturday April 20, 9-11:00 am at Hillwood Manor Park 13th Ave. and Elson St.

Section 2 Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at Flower Ave. & Garland Ave.

Section 3 Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at the parking lot near the intersection of Sligo Parkway and Kennebec Rd.

Section 5 Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at the parking lot along Sligo Parkway just upstream (north) from Three Oaks Drive.

Section 6 Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at the Dallas Ave. parking lot along Sligo Creek Parkway.

Sections 7 & 8 Saturday, April 20, 9-11 am at Dennis Ave. Recreation Center and Sligo Creek Parkway.

Section 10 Upper Long Branch Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at the corner of Wayne Ave. and Long Branch Parkway (the northwest corner of Long Branch-Wayne Local Park).

Section 10 Upper Long Branch Saturday, April 20, 10am-noon at the Community Center at 8700 Piney Branch Rd.

Section 10 Middle Long Branch Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at Rolling Terrace Elementary School.

Section 10 Lower Long Branch Saturday, April 20, 9-11:00 am at Becca Lilly Park.

Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds Saturday April 20, 10am-noon at Dennis Ave. at Hemley Lane.

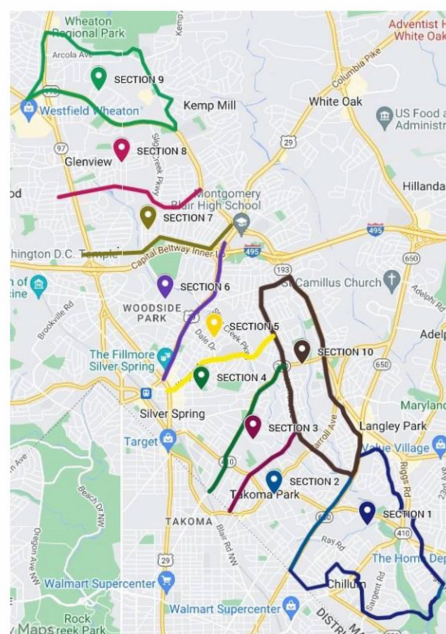
Section 4 Sunday, April 21, 1-3:00 pm at the parking lot by the tennis courts just upstream from Piney Branch Rd.

Section 9 Sunday, April 21, from 1-3:00 pm at Kemp Mill Shopping Center at the intersection of Arcola Ave. and Lamberton Dr. Go to the back of the shopping center where the park trail starts.

Please check the FOSC website for updates to this schedule: www.friendsofsligocreek.org



Sligo Creek/Long Branch Section Map



For a larger view, click on the item.

Smashed cans and plastic bottles. Straws and lids. Glass bottles and their bottle caps. How many ways can we find to drink beverages and leave the containers? As it turns out, so many. Beverage containers are the most common form of litter in Sligo.

EARTH DAY

Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration

Sat, April 20 10am - 2pm

Takoma Park is celebrating Earth Day on Saturday, April 20 in the park! Sligo Creek at Kennebec St. will be the center of the celebration. FOSC will be there with hands-on activities for young and old.

Here's your chance to try water quality testing, see Weed Warriors in action, participate in the Sweep the Creek litter clean-up, learn about the natural history of the creek, learn how to be a Water WatchDog, and more!



Saturday, April 20, 2024
(*Rain date April 21)



Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration!



Because there is no Planet B.

10 AM-2 PM | Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park Playground

Snowcones • Art • Games • Guided Tree Walk • EV Showcase

More info: takomarkmd.gov/sustainability | dorothy@takomarkmd.gov | (301) 891-7623



Sábado, 20 de abril 2024
(*Fecha de lluvia 21 abril)



¡Takoma Park Celebración del Día de la Tierra!



Porque no existe el Planeta B.

10 AM-2 PM | Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park, parque infantil

Snowcones • Arte • Juegos • Educación forestal • Exposición de EVs

Más info: takomarkmd.gov/sustainability | dorothy@takomarkmd.gov | (301) 891-7623

FOSC LISTSERV

Which Would You Choose: T-Shirt or Ball Cap?

Many FOSC members heeded the call in this newsletter's recent issues to join the FOSC main listserv. Stylish fedora in hand, FOSC President Elaine Lamirande selected one lucky member after the *Botany in Sligo* talk on March 13. "D" is now the proud owner of a green FOSC ball cap.

Ball cap or t-shirt: which would you choose?



Join the main FOSC listserv and you'll be entered into the next drawing.

Sorry, no fedoras in the next drawing.



The FOSC ball caps



Longtime FOSC member Joe Howard modeling the FOSC t-shirt at FOSC's 20th anniversary fete in Sept 2022.

WATER QUALITY

Pet Waste - more than inconvenient

Did you know...

Pet waste contributes *E. coli* bacteria (and often other illness-causing organisms such as salmonella, roundworms, and giardia) to Sligo Creek, Long Branch, and their tributaries, significantly degrading water quality.

When left on the ground, pet waste gets flushed by rain into storm drains where it goes directly into the creeks. Nothing that goes into storm drains is filtered or decontaminated before it enters the waterways. It is now a real barrier to safe human and pet contact with creek water, even affecting wildlife.

Please continue to pick up your pet's waste, even in the woods, even in spring.. summer.. fall.. winter.. and put it into a trash receptacle.

Though it may have been "natural" a century ago, the volume of pet waste far outweighs the ability of the local ecosystem to break it down before rain sends into the creeks. Sligo Creek and Long Branch are both highly stressed "urban impaired waterways" with a "Poor" quality rating.

FOSC's Water Quality team tests 12 sites in Sligo Creek and Long Branch for coliform bacteria every month or so. You can see the results from mid-2015 to Feb. 2024 on the **[FOSC Coliform Data webpage](#)**.

just 1 dog



of poop per year!



THE EPA SAYS:
dog poop is as toxic
to the environment as a
chemical or oil spill

Pet waste contains disease-causing organisms that can be transmitted to people, pets, and wildlife. Fecal coliform, bacteria, salmonella, roundworms, and giardia can remain on the ground for weeks and months if not flushed by rain into storm drains, which go directly into the creeks.

Why SCOOP That POOP?

Dogs Poop in
the Yard, Park
or Dog Park.



Disease Causing
Bacteria &
Parasites
Travel with
Rain Water
Runoff.



People Get Sick!

scoop IT. bag IT. trash IT.



Both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties have ongoing campaigns to get everyone to scoop pet poop. Graphics above courtesy of Prince George's County Dept. of the Environment's Scoop That Poop initiative. Graphic below courtesy of Moco Dept. of Environmental Protection.



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.

WATER QUALITY/SALT

Sligo's Salt Story Emerges

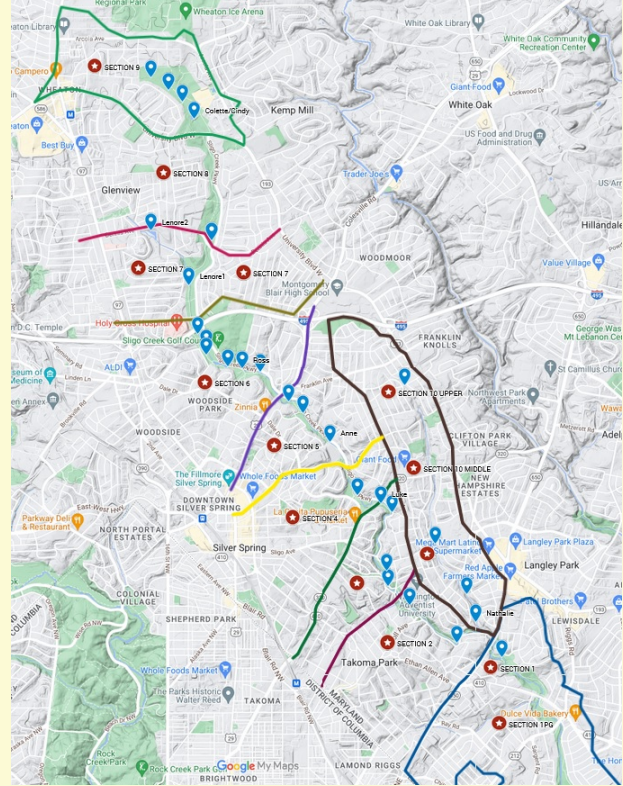
As winter yields to spring, we are looking at the data from the Salt Monitoring program, to find the story it tells and to advocate for more responsible salting practices in the watershed.

This year, the FOSC Salt Monitoring team grew to 26 very dedicated volunteer testers who tested 28 sites - 23 in Sligo, 4 in Long Branch, and 1 in Wheaton Branch - from mid-December through the end of March.

FOSC also grew our successful initiative to get residents to photograph and report excessive piles of salt in roadways to the County or to the State Highway Administration which is responsible for salting numbered routes (Rt. 29,

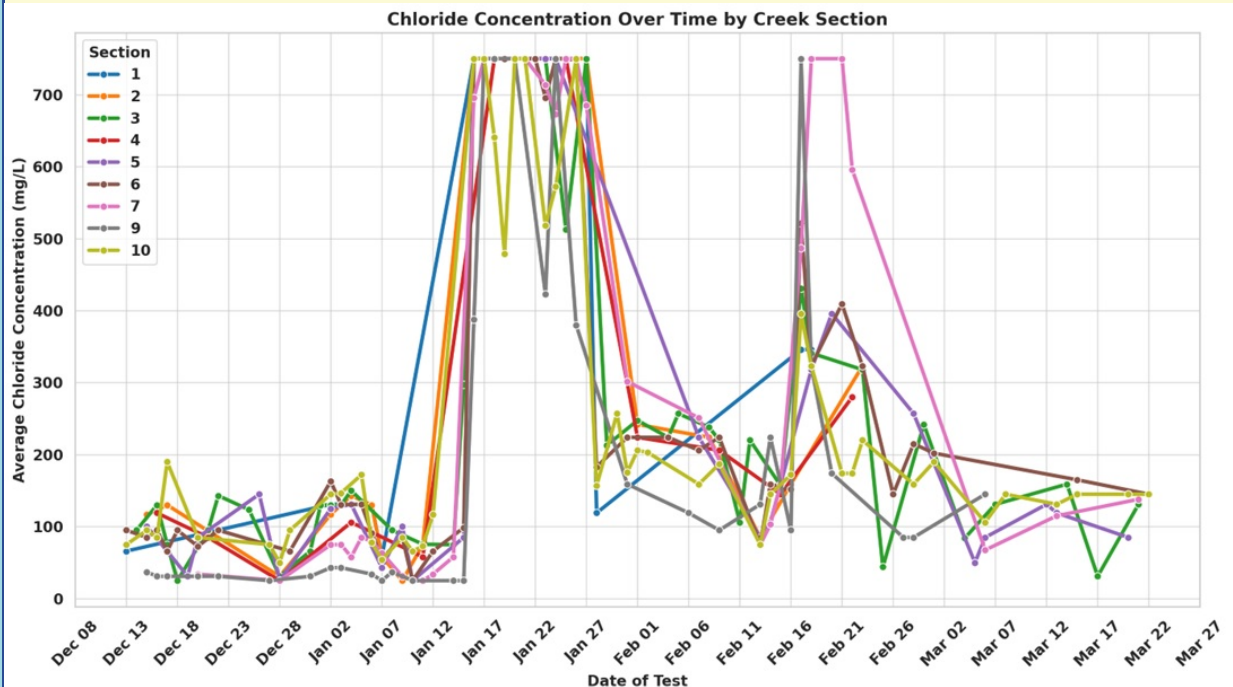
193, 410, etc.) and to work with the responsible party to get them removed.

Thus far, we can say the following:



Salt monitoring sites for Winter 2024. The blue markers represent the testing sites. The red circles show the creek Section number.

For a larger view, click on the item.



Preliminary graph showing the 750 part per million (ppm) detection limit of the regular salt testing strips. High-concentration test strips showed salt levels at some sites reached above 2,000 ppm in mid-Jan. and mid-Feb. For a larger view, click on the item. (Graph by M.Abrehet)

High salt levels took a much longer time to return to normal than expected.

At the end of March, six weeks after the last salt application, we

High salt levels this year exceeded the levels considered toxic to aquatic life in the short and the long term.

According to the Environmental

are finally seeing salt levels returning to "normal" levels at most, though not all, test sites in Sligo Creek and Long Branch.



Excessive salt application is common.

Though MOCO and the State Highway Administration (SHA) have provided training to employee salt crews and salt contractors, over-salting continues to be a common and serious problem in the Sligo watershed.



Salting on private commercial property, mostly parking lots, also contributes to the salt load in Sligo/Long Branch/Wheaton Branch waters.

Private commercial property owners salted before a predicted mid-February snow event for which the County and State did

Protection Agency, chloride can be toxic to aquatic life if it is present for long periods at levels **above 230 parts per million (ppm)**. And, a short exposure to chloride at **860 ppm** can also be lethal. From our testers' results using special high-salt concentration test strips, we know that the levels of salt this winter easily reached 860 ppm during the 10 days in January, sometimes 2x or 3x that level.



The quality and maintenance of salting equipment may play a role in over-salting.

Contractors use their own salting equipment; County and State equipment may also have varying levels of quality and maintenance.

not salt. We saw an increase in salt levels across the watershed. This is a topic for discussion with commercial property owners and business groups.



March 4, 2024

To: Chris Conklin, Director, MCDOT, and Jon Monger, Director, DEP
CC: Richard Dorsey, Chief, Division of Highway Services, MCDOT
Frank Kingley, Section Chief Pavement Management, MCDOT
Jeffrey Kruttsen, Section Chief, Field Operations, MCDOT
Stan Edwards, Steve Shofar, DEP
Matt Harper, MoCo Parks

Dear Director Conklin and Director Monger:

On behalf of the Advocacy Committee of the Friends of Sligo Creek, I am writing to bring to your attention the excessive salt application on roadways and parking areas in the Sligo Creek Watershed by MCDOT and SHA contractors during recent winter storm events.

Despite your program to reduce salt application, the opposite occurred. It is imperative for the environment and residents of Montgomery County that you analyze what went wrong and do better.

Here's what we saw:

- Our 20+ IWLA SaltWatch testers around Sligo Creek measured chloride levels well above toxic levels during and after recent storm events. Many of the chloride readings were even above 1000 ppm. (In the IWLA testing scale, anything above 231 is considered toxic.) Levels have come down, but many site readings are still in the poor or toxic range.
- We received over a dozen reports of specific excessive salt piles in our neighborhoods during or after recent winter storm events. From what we can tell, the neighborhood problems were grossly underreported. Many of our neighborhoods were very heavily treated. You can see some typical examples of excessive salt in our watershed in the photos below.
- FOSC's Water Quality team has been measuring high chloride levels at many of its testing sites.

Next Steps to Reduce Salt Application

1. Further improve the County's service request system so that excessive salt reported is picked up immediately, including on weekends and holidays.

FOSC's Advocacy and Water Quality Committees teamed up to write to MOCO agencies and the MD State Highway Admin. about the salt piles and salt levels in the Sligo watershed. Both agencies acknowledged some problems with their salting programs. FOSC will continue to discuss the testing program findings and recommendations with these agencies in the coming months. View the letters FOSC sent on the [Letters and Testimony page](#) of the FOSC website.

FOSC EVENTS

Recent FOSC Events

Early Botany in Sligo

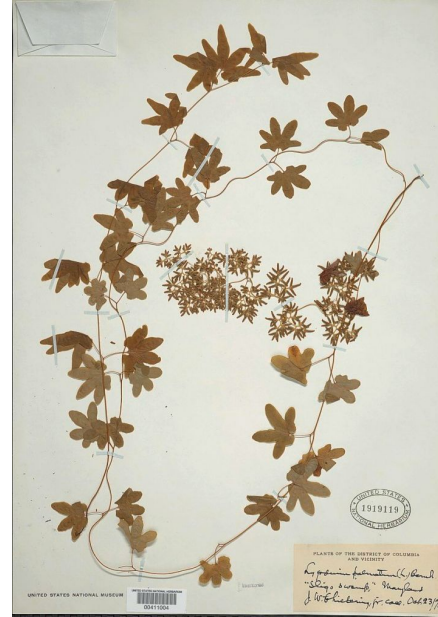
Michael Wilpers, FOSC chair of natural history, brought to light some of the 40+ professional botanists who travelled to Sligo between 1876 and 1920, taking advantage of new train and trolley routes to collect plants from our rich flora. You can now view [the Early Botany in Sligo video on the FOSC YouTube channel](#).

These early botanists collected more than 700 specimens, all now preserved at the herbaria of the Smithsonian and the University of Maryland. They collected specimens

from the floodplains near Forest Glen Rd. all the way to Sligo's confluence with the Northwest Branch.

One of the most appealing sites was probably the "Takoma bog," a magnolia swamp that disappeared soon after 1920. Clues to its possible location generated lively discussion during the Q & A...the mystery is not yet solved.

This talk was presented for the 20th anniversary of the 2003 publication of John Parrish and RG Steinman's "[Native Plants of Sligo](#)" on the FOSC website. A second edition is forthcoming, fully updated with current scientific names and new plant sightings over the last 20 years.



Specimen of an American Climbing Fern (Hartford Fern) found in the "Sligo swamp" in 1876 by J. W. Chickering. The fern is now rare in Maryland.

Takoma park history comes alive

Bruce Sidwell, a longtime FOSC member and master naturalist, led a walk March 24 through the historic Takoma section of Sligo Creek park, showing sites and telling stories of the attempts from 1890 until 1930 to exploit the beauty and other resources of Sligo Creek: a boogie joint, a resort, dam and waterworks, and a hotel, among other long-gone uses. We will be researching photos of these uses for display on the FOSC website. Stay tuned.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities

Watch the [FOSC Home page](#) and the [FOSC Calendar of Events page](#) for more upcoming FOSC programs and other volunteer events.

Sligo Stream Monitoring for Macroinvertebrates

Sun, April 7 at 3:00pm

Join a team of volunteers from FOSC, Nature Forward and other groups to monitor spring macroinvertebrates on Sunday, April 7 at 3:00pm. The rain date is Sunday, April 14 at 3:00pm. The closest address to the neighborhood paved access trail leading to the stream is [1400 Drexel St, Takoma Park, MD 20912](#). The geolocation for the trailhead is [38.977537, -76.986091](#).

There is street parking available.

Sweep the Creek - Watershed-Wide Clean Up

Sat. April 20 and Sun. April 21

Join the Sweep the Creek event on April 20 and 21 at various times throughout the watershed. See the schedule in the article above and on the [FOSC website](#).

Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration

Sat. April 20, 10am - 2pm

The Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration takes place on Saturday, April 20 at Sligo Creek at Kennebec St.

Donate to FOSC to keep our work going strong.

**You can give anytime and in any way that suits you!
Make a gift, set up a monthly gift, make a birthday gift,
a gift in honor of someone or a gift in memoriam.**

**Just use this link [Donate here](#) or the Donate button below.
It's simple and secure.**



Your gift is greatly appreciated and helps fund our 2024 programs.

**If you prefer to write a check, please send it to:
FOSC, P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913. Thank you.**

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

FOSC STORE

FOSC t-shirts, caps, mugs, and posters

Step out in style this Spring!

FOSC tees are made of soft, organic cotton **Kiosk Posters** are \$15 each. **Mugs** and

- with a great message! This is the one you will wear all the time. Short and long sleeves in 5 sizes, small to XXL, green and blue. The short sleeve tees are \$22 - \$24. The long sleeved tees are \$26 to \$28.

Ball caps are the latest addition to the store. They're adjustable, embroidered, made of 100% cotton, and can be had for \$18.



The FOSC ballcaps in a classic low profile style in light blue and dark green. 100% cotton with the FOSC logo embroidered on the front. (S. Deford photo)

window clings (for a car or home window) are available too.

Order from this link to the [FOSC store](#), or through the link on the upper right tab of the [FOSC homepage](#). You can have your order mailed or opt to pick it up locally. All sales support FOSC programs.

Thank you.



The FOSC t-shirts are 100% organic cotton and stay super soft. (J. Kassovic photo)

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



American Toad (far left) and two Eastern Painted Turtles at the Beltway stormwater ponds on March 17 (Dan Treadwell)



Virginia Springbeauty between Piney Branch and Midhurst on Mar. 12 (M. Wilpers)



Cut-leaved Toothwort near Sligo-Dennis Park on Mar. 26 (slider4)



Virginia Saxifrage between Flower and Carroll on Mar. 25 (M. Wilpers)



Eastern Meadowlark near the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds on March 24 (left by eshansen2; right by rekursiv)



A well disguised Running Crab Spider (left) near Dale Drive Park on Mar. 13 (Katja Schulz). Ribbon Jumping Spider preying on a much larger Running Crab Spider (right) near Greenwood and Browning on Mar. 18 (Leaf Grabenstetter).



Northern Watersnake in Long Branch near Schuyler on Mar. 3 (Chris Roach)



Northern Spicebush flowers near Long Branch and Maplewood on Mar. 18 (L. Grabenstetter).



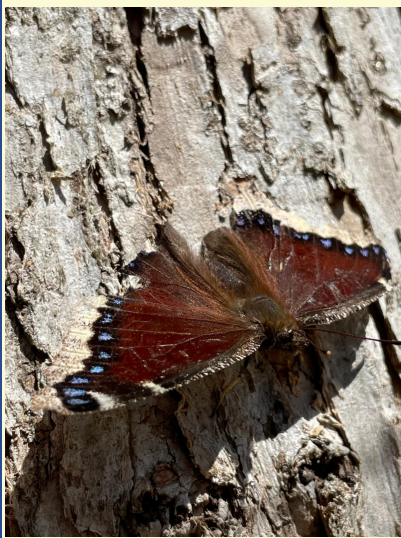
Striped Wintergreen between Maple and Kennebec on Mar. 8 (M. Wilpers)



Woodrush in flower between Carroll and Flower on Mar. 25 (M. Wilpers)



American Crow with nest-building materials near Long Branch at Houston on Mar. 17 (Philip N. Cohen).



Mourning Cloak butterfly
near Long Branch at
Maplewood on Mar. 20 (L.
Grabensterrer)

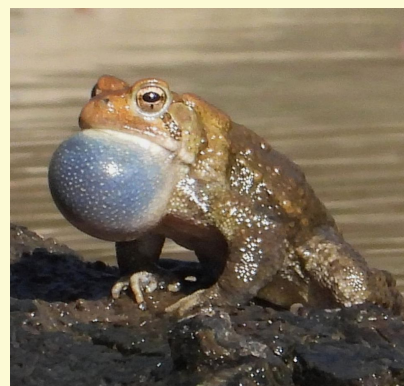


Springtail in the family
Dicyrtomidae near Holly and
Eastern on Mar 7 (K.
Schulz)

Polyphemus Moth cocoon at
Silver Spring Elementary
School on Mar. 19
(mitchgreene)



Male Boxelder flowers between Maple and Flower on Mar. 25. (M. Wilpers)



Pickerel Frog (left) on Mar. 25 and American Toad on Mar. 17 (right) at the Kemp Mill
stormwater ponds (D. Treadwell)



Eastern Bluebirds (above) on a nest box at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on Mar. 24. Red-tailed Hawks on the radio tower at the golf course on Mar. 14 (D. Treadwell).



Haircap Moss between Maple and Piney Branch on Mar. 8 (M. Wilpers)

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?

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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](#)



Friends of Sligo Creek | P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913

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