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Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter

April 2025

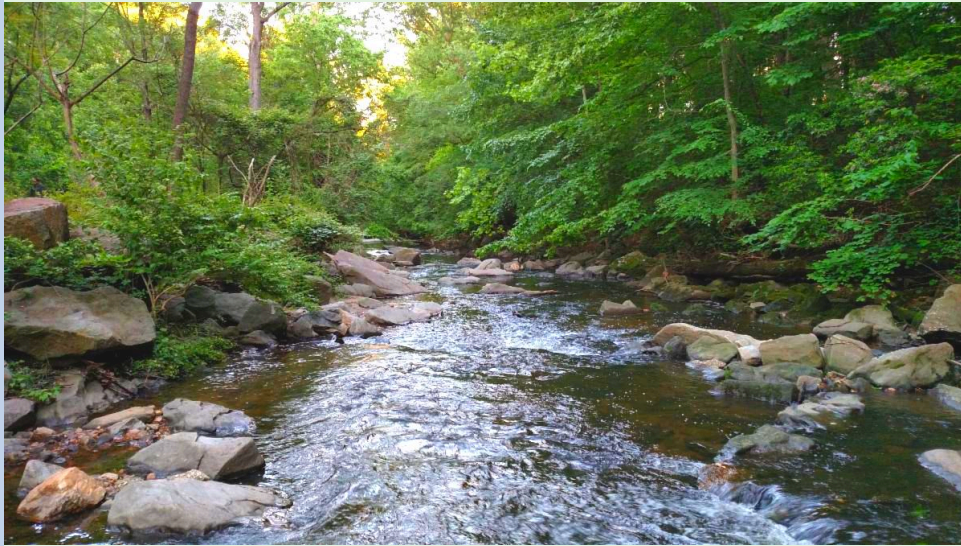


Photo by Xavier Courouble

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LITTER

The Creeks: Swept Clean

Despite the cancellation of the Saturday sweeps due to poor weather, **we amassed over 60 bags of trash (plus car tires, bikes, scooters and many miscellaneous bulk items) at our four Sunday afternoon cleanup sites.**

Over 90 volunteers took time to clear the creeks and parkland of litter.

Thank you to everyone who came out, young and old, families, and people who were participating for the first time. In personal gestures of goodwill, four people from the Purple Line project volunteered.

Our cleanup leaders earned a special thanks for rounding up bags, trash grabbers, gloves, tables and signs, forms and doing various admin. tasks. Without them, we couldn't have held the Sweep. Thank you Anne B, Christine D, James G, Kristen D, Nick C, Patton S, Stephen W, and Tanya D!

We will continue our Spring cleanups with our next cleanup tomorrow, Saturday, April 26 from 9:00am-11:00am at Green Meadows Park along Sligo Creek Park in PG County. Check the Upcoming Events section of this newsletter for details. The FOSSC website also has details and a Calendar of Events.

By working together, we are making a difference!

Ed Murtagh
Sweep the Creek Coordinator and
FOSSC Vice President



Kathryn and Stephanie from the Purple Line team, and Nick Clements, FOSSC Hotspot Litter coordinator, in Section 4



Kyle and Nathalie with kid and adult scooters, fencing, a metal rake, and an old mechanical bathroom scale.



Happy camper with the weirdest item found at the Spring Sweep: a googly eyes lawn ornament.





Stephanie from the Purple Line team with a fishing rod that was carefully dismantled, tied, and left in the creek.

Maria from the Purple Line team in Section 4



Gina in Section 4



Mike in Section 4



A family effort in Section 4



Many thanks to Anne Burson, Tanya Dekona, Ed Murtagh, and Alan Bowser (above) for their photos!



Anne and Patton led Section 2



Kathleen and Tanya at Section 9



Volunteers from the Member Church of God International in Section 9

NATURAL HISTORY

Spring Ephemerals Wildflower Walk



Little Sweet Betsy

About ten Sligo residents (and one from the Rock Creek watershed) shared a walk along the paved and dirt paths looking for native spring wildflowers between Kennebec and Piney Branch Rd. on April 6.

Of note were the numerous trilliums (Little Sweet Betsy), native to the southern Appalachians but becoming more common each year in this part of the Park.



Yellow Trout Lily



Bloodroot



Virginia Spring Beauty



Canadian Wild Ginger
(note burgundy-colored flower
at bottom center)

Bloodroots were almost done flowering, with just one still holding onto its petals. Wild Ginger were especially abundant in a reliable site, with a single example of their burgundy, low-perched flowers in evidence.

Virginia Spring Beauties were out in healthy numbers, seeming to hold their own against the highly invasive Lesser Celandine and its small yellow flowers. Even though we didn't get to a large patch of Cut-leaved Toothwort, we did find one on the way back along the paved trail.

Our walking and talking consumed nearly two hours, but no one complained. At the end, one member of the group read aloud "A Prayer Before Reading the News," which everyone

appreciated. Mimi Abdu organized the walk, and she and I co-led the group.

~ Michael Wilpers, Natural History Chair

FOSC VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

FOSC Volunteers: We Appreciate YOU!

Several dozen active FOSC volunteers gathered in early April to celebrate their many contributions to improving Sligo Creek. Volunteer Stewards, Weed Warriors, Water Quality and Salt Testing teams, Water WatchDogs, Advocates, Outreach, Roundtable members were treated to appetizers and iced tea/lemonade at El Golfo Restaurant and received FOSC coasters and/or stickers as small tokens of our appreciation for the amazing things they do at more than 100 events all year round.



FOSC President Elaine Lamirande (center) thanking the FOSC volunteers as Kit Gage (l) and Christine Dunathan (r) look on.

Montgomery Parks Weed Warrior coordinator Corinne Stephens and Cindy Dyballa, City of Takoma Park Councilmember from Ward 2, joined the FOSC Board in thanking our volunteers who make an incredible difference to the flora and fauna in Sligo Creek, its branches and parks, and the entire Sligo watershed. All who enjoy these natural areas for exercise, respite, and renewal are grateful for their efforts.



Dean Tousley (top), and Anne Vorce (below), Water Quality Committee Co-Chairs, thanking Winter Salt Monitoring, Monthly WQ testers, and Water WatchDogs for their tremendous

work.



WATER QUALITY/STORMWATER

Summer Water Quality Testing

The Summer Water Quality Monitoring program funded by Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK), with FOSSC and other partners, is getting underway.

If you are interested in participating in summer water quality testing:

- [View this 2025 training video;](#)
- [Self-certify online](#) by passing a short quiz;
- ARK will then follow up with you via email with the next steps.

Testing is done every other Wed. from mid May - mid Sept. You can sign up for the dates that work for your schedule.

You can join the team even after testing has started! And you can sign up to test at a single site, or decide to mix it up and test at different sites. Monitoring is usually done in pairs, and there are experienced volunteers looking for co-monitors! Start by watching the video. Contact monitoring@anacostiariverkeeper.org with any questions.

2025 Maryland Community Water Quality Training



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.

INVASIVE PLANTS

Garlic Mustard: Pervasive and Invasive

Coming Soon to Your Yard and Parks

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an unwanted guest wherever it grows. Brought from Europe in the 1860s, it has no insect predators in North America and White-tailed Deer (native to North America) don't recognize it as food.

It is an invasive plant, developing dense stands that crowd out native plants which pollinators and other insects and animals depend on. Garlic mustard is reported to reduce the health of hardwood tree seedlings grown in the same soil and to be able thrive where a key soil fungus that many native plants need is reduced.



Garlic mustard in its first year does not produce flowers or set seed. Note the rounded leaf shape and rounded teeth along the leaf margin. Pulling it in this stage will prevent it from going on to mature and seed in its second year. *(Photo: Dave Jackson, Penn State University)*

Weed Warriors in Sligo have taken on this invasive with a simple removal technique. In a springtime race against its maturing seed pods, called siliques, they pull and bag the entire plant. This prevents the seedpods from flinging the tiny seeds to gain a foothold in new areas. In fact, the primary goal with this biennial is to prevent new seeds from entering the seed bank in the soil. MoCo Parks takes the bagged plants to their composting facility which generates very high composting temperatures, high enough to kill the seeds.



Garlic mustard in its second year, when it "bolts", blooms, and seeds. Note the change in leaf shape from year 1.

(Photos above, left and right: Ansel Oommen on Bugwood.org)



The flowers develop into siliques which fling the seeds up to 5 feet from the plant. The seeds last many years in the soil, making persistent annual removal the key to eradicating the plant.

To protect Sligo flora and fauna, it is important to pull as much of the root and plant as you can from your property before it seeds. Garlic mustard research into bio-controls and other techniques for ecologically sound management continues. For now, hand pulling is the most effective practice. Bag pulled plants and place them in the trash. Home composting temperatures aren't high enough to render the seeds inactive.



*Look-alikes: native plant Sweet Cicely at left; Garlic Mustard at right.
(Photo: unknown source)*

Learn more about becoming a [certified Weed Warrior through MoCo Parks](#).

NATURAL HISTORY

Bird Walk

A group of 15 early morning birdwatchers headed out last week to look and listen for local and migrating birds in mid-Sligo. Altogether, they sighted/heard 34 birds.

Many thanks to leaders Mary Singer, David Blockstein, and Dave Wood for lending their expertise and guidance.

American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Robin
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Blue Jay
Brown-headed Cowbird
Buteo (sp)
Canada Goose
Carolina Wren
Chimney Swift
Common Grackle
Downy Woodpecker
European Starling
Fish Crow
Gray Catbird
Great Blue Heron

Hawk (sp)
House Finch
House Sparrow
Mallard Duck
Mourning Dove
Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Ring-billed Gull
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Song Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-throated Sparrow
Wood Duck
Yellow-shafted Flicker

WATER QUALITY/NATURAL HISTORY

Creek Restoration in Long Branch

Montgomery Parks just announced the completion of a fish passage project and improved aquatic habitat in Long Branch just downstream from Piney Branch Rd., which will enhance conditions for such fish as Eastern Blacknose Dace, Creek Chub, and White sucker.

Built as a part of the Purple Line light rail mitigation, Parks reports that it will "help restore habitat for migratory fish and supporting local aquatic communities ...it involved installing a fish passage under Piney Branch Rd, new baseflow culverts with specialized "fins" to increase flow depth for fish to swim through ...and included raising the stream bed and providing channel stability to support improvements to in-stream habitat and aquatic biodiversity.



(Photo: MoCo Parks)

A healthy ecosystem will sustain a stable fish community and their specialized food sources, even in a highly urbanized watershed such as this."

We applaud this investment in the creek, which we expect lead to increased fish diversity on both sides of Piney Branch. A similar, slightly older project further downstream seems to have been very successful in supporting fish populations, as we now see herons and night-herons hunting prey there.

EARTH WEEK

How Does Nature Inspire You?

Honoring Rachel Carson

This April, MoCo Parks is asking nature lovers to share words, photos, tagged places, and even drawings to help honor a county resident who was inspired by local natural places—Rachel Carson.

In Sligo, you can find the "How Does Nature Inspire You?" sign and notebook at the Houston/Kennebec Street playground. (There are also notebooks in Rachel Carson Conservation Park and the Northwest Branch Trail near Burnt Mills.) You can add your words or drawings about what inspires you in nature either in the paper notebook, or by sharing online at MoCoParks.org/NatureInspires or on MoCo Parks social media.

About Rachel Carson:

Renown writer and biologist Rachel Carson (1907-1964) lived in Montgomery County for much of her adult life. She wrote her most famous book—*Silent Spring* (1962)— while living in Silver Spring near Northwest Branch. Carson's readable account of the devastating impacts of the pesticide DDT is widely credited with spurring the modern environmental movement. She was an aquatic biologist at the Bureau of Fisheries and a Guggenheim Fellowship recipient. Read other less well known facts about her on the [FOSC website story archive page](#).

For more information, visit MontgomeryParks.org/UntoldStories

Check out the sign and notebook (at right) at the Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration on Sun, April 27 at the Sligo Creek Houston/Kennebec playground. *(Details below in Upcoming Events.)*

(Photo: MoCo Parks)



SLIGO AND LONG BRANCH

Always Wondered About...

- **Wondering about** a mammal, amphibian, reptile, fish, or bird?
- **See problems** in the creeks or parklands you think FOOSC could help with?
- **Heard an interesting talk** you think FOOSC could host?
- **Have an idea** you want FOOSC to know about?



It takes just a moment to [check some boxes and leave a note if you wish](#). We'll figure out what we can do and let you know!

Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities

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

Saturday, April 26 from 9:00am - 11:00am
Litter Hotspot Cleanup at Green Meadows Park

Join Friends of Sligo Creek and the Potomac Conservancy for a litter cleanup at 6310 Sligo Parkway near the Park building. Look for the FOSC at work sign! Make a difference as we work to clean up Sligo Creek!

We will provide the bags, gloves, trash grabbers, etc., but bring your own if you have gloves/trash grabbers! Remember to bring water to drink.

Now moved to Sunday due to weather!

Sunday, April 27 from 10:00am - 2:00pm
Earth Day Celebration at Sligo Creek near Kennebec St.

We are hosting a cleanup in this area as well, from 9:00am -10:00 am. Meet at the FOSC kiosk near the Kennebec entrance.

Enjoy this fun celebration of Earth Day along Sligo Creek with FOSC and many other community groups, nature activities, and green technology demonstrations. A relaxed family-friendly event. Portable restrooms and a handwashing and water station will be available.

Saturday, May 3 from 11:00am - 3:00pm Rain or Shine
Sligo Creek Fest
Sligo Creek Parkway between Dennis Ave. & University Blvd.

FOSC will be at Moco Parks' Sligo Fest, a one-mile long street festival featuring multiple stages of music and entertainment, kids' activities including touch-a-truck and tree climbing, roving entertainment, food and drink vendors, and hands-on activities and demonstrations. Check out the [Sligo Creek Fest webpage](#) for the bands and times/stages, details about activities, the food and drink vendors, and more.

There will be portable restrooms available, a quiet area; the festival is ADA accessible and pets are allowed on leash.

There are plenty of ways to get to Sligo Creek Fest! Whether you bike, walk, hike, drive, or skate, MoCo Parks has detailed directions, including trail access, public transportation, and parking options for bikes and vehicles, on their [plan your visit page](#).

Saturday, May 10 from 9:00am - 11:00am
Litter Cleanup at Sligo Creek and East/West Highway

A litter cleanup by FOSC with the Potomac Conservancy. There is usually a big assortment of discarded larger items along with the typical litter - plastic bottles and cans. Your participation really makes a difference in the health and beauty of the creek!

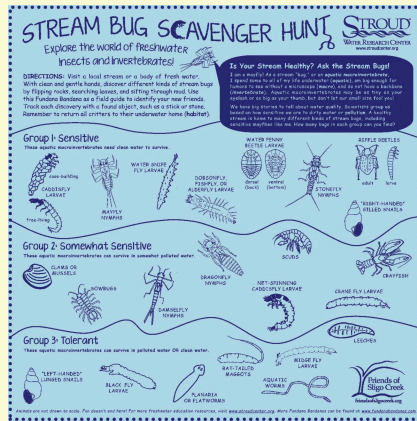
Gloves and bags provided and SSL hours are available. Meet just above East/West highway on the trail. See further details on the [FOSC website](#).

FOSC STORE/LISTSERV

T-Shirt, Ball Cap, or a Fundana?

**For the buggy person in your life...
a Stream Bug Scavenger Hunt Fundana!**

Accurate drawings of stream bugs that morph into flying creatures that feed fish, birds and others. Learn how we know stream health by who is living in the water. Fundanas are 100% cotton, last for years, and have many uses.



¡Y ahora en español!!

Para la persona que gusta insectos en tu vida...

¡Una Fundana para la búsqueda del tesoro de insectos del arroyo!

Dibujos precisos de insectos de arroyo que se transforman en criaturas voladoras que alimentan a los peces, pájaros y otros. Descubra cómo sabemos la salud de los arroyos según quién vive en el agua. Las fundanas son 100 % algodón, duran años y tienen muchos usos.



Order your fundana, t-shirt, ball cap and mugs from the [FOSC store](#). You can have your order mailed to you or opt to pick it up locally. All sales support FOSC programs. Thank you.



JOIN FOSC / JOIN THE FOSC LISTSERV

The next drawing for a t-shirt, cap or fundana - your choice- will happen in early 2025. We're working on a date. To enter the drawing:

- **If you are already a FOSC member**, join the [main FOSC listserv](#) to be automatically entered in 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.

FOSC GIVING

Donating to FOSC keeps our many projects going.
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.

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



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

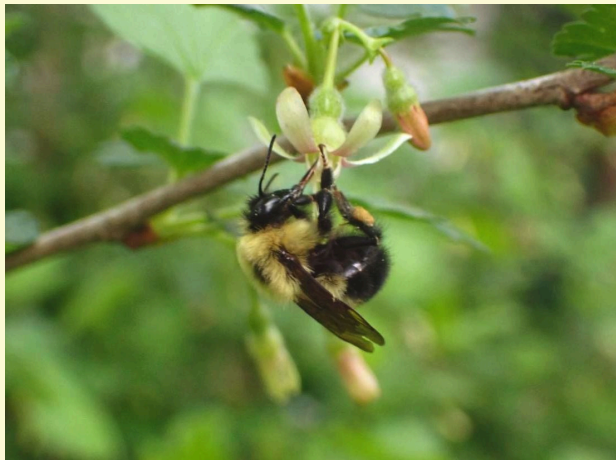
Your gift is greatly appreciated - thank you!

NATURAL HISTORY

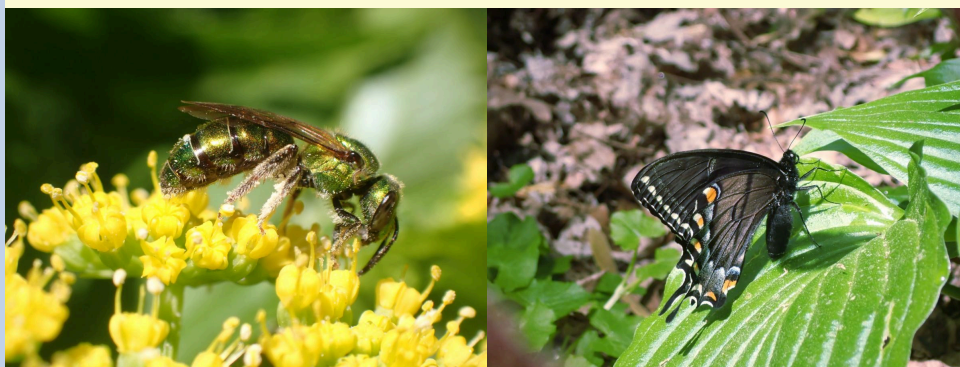
Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



DeKay's Brownsnake at the Long Branch Library Apr.19 (Ed Murtagh)



Two-spotted Bumblebee at Franklin and Caroline Apr. 21 (hugrand)



Pure Green Sweat Bee at Franklin and Caroline Apr. 23 (hugrand)

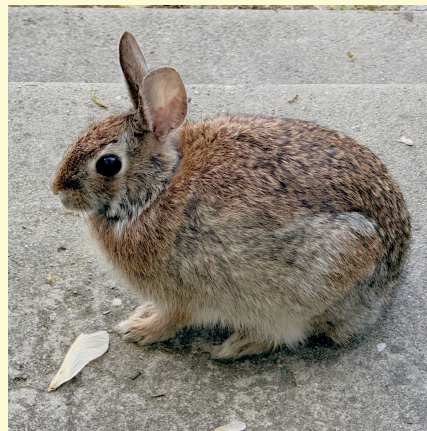
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail at Franklin and Caroline Apr. 22 (hugrand)



Orchard Oriole at the Wheaton Branch ponds Apr. 19 (mstrecker)



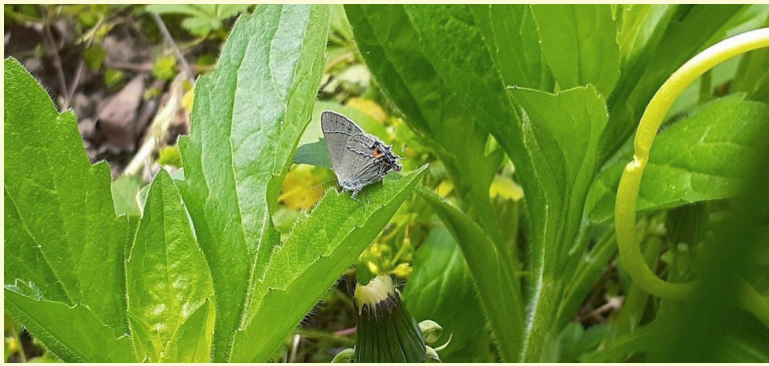
Common Pawpaw near Kennebec
Apr. 20 (mwilpers)



Eastern Cottontail on Islington
Apr. 23 (allenbrowne)



Common Oak Moth on Browning Ct. Apr. 19 (leafgrabenstetter)



Grey hairstreak near East Silver Spring Elementary Apr. 25 (mitchgreene)

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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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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