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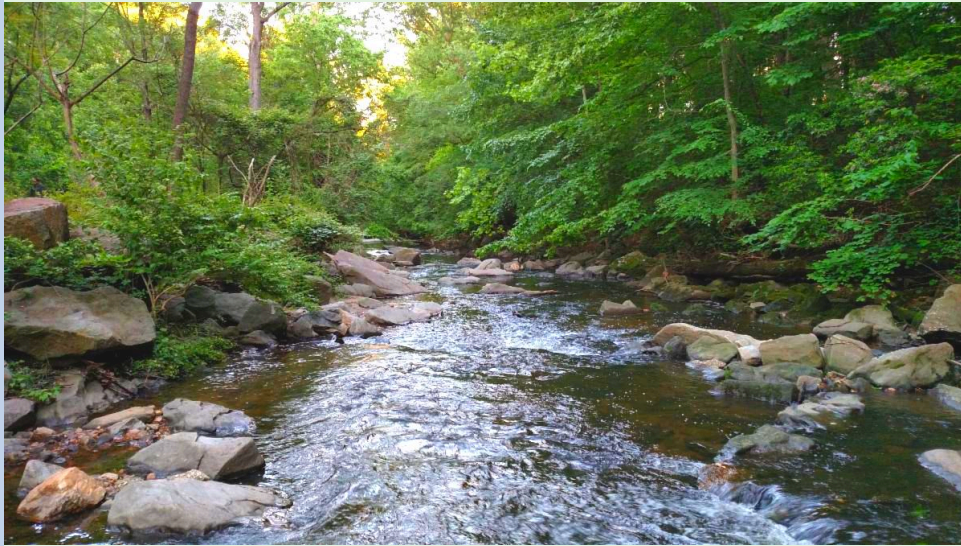
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## Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter

March 2025



*Photo by Xavier Courouble*

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### NATURAL HISTORY

## The Wood Frogs Are Out!

## Wood Frogs in Sligo Creek Vernal Pool



(Video by Ed Murtagh)

The wood frogs in Sligo are out, floating about in the fleeting vernal pools that last a few weeks before evaporating in midsummer. Sligo's vernal pools are at the headwaters and in mid-Sligo. We don't mention their exact locations to minimize the chance that they are disturbed.

The wood frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) lives in woodlands and emerges from its winter hibernation (technically, brumation) in early spring, the males calling for a mate with a clucking sound similar to a chicken. They are a charming sight and sound.

Adult wood frogs eat mostly insects. The tadpoles are omnivorous, feeding on plant detritus and algae along with other tadpoles of their own and other species. In the summer, they live in wetlands and moist woodland areas.

### Hibernation vs. Brumation

Wood frogs spend winter just under the surface of the soil topped by leaf litter and /or snow. Remarkably, they can survive at 20F and well below for many months (down to -50F for 8 months in the Arctic Circle) by brumating, or entering a frozen state of suspended animation.



*Wood frog floating in a vernal pool.*

In contrast, hibernating frogs are dormant, overwintering deep enough under streams or ponds to keep their body temperature above freezing.

As the temperature drops, the wood frog's liver produces large amounts of glucose (up to 100 times its usual glucose level) and urea in its bloodstream. This solution prevents the cells from freezing and binds the water molecules inside the cells to prevent dehydration. At below freezing temperatures, ice quickly fills the wood frog's abdominal cavity and encases its internal organs; ice crystals form between its skin and muscle. Its eyes turn white because the lens freezes.

When brumating, wood frogs have no detectable vital signs: no heartbeat, breathing, blood circulation, muscle movement, or detectable brain activity.

Researchers seek to understand how they restart their hearts, withstand high glucose and urea levels without damage, and other mysteries that might benefit human medical science.

(Sources: "Amphibian Declines: The Conservation Status of US Species" by Redmer and Trauth, U.S. National Park Service, and Wikipedia. Photo: Marylandbiodiversity.com)

## LITTER

# Sweep the Creek

### It's coming soon -

**Sweep the Creek to rid the creeks and parks of litter.** Volunteer just an hour of your time on **Sat. April 12 or Sun. April 13** and see how much good you can do!

- No registration required - just sign in when you get there.
- We supply the bags, gloves, and will have a few grabbers on hand.
- Bring your friends and neighbors.
- Eligible for student SSL hours. Bring your form with you. Check if you need to get **this waiver form signed** to bring with you as well.
- Do it for the wildlife around you!
- Make a difference where you live.
- #FOSC #sweepthecreek



*Plastic bottles, cans, glass, bags, bikes, furniture, fencing, auto parts...*

What will you find? Send a picture of you + it to [editor@fosc.org](mailto:editor@fosc.org) for the newsletter or website.



## Sweep the Creek Spring 2025

### Supply Pick Up Locations and Times (Rev. 3/18/2025)

#### Sligo Creek

**Section 1** Confluence with NW Branch to NH Ave.

*Cleanups will be held later in the spring as Litter Hotspot Cleanups.*  
Please join the Sweep at another section!

**Section 2** NH Ave to Maple Ave.

**Sunday, April 13, 1-3 pm:** Flower Ave & Garland Ave at Sligo Creek North Neighborhood Park.

**Section 3** Maple Ave to Piney Branch Rd.

*Cleanup will be held in May as a Litter Hotspot Cleanup.*  
Please join the Sweep at another section!

**Section 4** Piney Branch to Wayne Ave.

**Sunday, April 13, from 1-3:00 pm:** Parking lot by the tennis courts just upstream from Piney Branch Rd.

**Section 5** Wayne Ave to Colesville Rd.

**Saturday, April 12, 9-11:00 am:** In the parking lot along Sligo Parkway just upstream (north) from Three Oaks Drive.

**Section 6** Colesville Rd to Forest Glen Rd.

*Cleanup will be held later as Litter Hotspot Cleanup.*

**Sections 7 & 8** Forest Glen Road to University Blvd.

**Saturday, April 12, 9-11:00 am:** Dennis Ave Recreation Center.

**Section 9** Upstream from University

**Sunday, April 13, from 1-3:00 pm:** at the back of the Kemp Mill Shopping Center at the intersection of Arcola Ave. and Lamberton Dr.

#### Revised - Long Branch

**Section 10U** Upper Long Branch, north of Wayne Ave.

**Saturday April 12, 9-11:00 am:** the corner of Wayne Ave. and Long Branch Parkway (the northwest corner of Long Branch-Wayne Local Park).

**New! Section 10M** Middle Long Branch, between East Wayne Ave. and Carroll Ave.

**Sunday, April 13, 1-3:00 pm:** at Rolling Terrace Elementary School, 705 Bayfield St. Takoma Park

**Cancelled - Section 10L** Becca Lilly park

#### Wheaton Branch

**Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds** on Dennis Ave at Hemley St.

**Saturday April 12, 10-noon:** at Dennis Ave entrance to the stormwater ponds.

*Click on the schedule or the map to see a larger version.*



## NATURAL HISTORY

# Let Your Garden Sleep In



You gave them flowers and a place to nest. You tended your garden and avoided pesticides. **Don't carry all of that hard work out to the curb.** Simply put, when we treat leaves like trash, we're tossing out the beautiful moths and butterflies that we'll surely miss and work so hard to attract.

*(Photo and text courtesy of the Xerces Society)*

### **Let your garden sleep in**

It's tempting to start tidying up your garden now, but please do our local fireflies and butterflies a favor and wait a bit longer. Butterflies and moths such as swallowtails and luna moth pupae overwinter among dead stalks and leaves. Fireflies and native bees are also tucked among the leaf litter or just beneath the soil surface.

Even if you aren't a big fan of caterpillars and other insects in your yard, baby birds sure are! They can eat only soft foods like caterpillars until they mature.

### **Is it time to plant tomatoes?**

Because beneficial insects and tomatoes need evening temps at or above 55F, it's an easy way to know when it's safe to cut plant stalks and remove the leaves. Consider leaving them under your bushes, in your garden beds, under a tree, or in a corner of your yard where they act as free natural mulch -- they suppress weeds, retain moisture, and create rich organic matter that boosts soil nutrition as they decompose.

To learn more, visit these sites:

**UMD Maryland Grows blog:**  
<https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/2024/04/15/waiting-on-spring-garden-cleanup-to-support-beneficial-insects/>

**Xerces Society blog:**  
<https://xerces.org/blog/dont-spring-into-garden-cleanup-too-soon>

**Penn State website:**  
<https://extension.psu.edu/delay-garden-cleanup-to-benefit-overwintering-insects>

## **CONSERVATION**

# **Sligo Mill Gets Some Love**

Used as a dumping ground for years, Sligo Mill Conservation Area just off New Hampshire Ave. at Sligo Mill Rd. in Takoma Park is getting some much needed attention this year.

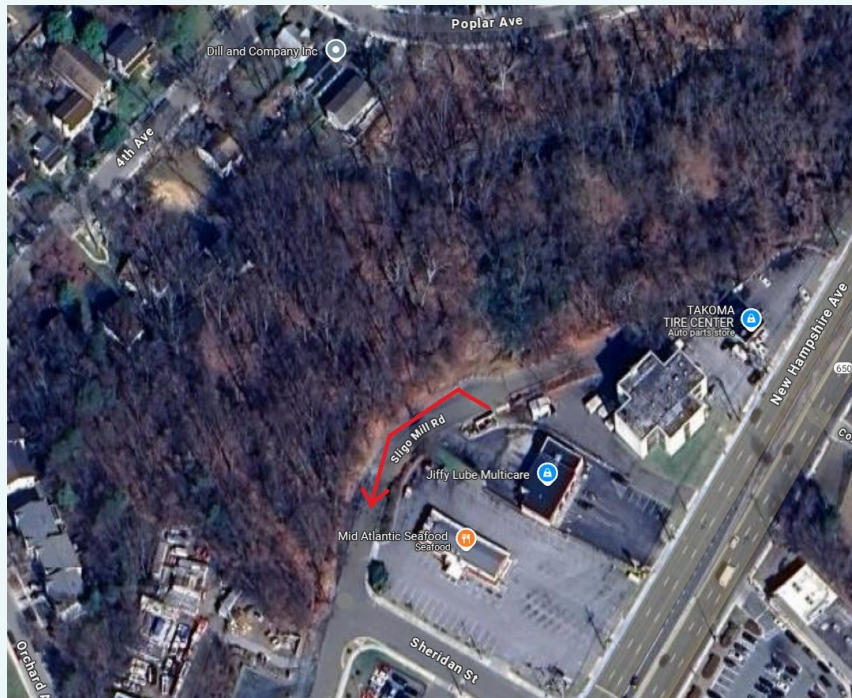
We applaud the City of Takoma Park for undertaking restoration of this important urban forest, which is also the headwaters of the Takoma Branch tributary of Sligo Creek. We hope this extensive project will help improve the water quality too.

Excerpted from the February 11, 2025 City of Takoma Park newsletter

### **From Dump Site to Green Space: What's Happening on Sligo Mill Road?**

You may have noticed roadwork, fencing, construction vehicles and more on the 6500 block of Sligo Mill Road, where there used to be piles of illegally dumped refuse and trucks parked overnight. The city was awarded a \$92,000 Environmental Justice grant from the [State of Maryland's Community Health and Safety Works program](#) to deter dumping, naturally treat stormwater runoff, and expand the woodland.

Excess asphalt has already been removed from the site to improve drainage, and an initial treatment of invasive plants and planting of the reclaimed area has been completed. When finished, by December 2025, the former dumping ground will be a green space open to community use, with educational signage describing the natural erosion control and bioretention systems that have been implemented.



*The roadway on the block of Sligo Mill immediately behind the Jiffy Lube and Atlantic Seafood on New Hampshire Avenue is being reduced to a one-way lane toward Sheridan Street, starting at the Jiffy Lube rear exit. This will allow the businesses to continue using the road as an exit but will eliminate the space and opportunity for vehicles to come on to the block in order to dump furniture, tires, yard waste, and other refuse along the roadside.*

“This is a fixable problem, and the City of Takoma Park has developed a thoughtful and comprehensive proposal that is clearly based on community input,” wrote local resident Jeremy Schwartz [in support of the grant application]. “The project will improve the health of our urban forest while improving community pride and our sense of ownership of public space.”

[Read the full article in the February 11, 2025 edition of the Takoma Park Newsletter.](#)

## STORMWATER

# Bioretention Gardens to Benefit Sligo Creek

Parkside Plaza Condominium, on the hill at the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway and Three Oaks Drive, has too many parking spaces. Built in 1965, Parkside has what is by today's standards an overly large parking area. Recognizing the deleterious impact of stormwater runoff from the parking area into Sligo, Parkside pursued and was recently awarded grants from Clean Water Montgomery for bioretention gardens.

Through its contractor, Environmental Systems Analysis Inc. (ESA), Parkside is excavating the asphalt from about 10 parking spots and constructing the first of two planned gardens. New, deep-rooted native shrubs, grasses, perennials, and trees will slow parking lot runoff and increase water infiltration into the soil, and provide habitat for native pollinators and wildlife. Demolition and construction are expected to begin this month. The construction of the second garden awaits further funding.

**Clean Water Montgomery** is a grant program funded by Montgomery County and the U.S. EPA. Partners include the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay.

— Terry Anderson, longtime FOOSC member and resident of Parkside.

FOOSC appreciates Parkside's commitment to reduce the impervious surfaces on their property and reduce the environmental impacts of stormwater on the creek.



*A sign installed by Clean Water Montgomery explains the future bioretention project.*



*The parking spaces uphill of the sign in the picture at left will be converted to the bioretention garden.*

*Photos courtesy of Janet Kinzer.*

## INVASIVE PLANTS

# Got Invasives?

Non-native plants in your yard are finding their way to Sligo and Long Branch where they outcompete native shrubs and trees.

Many landscaping plants advertised as “deer resistant” are in fact invasive plants that can spread quickly since they are not palatable to deer or natural predators. Though you may not see the seeds in your yard, they do spread into Sligo and Long Branch, carried by birds, wind, and stormwater.

Bush honeysuckle, a fast-growing Asian shrub, was imported for landscaping and erosion control in the late 1800s, among many others. It “escaped cultivation” and now plagues woodlands and forests throughout the eastern part of the U.S. Bush honeysuckle leafs out early in spring, shading out other plants; it is allelopathic as well, releasing chemicals that prevent other plants from growing near it.



In Sligo and Long Branch, bush honeysuckle is ubiquitous. Weed Warriors spent 3,600 hours last year pulling NNIs out of Sligo and Long Branch, with the top three --porcelain berry, bush honeysuckle and English ivy -- accounting for much of that total. Multiflora rose is vying for a place in the top 3 too.

***"If you lose your native plants, you lose the base of the food web."***

*-- Denis Conover, professor of biology, Univ. of Cincinnati*

Non-native invasive plants are one of the major causes of the global biodiversity crisis, along with habitat loss and fragmentation, pesticides, climate change, light pollution, and poaching.

### **Fighting Back**

In addition to extensive volunteer Weed Warrior work, MoCo Parks has undertaken replanting projects along both creeks to reestablish native stands of trees and bushes in place of NNIs. In Long Branch, FOSC is partnering with Parks to adopt several stream restoration sites, which include extensive new plantings, to keep them free of NNIs.

The Dept. of Environmental Protection has a new video about stream restoration that shows what they are and why they are important:

**In English:** <https://youtu.be/dTpJIGJtFTA>

**En Espanol:** <https://youtu.be/OHmN4ZsGcuY>

### **What You Can Do**

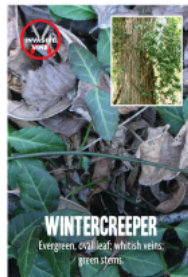
**Spring is the perfect time to  
remove the  
invasive plants from your yard.**

Garlic mustard season is here.  
Pull it from your yard, bag it, trash it.

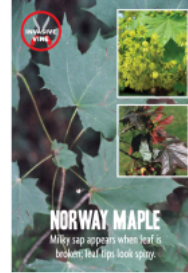
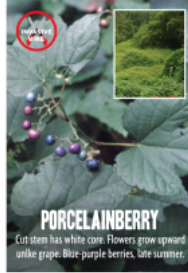




## ARE INVASIVE PLANTS IN YOUR YARD?



NON-NATIVE INVASIVES CROWD OUT NATIVE PLANTS AND COULD BE SPREADING FROM YOUR YARD.



Removing invasive plants from your yard is a great way to help Sligo Creek Park and the environment. We can help with plant identification, removal techniques, ideas for native

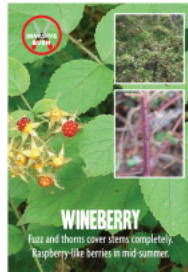
replacements and ways to keep invasives gone for good. Visit us at [www.friendsofsligocreek.org](http://www.friendsofsligocreek.org).



### RESEARCH. REMOVE. REJOICE.



Know your plants! Find out more: [www.friendsofsligocreek.org](http://www.friendsofsligocreek.org)



Click to see larger versions of these cards.

FOSC SUPPORT

## Young Activist for Sligo

Middle schooler Laura held a bake sale a few weeks ago to raise funds for Friends of Sligo Creek. She wanted to support FOSC because of our work on water pollution and focus on the Sligo watershed.

**Thank you, Laura!**



**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.**

### **SOMETHING NEW**

## **Architecture Walk**

An enthusiastic crowd of more than 30 people participated in the Architecture Tour of Sligo. We saw the famous cinderblock house, some impressive glass additions and balconies, and the house Stewart Armstrong lived in when he was at the National Arboretum. A famous horticulturist, he was one of the folks who helped create hundreds of cultivars of azaleas.

The houses and apartments along the stretch of Sligo between Piney Branch and Maple date mostly from the 1920s to the present day, so we saw a good variety of architectural styles.

Thanks to architect Marty Shore for his guidance and commentary.

A number of people were sad to miss it so we promised to try to have another tour next year.

-Kit Gage



*Marty Shore discussing a house.*

*(Photo by Kit Gage)*

### **LITTER/WEED WARRIORS**

## **March Madness Sligo/Long Branch style**

**March Madness in Sligo/Long Branch:**

-Litter Hotspot pop-up clean ups at Forest Glen, Sligo at University, and Nolte Park.

-Weed warrior work sessions at Nolte Park, Brunett Ave, Kemp Mill, Long Branch sites, and native plant planting at Forest Grove Local Park. (*Weed Warriors collect a lot of trash too.*)

-FOSC's Adopt-A-Road cleanups on Forest Glen Rd, Brunett Ave, and Sligo Creek Parkway in Section 5.

-Ploggers active all over Sligo and Long Branch.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and effort to make a big difference reducing pollution in the creeks. We're planning more pop-ups in other parts of the watershed.

- Ed Murtagh

P.S. If you are a plogger or weed warrior, take a photo of yourself in action and send it to us at [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org) or [invasives@fosc.org](mailto:invasives@fosc.org)!

See **Upcoming Events** later in this newsletter for larger **litter cleanups on March 23 and March 30, and Sweep the Creek on April 12 and 13.**



*Trash hotspot pop-up in Section 6 near Forest Glen Rd.*



*Weed Warrior pop-up at Nolte Park in Section 4*



*David S. filled his trash bucket and recyclables bag 3 times on his plogging route in Sligo.*

## 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 volunteer events.

### ***Tonight***

**Thursday, March 20 at 7:30pm**

**Microplastics in Sligo Creek**

**Zoom talk by Prof. Jason Davison of Catholic University**

**[Here is the Zoom link](#)**

Dr. Davison is at the forefront of microplastic pollution research in streams and rivers. Through his research in Sligo Creek and elsewhere, Dr. Davison has developed innovative ways (such as 3d object detection for counting and classifying trash, particle tracking

software, and more) to eventually help waterway managers identify microplastic hotspots and prioritize sites for cleanup.

Microplastics are small bits of plastic, up to 5 mm, that are used in manufacturing or break down from larger plastics, clothing, toothpaste, cosmetics, and many other items. They release toxic chemicals into the environment through water, soil and air and can be ingested by wildlife and humans.

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**Sunday, March 23 from 1:00 – 3:00pm**

**Cleanup at Hillwood Manor Park**

**1301 Elson St, Takoma Park 20912**

Join us at this lovely neighborhood park along Sligo Creek. [Please register here](#). Meet at the park on Elson Street. We'll have trash and recycling bags, and gloves if you need them. All are welcome. Students can earn SSL hours; see the details when you register.

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**Sunday, March 30 from 1:00 – 3:00pm**

**Cleanup at Long Branch-Garland Park**

**Meet at the Long Branch Community Center at 8700 Piney Branch Rd.**

Come out to this popular Long Branch neighborhood park. [Please register here](#). We will meet at the Long Branch Community Center where there is ample parking, then walk across Piney Branch and down the trail to Long Branch-Garland Neighborhood Park. We'll have trash and recycling bags, and gloves if you need them. All are welcome. Students can earn SSL hours; see the details when you register.

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**Saturday, April 5 at 1:00pm**

**Spring Ephemerals Wildflower Walk**

**Meet at at the kiosk at the intersection of the Parkway and Kennebec.**

We'll be visiting (usually) reliable locations for Solomon's Plume, Cut-leaved Toothwort, Yellow Trout Lily, Bloodroot, and Spring Beauty, among others, while keeping our eyes out for surprises. If you have binoculars, bring them, as some flowers (especially on trees) may be some distance away. [Please sign up here by Thurs, April 3](#). Parking on Kennebec and other neighborhood streets. The outing will proceed in light rain but be cancelled in case of a downpour; check the [main page of the FOSC website](#) for any updates.

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**Sat, April 12 and Sun, April 13**

**Sweep the Creek**

**Sligo Creek, Long Branch, and Wheaton Branch**

See the schedule in the article in this newsletter or visit the [Sweep the Creek page](#) of the FOSC website.

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**Saturday, April 19 at 9:00am**

**Bird walk** with David Blockstein, Mary Singer and Dave Wood

Mid-Sligo location

We expect to see a combination of year-round resident birds and Spring migrating birds. Last May we saw or heard 37 species. [The event will be limited in size, and, therefore,](#)

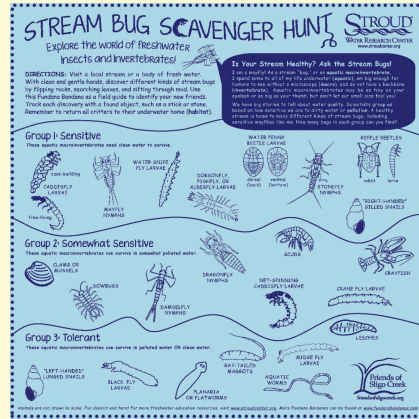
requires an RSVP to Ross Campbell at [rosscampbell728@gmail.com](mailto:rosscampbell728@gmail.com). Please RSVP no later than April 14th. Details will be sent to participants before the walk.

## 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, amphibians, and water birds! Learn how we gauge 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, anfibios y aves acuáticas!

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.



## 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



Red-eared Sliders at the Beltway ponds on Feb. 26 (Dan Treadwell)



Left: Peregrine Falcon at the WTOP property along Univ. Blvd. on Mar. 4 (D. Treadwell)

Above: Belted Kingfisher at the Beltway ponds on Feb. 23 (D. Treadwell)



Left: Dekay's Brownsnake near Glazewood & Devonshire on Feb. 28 (vegmain)

Above: Eastern Red-backed Salamander along Takoma Branch near Knollbrook (Adrienne van den Beemt)



Killdeer at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Mar. 10 (rekursiv)



A native Sweat Bee (Genus *lasioglossum*) near Cedar and Wayne on Mar. 10 (maragay)



Thin-legged Wolf Spider near Cedar and Wayne on Feb. 25 (maragay)



Left: Great Blue Heron on Garland at Jackson on Mar. 4, perhaps expecting high water (Jim Della)

Above: Honey-vine Climbing Milkweed near Takoma Urban Park on Feb. 24 (A. van den Beemt)

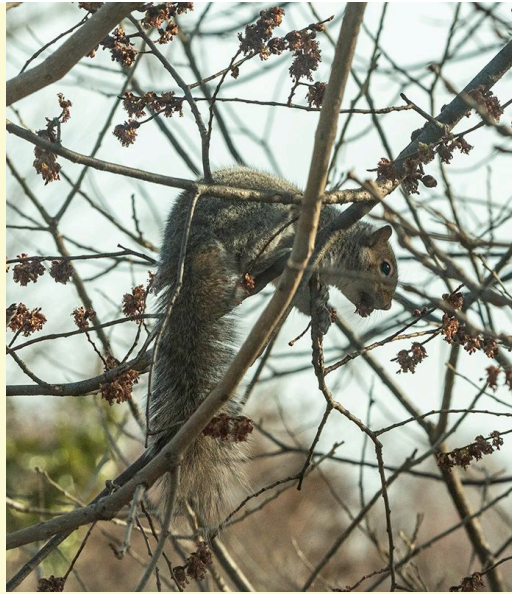


Left: Barred Owl along the Parkway near Mississippi on Mar. 1 (Jim Della)

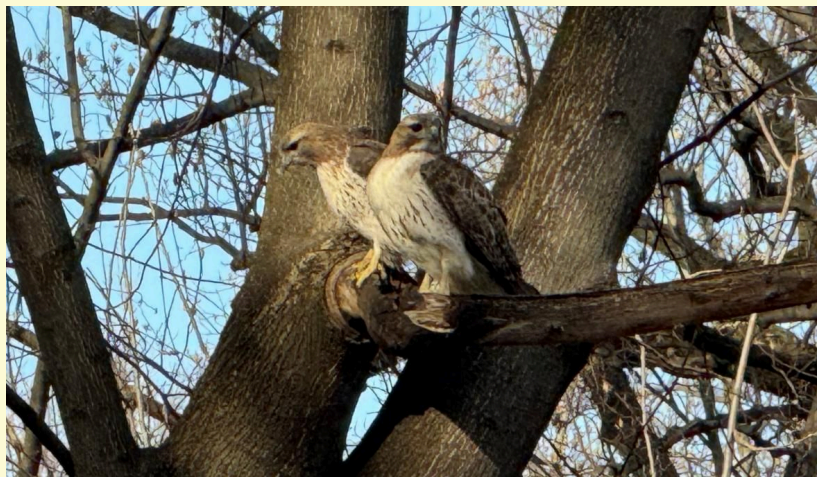
Above: American Hazelnut catkins (flower clusters) near Flower and the Parkway on Mar. 10 (M. Wilpers)



Above: American Goldfinch feeding on American Elm flowers near Long Branch at Kennebec on Mar. 11 (Philip Cohen)



Right: Eastern Gray Squirrel feeding on American Elm flowers near Cedar and Wayne on Mar. 12 (maragay)



Red-tailed Hawks near Garland and Davis on Mar. 1 (Jim Della)

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Photo selection and captions by Michael Wilpers  
(questions or comments, [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto: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.

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## Need to Reach Us?

President (Elaine Lamirande): [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

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

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

Advocacy (Kit Gage): [advocacy@fosc.org](mailto:advocacy@fosc.org)

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

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): [stormwater@fosc.org](mailto:stormwater@fosc.org)

Water Quality (Dean Tousley & Anne Vorce): [waterquality@fosc.org](mailto:waterquality@fosc.org)

Outreach (Sergio Obadia): [outreach@fosc.org](mailto:outreach@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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