



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter
December 2025

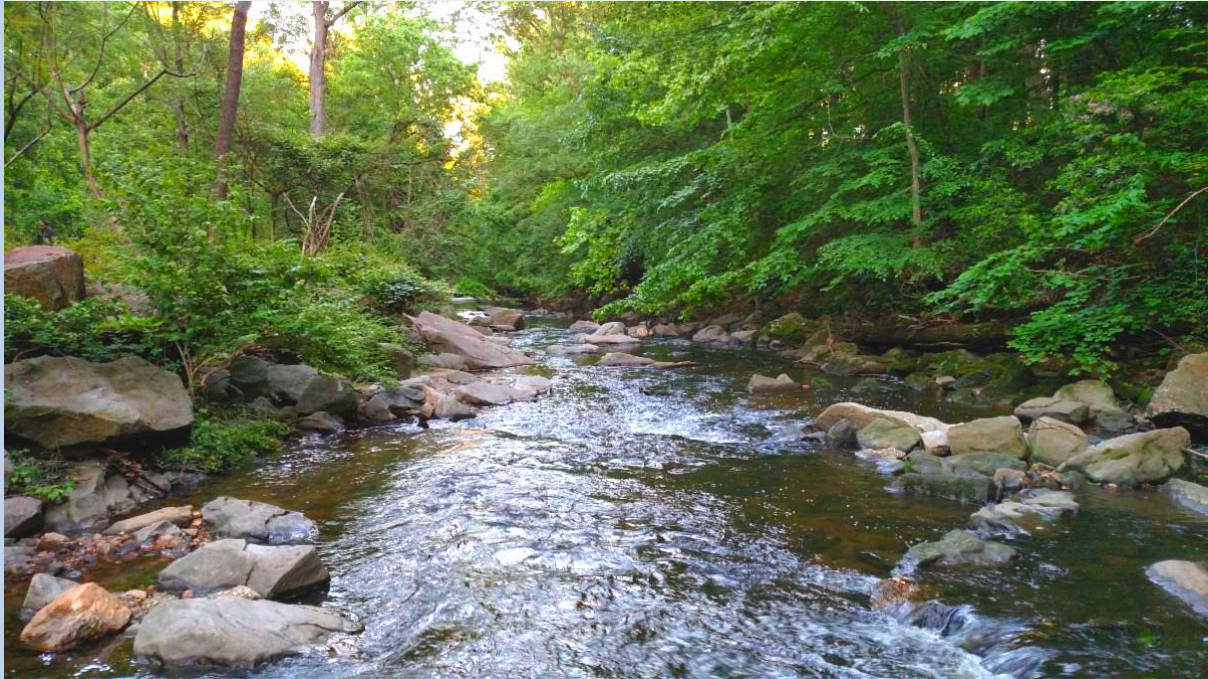


Photo by Xavier Courouble

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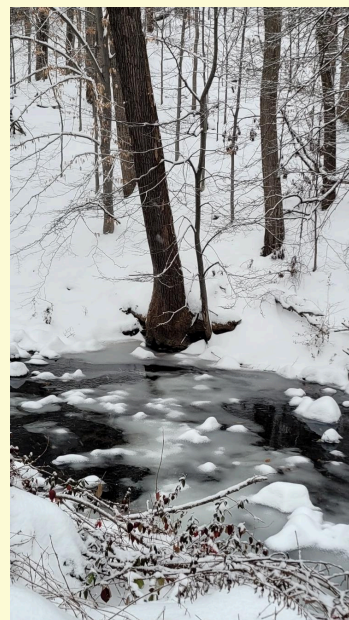
Serenity in Sligo Creek Park

The park is quieter now, the slanted sunrise and sunset light more dramatic. The bare trees and vines twist, lean and tangle, sometimes creaking in the cold wind gusts. The water in the creek itself seems sluggish.

Winter is a time of peace and haunting beauty in Sligo Creek. While we rest in heated homes and warm clothing, the living systems of the park hunker down to get through winter. Trees go dormant, adding sugars to their cells and thickening their bark to avoid freezing. Squirrels hide yet more nuts when they're not scrambling to build deep leafy nests high up in the tops of trees. Some birds remain through winter, like the ruby-crowned kinglet, white-throated sparrows, and pine siskins.

But all who walk in the park in these cold, dark months will find peace, crisp air, and beautiful sights. We are fortunate to have the chance to take refuge in the sound of our creek, in its rocks and plants and wildlife. It is a calming gift and a source of renewal. Thank you for being a FOSC member and caring for this beautiful treasure of nature.

~ *Ellen Maidman-Tanner*



(Photos by E. Maidman-Tanner)

FOSC

Winter Seed Sowing Workshop

Adding native plants to your outdoor space is a great way to beautify your yard and help our local pollinators and other wildlife. Plus they are perennial and know how to grow in our soils and climate so are less work for you. And now is the perfect time to winter sow native plants.

Winter seed sowing is what it sounds like: planting seeds in the middle of winter in a container that is left outside. With a hole in the top and holes in the bottom for drainage, the

seeds in the container get sun and rain but are protected from critters and weeds. It is an easy, inexpensive way to get plants, it just requires just a little planning and know-how.

FOSC will be hosting an in-person workshop in mid January to help you jump-start your New Year's resolution to add more native plants to your garden!

We're firming up the location and date, but in the meantime, you can start saving 1 gallon plastic milk jugs, 2-liter bottles, and other similar containers to get ready. We'll have some seeds and other materials to help get you started.

A few helpful websites to get ready for your winter-sowing project are:

- [UMD Extension - All the Dirt on Winter Sowing](#)
- [Wild Seed Project - Ideal Time for Sowing Native Seeds](#)
- [USDA-NRCS - Forb Seedling Identification](#)

If you're interested in the workshop, keep an eye out in the New Year for a FOSC email to FOSC members with details and a sign-up form, and an announcement on the main page of the FOSC website.



FOSC

Support FOSC, Support the Creeks

Litter cleanups, invasive plant removal, talks and tours, water quality monitoring...you make many programs possible when you donate to FOSC.

Help keep Sligo Creek healthy, now and for generations to come!

[**Donate Now**](#)

Your generosity helps us continue and expand the work we do to protect Sligo Creek and parklands. You can donate above, or [**through the FOSC website**](#), or mail a check to FOSC, P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913.

Help your local environment thrive and enjoy the results -

GEOLOGY/NATURAL HISTORY

What to See in Sligo Now: Couch Rock

From Bruce Sidwell, former FOSC President and former Natural History chairperson:

The only named rock in Sligo Creek park sits downstream from Maple Ave. and Brashear's Run, above the Carroll Ave. bridge. Not surprisingly, the Seventh Day Adventists who built their hospital nearby nicknamed it "couch rock". The bedrock seen here is more than 200 million years old!



Couch Rock aka Meditation Rock
(Photo by B. Sidwell)



Behind Couch Rock is a dramatic vein of quartz with a segment of pure muscovite.

(Photos and captions above and at right by M. Wilpers)



Quartz rock is common in Sligo. Although highly resistant to chemical breakdown (by acid or water, for example), it is quite brittle and breaks easily into smaller and smaller pieces, thus forming the pebbles and sands of Sligo's stream beds (and our ocean beaches).

Visit the [Habitats and Ecology page](#) and [Sligo's Amazing Geology page](#) under the [Natural History tab](#) of the FOSC website to learn more about Sligo's unique and varied geology.

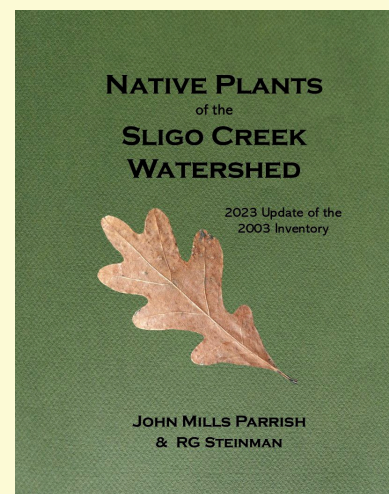
NATURAL HISTORY

Native Plants of Sligo, Renewed

For the first time in 22 years, Friends of Sligo Creek has updated its inventory of the native plants of the watershed.

The result is available as a handsomely printed book titled **Native Plants of the Sligo Creek Watershed** that documents 406 species known to be growing wild in the watershed.

The book is available for reading at Historic Takoma and in the reference section of the Takoma Park, MD Library.



You can also check out a copy from the Takoma Park MD Library or the Silver Spring (Charles McGee) Library, as well as through interlibrary loan from any Montgomery County Library.

Updated "Native Plants of Sligo" Now Available

Why not make this 70-page book the perfect holiday gift for those plant lovers in your life? The price of \$25 helps cover the printing costs while also supporting FOSC's many activities throughout the year. Buy yours at the Woodend Shop (Nature Forward) or from [our FOSC web store](#), where you can opt at checkout to have it shipped or to pick it up in person. Supplies are limited.

Co-authors John Parrish, a professional field botanist, and RG Steinman (both longtime Sligo residents) have added 33 new species to their previous list, published on the FOSC website in 2003. Among the newly listed species are 14 sedges, 3 grasses, and 13 wildflowers (herbaceous dicots). They've also revised scientific names to reflect current practice and added new locations where native species have been found since the first inventory.



Field botanist John Parrish, who, along with RG Steinman, documented 406 species of native plants in the Sligo watershed.

In total, 406 plant species are accounted for, including 225 wildflowers (and related plants), 54 trees, 27 shrubs, 21 vines, 13 ferns, and 66 grasses. The flora provides details on where you can find our native trees, shrubs, and woody vines, as well as their abundance and typical habitats.

Of tremendous value is the comprehensive index, which lists in alphabetical order the scientific (Latin) names and common names of all 406 species, as well as plant families (such as aster or rose, also as common and scientific names).

Heartfelt thanks to John Parrish, RG Steinman, Laura Mol, and Michael Wilpers for their hard work in bringing this ambitious and valuable project to fruition.

~ Elaine Lamirande, FOSC President

Please be sure to view the entire newsletter!
Click on "View entire message" or similar text at the bottom of your browser.

What Are These?

Have you seen these in the park? They're everywhere.

We're looking into the why and the who of them.

Some have been there a year or more, others are relatively recent.

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 volunteer events.

Winter Seed Sowing Workshop

Mid January in-person event; date and location not yet confirmed.

An in-person workshop to learn how to do winter seed sowing for native plants, date and time tbd. In the meantime, you can start saving 1 gallon plastic milk jugs, 2-liter bottles, and other similar containers to sow in.

If you're interested in the workshop, keep an eye out in the New Year for an email to FOSC members with details and a sign-up form, and an announcement on the main page of the FOSC website.



Join Friends of Sligo Creek & Montgomery Parks in celebration of MLK, Jr. Day

Participate in one of these volunteer park cleanups or a Weed Warrior Workday! Give back to your community, help beautify our green spaces, keep litter out of our streams, and protect wildlife.

MLK Litter Cleanup at Sligo Creek Trail from Colesville Rd. to Wayne Ave. (FOSC Section 5) Sat, Jan 17 from 10:00am - 12:00pm Three Oaks Dr. and Sligo Creek Parkway

Our FOSC Stream Steward Carrie will lead the group. To participate, [register here](#).

MLK Litter Cleanup at Long Branch Local Park Sat, Jan 17 from 10:00am - 12:00pm 8700 Piney Branch Rd, Silver Spring 20901

FOSC VP Ed Murtagh & Drew Mackay will lead the group. To participate, [register here](#).

MLK Litter Cleanup at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park Sat, Jan 17 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm 125 Dale Drive near Piney Branch Rd, Silver Spring 20910

FOSC Stream Steward Chris Richardson will lead the group. To participate, [register here](#).

Weed Warrior Work Morning at Long Branch near Wayne Ave.

Sun, Jan 18 from 10:00am - 12:00pm

At the end of Wayne Ave - additional instructions will be emailed to all pre-registrants

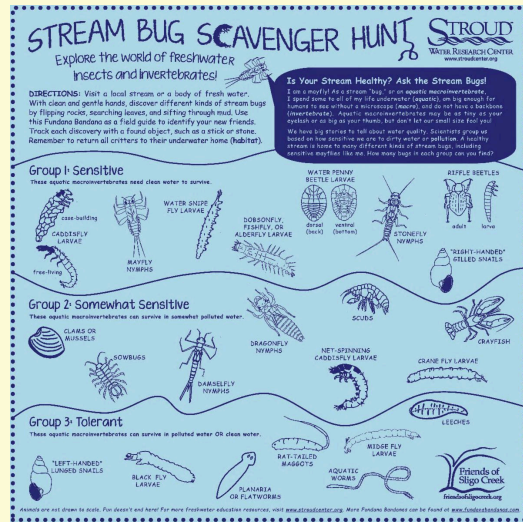
Join FOSC Weed Warrior Supervisor Barbara for a non-native, invasive plant removal workday at Long Branch Stream Valley by Wayne Ave. We will meet at the footbridge at the end of Wayne Ave. Parking is available on Wayne Ave. and Garland Ave. (requires walking down the concrete steps to the bridge) or at the lot at University Blvd. and Wayne next to the picnic tables and basketball court. To participate, [register here](#).

FOSC STORE

T-Shirt, Ball Cap, Fundana, Mug or Poster

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

Para la persona que gusta insectos en su vida...
¡Una Fundana para la búsqueda del tesoro de insectos del arroyo!



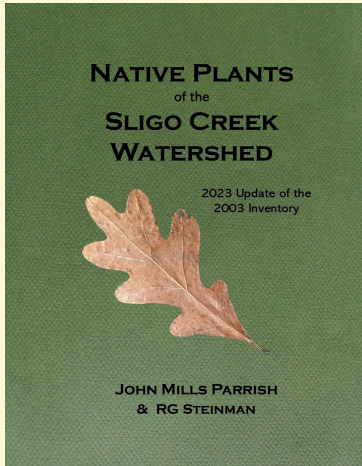
Accurate drawings of stream bugs that morph into flying creatures that feed fish, birds and others. Learn how we know stream health by who is living in the water. Fundanas are 100% cotton, last for years, and have many uses.

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, mug, poster or books 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 at the Volunteer Appreciation event in Spring.

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

FOSC GIVING

FOSC runs on donations! Your gift to FOSC keeps our many projects going.
In this giving season, please support FOSC.

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 use the Donate button below.
It's simple and secure.

Donate



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

**FOOSC is able to accept DAF gifts, gifts of securities, and planned gifts.
Our EIN is #52-2345099**

Your gift is greatly appreciated - thank you!

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings

On vacation - back next month!

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

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

Outreach (Mimi Abdu): outreach@fosc.org

Treasurer (Tom Walton): treasurer@fosc.org

Webmaster (Christine Dunathan): webmaster@fosc.org

Newsletter Editors (C. Dunathan & M. Wilpers): editor@fosc.org



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 US

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