



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter August 2017



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Learn about Litter Control Efforts on Sept. 19

Find out how the entire region is dealing with trash in our streams through cleanups, regulations, and monitoring when Hannah Seligmann of the Alice Ferguson Foundation speaks on Tuesday, September 19, at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

The talk begins at 7:30, with refreshments and socializing at



Hannah Seligmann will speak on September 19. (AFF photo)

7:15. Parking is free after 6:30 in the county parking garage on the side of Ellsworth opposite the Civic Building.

Hannah is the lead contact for the Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup and the foundation's volunteer and outreach coordinator.

She notes that "Every April thousands of people volunteer to take control of trash and clean up communities through the Annual Potomac Cleanup. This year more than 400,000 pounds of trash were removed from the watershed!" She adds that "this momentum continues as communities work to prevent litter and remove existing trash. The benefits of a community cleanup go

beyond a healthy river. The experience promotes clean land, safe waters, and healthy lives for everyone in the watershed."

An important local step is volunteering for our next Sweep the Creek, which takes place Saturday, September 30, and Sunday, October 1.

Hannah will also help us understand the regulations on trash in the Anacostia watershed that were approved in 2010 by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The regulations address the "Total Maximum Daily Load" (TMDL) for trash, a measure of how much trash must be removed from, or prevented from entering, our streams. (If you want a deep dive into this subject, see this [2010 document](#) by the MD DOE.) The Clean Air Act requires states to set such TMDLs for a range of pollutants.

As Hannah notes, "Since 45 percent of the Anacostia watershed is residential, communities can have a tremendous impact on trash in our streams."

Hannah joined the Alice Ferguson Foundation in 2015 as an intern with the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative. She spent a year with the foundation through AmeriCorps as the Volunteer Maryland Coordinator.



One of our young volunteers at Sweep the Creek in spring 2017.

High Turnout for Talk on Rachel Carson

A total of 87 people turned out to hear historian Mark Madison give a talk on "Rachel Carson: Bureaucrat for Nature" on July 11 at the Silver Spring Civic Building. He is the historian for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, whose collections include Carson's personal library, typewriter, and magnifying glass.



Mark Madison speaks at FOSC event on July 11. (Ed Murtagh photo)

Mark structured his talk around three themes of Carson's life: patronage, translation, and networks. He compared the importance of her steady government employment to that of court patronage of scientists in the Renaissance like Copernicus or Kepler. Her steady work at the Fish and Wildlife Service gave Carson the reliable income she needed to learn on the job and to explore her own conservation interests.

Her government job also taught her to translate complex scientific ideas and data for a broader public -- lessons, Mark pointed out, that she later brought to bear in raising awareness about DDT and other pesticides in *Silent Spring*. And her work for the government put her in touch with a tremendous range of scientists working across the country whom she later drew upon for her publications and speaking appearances on the dangers of chemicals like DDT.

Thanks to Laura Mol for reaching out to Mark Madison for this talk and to Wes Darden for handling all of the day-of logistics. If you missed the talk and want to

Five Years of Inspired Kiosk Postings



Laura Mol's kiosk display about woodpeckers in Sligo

Have you ever wondered who's behind those artful and informative displays on natural history that appear every few weeks in our kiosks along Sligo Creek? They are all thanks to the creative dedication of Laura Mol, who has researched, designed, and put up these inspiring materials for over five years.

In all, Laura has put up more than 50 displays in our nine kiosks since 2012, covering a wide variety of topics related to Sligo's plants, birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and the often-unseen interactions among living things and the physical world of our watershed, including its rocks, soils, and weather.

Most displays have included, in the bins below, a companion piece that expands upon the theme of the display material and is meant to be taken home and read at leisure.

Laura keeps track of the quantity of these handouts taken, providing useful insight into materials most appreciated by park users. Nine of the natural history displays have had over 300 handouts taken.

A record number of handouts--more than 400--were taken in June of this year for a display on fireflies. Other displays of particular popularity discussed owls, chipmunks, snakes, box turtles and may apples, the winter solstice, and patterns of daylight in winter. Over five-plus years, more than 12,000 of these natural history handouts have been taken.

Laura has further inspired park users by featuring poetic writing on nature that expand upon the themes of the postings. Her displays have featured such household names as Robert Frost, Henry David Thoreau, Wendell Berry, Annie Dillard, John Updike, Thomas Merton, and Lewis Thomas, while also

introducing us to lesser-known writers on nature.

Quotations have come from scientists, novelists, essayists, and two children's classics: *Wind in the Willows* and *Charlotte's Web*. Many of the displays' compelling photos have been generously provided by local photographers, notably Stephen Davies, Bonnie Ott, and Richard Orr.

The kiosks were acquired by Friends of Sligo Creek through a matching grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Labor was donated by Montgomery Parks for assembling and installing them. Also essential was permission from Montgomery Parks to devote parkland for these kiosks to help us promote our events and activities, as well as nature appreciation and education.

If you have any comments or questions about the natural history kiosk displays, email naturalhistory@fosc.org.



*Laura reflected in a kiosk display
(L. Kaufmann photo)*

A Flurry of New Habitat and Stormwater Projects

Eleven habitat and stormwater improvements have been completed in Sligo this year as part of an ambitious period of work in our watershed by Montgomery Parks. These projects have created more natural conditions for stormwater to flow into the creek and, in the process, provide habitats for many kinds of water-loving plants and wildlife along the creek.

Ed Murtagh recently posted his photo-essay about several of these projects on our website [here](#) following a tour of sites with FOSC's Kit Gage and Pat Ratkowski, led by Matt Harper and Andy Frank of Parks.

Another project, located along the hiker-biker trail near the south end of the soccer fields, is a 200-foot-long bioswale that utilizes some of the ash trees recently cut from that same site (see photo at left).

A widened depression there is bordered by a dense stand of spotted jewelweed and has been



planted with native rushes, sedges, and grasses. The bioswale slows stormwater on its way to the creek and provides better habitat for freshwater organisms such as dragonflies, which prey on mosquitoes and other insects, and, with luck, for frogs and salamanders.

Yet another new installation is located between Forest Glen Road and the Beltway, on the east side of the parkway, and includes three ponds with native plantings. These ponds collect outfall from a stormwater pipe emerging from beneath the Beltway. The three ponds have been generously planted with water-loving species such as swamp milkweed, which is currently in bloom. (See "before" and "after" photos, below.)

New bioswales along the hiker-biker trail near the south end of the soccer fields



Before and after: Mowed field (above), between Forest Glen Rd. and the Beltway (east side of the parkway), now has three ponds surrounded by native wetland plants (below). (Wilpers photos)



Here is the full list of wetland species Parks used in all of these projects: soft rush (*Juncus effuses*), squarrose sedge (*Carex squarrosa*), wood reed grass (*Cinna arundinacea*), false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindica*), wool grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), fox sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), and cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*).

In addition to eleven completed projects, five more are awaiting the availability of contractors and three others have been postponed until later this year or 2018. Four of the upcoming projects target degraded areas around the parking lot at the Sligo Golf Course.

Our thanks to Matt Harper, Andy Frank, and Eric McArdle of Montgomery Parks for their leadership and expertise in seeing these great improvements through to completion.

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.