



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter October 2019



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

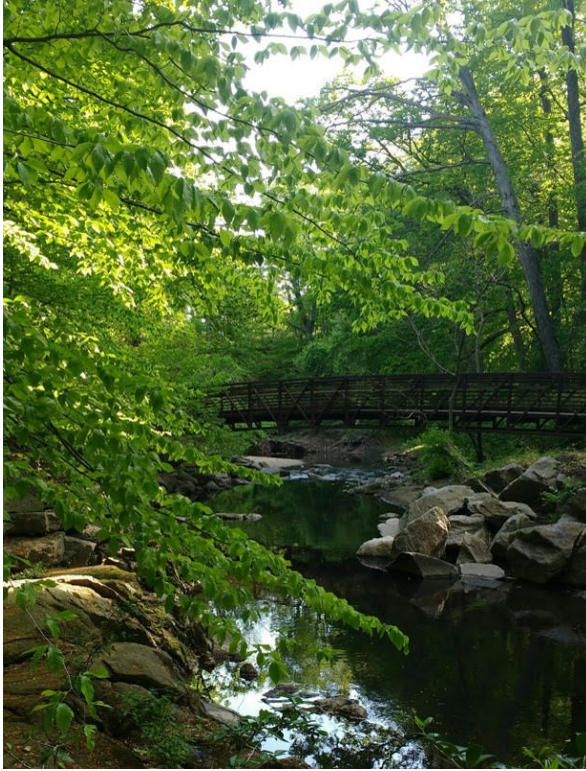
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Tour Lower Sligo on Oct. 12

Learn about the natural and human history of lower Sligo -- downstream from New Hampshire Avenue -- on Saturday, October 12, at 10:00 am, when two former presidents of Friends of Sligo Creek lead a walk from Hillwood Manor Park to the powerline meadow.

Bruce Sidwell and Michael Wilpers, both also longtime



Sligo Creek near Hillwood Manor Park

members of the FOSC natural history committee, will point out evidence of the ancient geology of the area; identify trees, shrubs, and wildflowers; and discuss the sometimes colorful human history of the Sligo gorge (dating to the very early 1900s).

We'll meet in front of FOSC kiosk at Hillwood Manor Park, located on 13th Avenue, between Elson Place and 14th Avenue. Adults, children, and people using wheelchairs are welcome. For more information, contact Xavier Courouble at this [email address](#).



Footpath through the powerline meadow between New Hampshire Avenue and East West Highway (Xavier Courouble photos)

Water Quality Roundtable Oct. 15

What's in the water of Sligo Creek?
Is it clean or polluted? Can people wade in it safely? How healthy is it for our fish and the birds that eat

them?

Learn all about the water quality in Sligo and the many methods to measure it, when a panel of three local experts convenes at the Silver Spring Civic Building on Tuesday, October 15. Titled "Sligo Creek's Water: Cause for Concern, Reason to Hope," the program begins at 7:30 pm. Come at 7:00 to socialize with others who care about Sligo.

The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at 1 Veterans Plaza, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Plenty of free public parking is available in the parking garage across Ellsworth Drive from the Civic Building.

Our panelists will be Chris Victoria, a longtime resident of Sligo and an environmental scientist for the Anne Arundel County Watershed Protection and Restoration Program; Pat Ratkowski, chair of FOSC's Water Quality Committee who has measured the creek's water quality for years; and Paul Chrostowski, PhD, a registered Qualified Environmental Professional and FOSC board member.

They will explain how professional and volunteer groups monitor Sligo's water quality -- collecting chemical, bacterial, and biological data -- and show us long-term data collected by FOSC members, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (our water and sewage utility), the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

These experts will help us understand what all the data means in terms of human safety and ecological health. Finally, they'll discuss what government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and individuals can do to improve water quality and advocate for better policies and procedures. Please come with your questions and observations.

For questions about the program contact Dee Clarkin at [this email](#).



Volunteers wade into Sligo Creek to collect trash in 2019. (D. Clarkin photo)



Test for chlorine being done by Pat Ratkowski of Friends of Sligo Creek at the Brashear's Run out-fall near Maple Avenue in 2017 (Ratkowski photo)

Fall Sweep Draws 361 Volunteers

Our fall Sweep the Creek attracted 361 volunteers who collected 226 bags of trash, 72 bags of recycling, and the usual assortment of large items (like shopping carts) that are now removed from the creek.

A tremendous vote of thanks is, once again, due to our veteran and tireless Sweep Coordinator, Patton Stephens, who met her consistently high standards of preparation, organization, communication, and enthusiasm to make this Sweep such a big success.

Patton says, "Thanks again to all of you for your support of this Fall's Sweep. Another important event made possible by you all and our volunteers. I look forward to working with you in the spring -- stay tuned for those dates."

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Students from Takoma Middle School show off their haul at the fall 2019 Sweep.

Sligo Birders Find 30 Species at Forest Glen Wetlands

The Fall 2019 Friends of Sligo Creek Bird Walk turned out to be more like a Bird Stand. But no one was really complaining about the change in itinerary.

Sixteen birders joined trip leaders Mary Singer and David Blockstein in proving that one does not need to trek long distances to observe avian diversity.

The group started at the parking lot near the stormwater ponds upstream from Forest Glen Road, ambled about 100 feet to the nearest pond, and returned to the parking lot two hours later



without having ventured any further.

*Some of the birders who joined our outing at the Forest Glen wetlands on September 28
(Ross Campbell photo)*

Not only did we save on shoe leather, we also found that the pond was an attractive lure for resident and migratory species. At the end of the two hours, our count was 30 species seen or heard.

They included six species of woodpecker (Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Pileated) and five species of warbler (Black-and-white, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, and Black-throated Blue). While many of these birds were a bit aloof and elusive, the Pileated Woodpecker was particularly cooperative as it hammered a maple tree less than 30 feet away.

Several species were seen in large numbers, including eight Northern Flickers, eight Red-eyed Vireos, twelve Blue Jays, five White-breasted Nuthatches, 14 American Robins, and eight American Goldfinches.

Other highlights included a Wood Duck on the wing and a small flock of Red-eyed Vireos chasing each other amidst the shrubbery. Another welcome sight was an abundant number of Monarch butterflies soaring toward the clouds and doing their best to fool some of us into thinking we were spotting distant raptors.

We held the "walk" near the ponds this fall in hopes that the water would give us additional diversity. No doubt it did, though the "flash drought" we are experiencing has diminished their usual liquidity. Let's hope there is enough water in the system to keep our migrants and residents from becoming too parched.

The Friends of Sligo Creek once again thank Mary and David for sharing their enthusiasm and expertise. Their knowledge goes well beyond simple (or not so simple) identification to cover birdy behavior, natural history, and biomimicry. How else would we learn, for example, that woodpecker skulls have been studied as models for designing better motorcycle helmets? After seeing the Pileated dismantle that maple, we now understand why.



Eight Red-eyed Vireos were spotted on the outing. (allaboutbirds.org photo)

-- Ross Campbell

Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): president@fosc.org

Invasive Plants (Jim Anderson): invasives@fosc.org

Litter (Patton Stephens): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

Natural History (Bruce Sidwell): naturalhistory@fosc.org

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@fosc.org

Water Quality (Pat Ratkowski): waterquality@fosc.org

Outreach (Sarah Jane Marcus): outreach@fosc.org

Treasurer (Dee Clarkin): treasurer@fosc.org

Webmaster (vacant): webmaster@fosc.org

Newsletter Editor (Michael Wilpers): editor@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.