



NEWS ITEMS

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Upcoming Events

Sunday August 15, 3:00 p.m. Walk with John Parrish. A Special Treat!

A reminder from last month's newsletter:

Botanist John Parrish leads a look at the north-most section of Sligo Creek: discover how much there is to appreciate so close to home. Meet on the path near the Giant parking lot at the Kemp Mill Shopping Center on Arcola Ave.

John recently completed walking through nooks and crannies of the park in search of non-woody plants. Among plants that still exist in Sligo he found wild strawberry, wild ginger, and in the sections below Piney Branch, saprophytic Indian pipes. A few more plants may inevitably appear, but John's list—now on the website—marks the formal close of a magnificent achievement. Already it has been useful by informing whether a questionable plant is actually native to Sligo, and by narrowing down the choices when we identify plants. We are most grateful! The inventory is at <http://www.fosc.org/PIHerb2.htm> Have a look at the inventory before the walk.

Questions or directions: contact Laura Mol at (301) 681-9686.

Thursday, August 19th, 7:15 p.m. Evening Birdsong Walk

Ross Campbell will lead a brief and informal gathering at a time when the path is quiet, the evening light is lovely through the trees, and the birdsong is delightful. Who's that singing? We'll meet along the paved path a little north of Forest Glen. If driving, from the Parkway, park in the first (only) lot between Forest Glen and Dennis and walk to the paved path—which is, from the west side, near the playground next to Kensington Day Care. We'll walk north on the path, cross the Troll Bridge (next to the square-stones that make a ford for crossing the stream), and pause where the birdsong is usually varied and easy to hear. The forest is especially deep here, where the Wheaton Branch comes into the Sligo mainstem, and the birdsong is lovely.

Questions or directions: Call Laura Mol at 301-681-9686.

August 21, 22 and 28: Three Opportunities to attack Stilt Grass

Each session is scheduled from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Meet at the parking lot near Dallas Avenue, just upstream from Colesville Road. Hand-pulling or scything. Wear gloves, long pants/long sleeves.

Please RSVP: Click on RSVP on the web site calendar or call Ross Campbell at 301 587 6898.

Saturday, September 11th, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Rain Date September 12th) Rain Gardens Workshop

This is not a Friends-sponsored event, but it comes hot on the heels of our American Elm Park Raingarden dedication and we would love to have some members participate. Raingardens and other measures to control stormwater are very important to our creek and all the others in our Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources, Town of Berwyn Heights and the Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek invite us to join them for the Stream Team's Rain Gardens Workshop. Raingardens are

landscaped areas that improve water quality by using plants and soil to remove pollutants from rainwater. Two Rain Gardens will be installed at the Town Hall parking lot to catch stormwater as it runs off the lot. Come learn about Rain Gardens and help with planting these gardens with perennials and shrubs. Volunteers will each get a free plant to take home.

The workshop, to be held at the Berwyn Heights Town Hall, 5700 Berwyn Road, is free but space is limited. Pre-register, get directions and ask questions by contacting Sharon Meigs, 301 883 5898 or slmeigs@co.pg.md.us. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday, September 18 and follow-up Sunday, September 19 we will hold our Third Annual Sweep the Creek. Mark your calendars.

We are doing it again. Our ever-popular Sweep the Creek. We hope to get another big crowd this year. We plan to clean the entire creek of trash in one day—or one day and a little bit more. For the first time, we are holding the trash pick-up in Section 9 (Wheaton area) on Sunday. Over the years, many people throughout the park who observe the Sabbath on Saturday have asked us to hold some of our events on Sunday. So, if you observe a Saturday Sabbath, or if you can't come on Saturday for some other reason, mark your calendars for Sunday and come join us in Section 9.

Watch the web site for more details as they are added. Our September newsletter will also have more detail.

Tuesday, September 21 at 7:15 p.m. Program Meeting: The Birds of Sligo.

Mark you calendars. This program meeting will be very interesting. What migratory and year-round birds do we have in Sligo and what can we do to protect and improve their habitat? Two experts on birds will talk and entertain questions. Gail Mackiernan, who is surveying Sligo Creek Park for the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project, will tell us about "The Breeding Birds of Sligo Creek: who, when and where -- an update from the ongoing Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas." Peter P. Marra, Senior Scientist with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, will then describe his research to determine the impact of West Nile Virus on our birds. You can find more detail on our web calendar at <http://www.fosc.org/cgi-bin/calendar.pl>

News

August 7 Dedication of American Elm Park deemed a major success.

Over 60 people joined us on a sunny afternoon to help celebrate American Elm Park, home to four young, disease-resistant Valley Forge American Elms and a Raingarden. The crowd was entertained with music by BouletBoulet (our own

Lenore Boulet and her husband John) and friends. We had refreshments, tours of the Raingarden, a native plant scavenger hunt and a program of brief, informative and encouraging remarks by:

- Cameron Wiegand, Chief of the Watershed Management Division of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP), who talked about the County's involvement in Sligo
- Jeffrey Deschamps, of the Izaak Walton League's Wildlife Achievement Chapter, who talked about the League's part in promoting the American Elm (<http://www.elmpost.org/>)
- Meosotis Curtis, Senior Planner with MCDEP, who talked about the Rainscapes project (of which this Raingarden is a part) and unveiled a lovely sign for the park <http://www.fosc.org/PDF/RainGardensign.pdf>
- Councilmember-at-large Nancy Floreen, who thanked and encouraged us all to keep up the good work, and
- Kathy Michels, Ed Murtagh and Ellen Griffiths, representing *Friends of Sligo Creek* and local civic associations; who talked about next steps.

The park, near Sligo Creek's headwaters, is now blooming with moisture-loving native flowers and native shrubs. The American Elm project and the Raingarden are the result of a collaborative effort by *Friends of Sligo Creek*, two neighborhood civic associations (Upper Sligo CA and Sligo Headwaters CA), the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (with funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust) and the Izaak Walton League's Wildlife Achievement Chapter. The Raingarden adds beauty to the Park while it helps control and absorb stormwater run-off and enhances habitat for birds and other creatures.

For More Information

For more about the importance of Raingardens for stormwater control and how we built our Raingarden, see our Stormwater Committee web page at <http://www.fosc.org/StormwaterCommittee.htm> and our Action Log entry at <http://www.fosc.org/AL-AmericanElmPark.htm>. The Action Log will be updated soon to include this celebration and the photo gallery will soon have many pictures of the event <http://www.fosc.org/PhotoGallery.htm>. Also go to www.askdep.com for lots of great information. Look under "Rainscapes" for articles on "Harvesting the Heavens" and "The Soggy Garden."

Update from the invasives battleground. *Friends* attack Japanese Knotweed

Sally Gagne, our "General," says all known Knotweed in Sligo should be gone before 2005, and with luck, a lot sooner than that. But it takes patience - this plant is effervescent! Several sections have reported in, describing their progress to date.

Knotweed is so invasive that it covers miles of shoreline along the Potomac and miles of highway along Route 95 in New England. We've heard that a few Sligo residents have it growing in their yards as an ornamental. If you know people who have Knotweed growing, please make sure they are aware of the problems it causes. They might be willing to cut flowers when past their prime, before they go to seed in August-September.

RSVP Feature Added to Friends of Sligo Creek Calendar

Some events on the *Friends* calendar now have an RSVP button, allowing you to indicate to the event organizer that you will attend that event. When you click this RSVP button, a screen appears asking for your name, e-mail address, number in your party and comments. When you click on the Submit button on that screen, that information is sent to the organizer of that event.

If you would like to try out this new feature, go to the calendar entry for June 21, 2004. Click on one of the two RSVP test entries and an e-mail will be sent to our webmaster, who will forward it back to you to indicate its receipt.

Ed Murtagh's Article on Vernal Pools published in Takoma Park Newsletter

The August issue of the Takoma Park Newsletter includes a great article by Ed Murtagh about the importance of vernal pools in Sligo Creek Park. The article encourages readers to help educate the community about the importance of vernal pools. You can find the article on our web site at <http://www.fosc.org/VernalPool.htm>.

Friends Joins Coalition to Spur WSSC Action on Sanitary Sewer Problems

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) is the utility that sees that Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties have clean water and a safe sewage system. WSSC has documented over 30 overflows into Maryland rivers and streams for 2004 alone, which translates into over 75,000 gallons of sewage discharged into our waterways so far this year. Many citizens have experienced basement backups and flooding from these sewer overflows, which present a serious health threat to the community. WSSC must take action to address its aging infrastructure, broken pipes and exposed manholes, to stop raw sewage from threatening our citizens' health and well-being. WSSC can combat the overflow problem by creating an upgrade and maintenance comprehensive plan for its collections and piping system.

These overflow problems have been known for some time. For many months, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have been negotiating with the WSSC because their failure to prevent sanitary sewer overflows violates the Federal Clean Water Act. The overflows also violate Maryland law.

Some of us think the negotiations are going too slowly and have formed a coalition to work toward a solution. The coalition plans to urge WSSC—through negotiation or, failing that, legal action—to remedy the sanitary sewer overflows discharging into the rivers and streams in Maryland. Coalition members are concerned about human waste being discharged into our waterways and the health impacts that are associated with human waste and sewage in waterbodies that are used for recreation in Maryland.

Our Friends of Sligo Creek Board has resolved to join the coalition, now called Marylanders for Sewage Free Streams. Others in the coalition are the Anacostia Watershed Society, the Audubon Naturalist Society, Clean Water Action, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter. Other groups are being invited to join.

The coalition would like to work with WSSC to generate and implement a plan to upgrade its aging collection system and to find additional revenue sources to fund the plan over a reasonable length of time. It is imperative that WSSC address this problem now because the system is continuing to deteriorate, and the solution will take a long time to implement. Our sewer system should provide effective sewage treatment to protect the health and safety of ratepayers and downstream users of the waterways.

This is the Board's Resolution

Because of the gravity of these problems and because of our own mission to "...restore to health the water quality...of Sligo Creek," the Board of Directors of *Friends of Sligo Creek* resolves to join the coalition, with the hope that a solution can be found through informal discussions with WSSC. Failing that, the Board of *Friends of Sligo Creek* resolves to take part in the coalition's plan to file a 60-day *Notice of Intent to File a Citizen's Suit*.

Reporting on Recent Dialogue about the Importance of Small Streams

Jim Fary from Sierra Club recently sent this message to a list serve. It certainly applies to Sligo. We quote here directly:

The Trust for Public Land and the American Waterworks Association have updated their work "Protecting the Source: Land Conservation and the Future of America's Drinking Water." There is a lot of good advice and case studies on why and how to protect drinking water and the costs to remove pollutants from drinking water. A case is made that land conservation is a more cost effective way to protect the source than treatment. But here are 2 short paragraphs that summed up why we must protect small streams:

"Within any particular watershed small streams constitute up to 85% of the total stream length and collect most of the surface runoff and pollutants from the land.

Because small headwater and tributary streams comprise most of the drainage network in watersheds, they strongly influence the quantity, timing and quality of streamflow. However, due to their size, small streams are rarely mapped by many local governments and often ignored during planning processes.

Recent scientific studies show that protecting small streams and their riparian zones can have a greater impact on maintaining water quality and quantity than protection of larger tributaries. Watershed managers are beginning to target the protection of small streams and their riparian zones." p.26

And here is a response from Jim Caldwell, Head of Montgomery Department of Environmental Protection, also quoted verbatim:

Thanks for the info Jim. This has been our mantra for sometime. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to convince EPA and MDE of the importance of small streams and the maintenance of small stream restoration funds as both agencies tend to focus time and money on the mainstem of the Bay. Clearly for Montgomery County, our part for overall Bay improvement is to assure we do what we can to protect small streams and, in cases where past practice has played havoc with the habitat and biology of those streams, to undertake restoration projects. Hence the development of our stream protection strategy and the CIP funds targeted to specific watersheds where restoration will prove beneficial. We have had some great success stories in bringing small streams back to a better condition, but for every success there are many more out there waiting for help. Our job continues to be cut out for us well into the future.

Again, thanks for bringing this to our attention. Cameron has been a champion of this philosophy for some time and it is nice to see it getting wider press. Jim

Announcements

A Reminder about Weed Warrior Training

Carole Bergmann holds a training session for Weed Warriors on the last Wednesday of every month. Look at our web calendar <http://www.fosc.org/cgi-bin/calendar.pl> for details. August training is on the 25th.

Last Call for Frog Watchers

The end of the breeding season is upon us and frogwatchers have until Sept.5 to listen to the late summer frogs and send in information. So far three frog species have been reported, and we suspect there are more out there. A full report on the Sligo FrogWatch will come this fall. For more information about the Frogwatch program, go to www.frogwatch.org.

Flood Damage Pictures on the Web Site

Bruce Sidwell contributed some great shots of flood damage near Long Branch in Takoma Park. See <http://www.fosc.org/BeccaLillyFlood.htm>

FREE Compost Bins Available from Montgomery County Recycling Program

Adjustable, rubber compost bins (2.5 X 10 feet; capacity: 14.2 bushels) are available free of charge to Montgomery County residents at the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, 8435 Georgia Avenue (corner of Georgia and Wayne Avenue) between 8:30 and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. You have to promise “to make a good faith effort” to compost your yard trim, and agree that Montgomery County may contact you. To check on availability of the free bins, and for directions to the Silver Spring Regional Center, call 301-565-7300.

News Items collected and edited by Ann Hoffnar