



Chapel Road Park



Aydan Kalyoncu at Clifton Day



Who knew weevils are so cute?



An American Mink

# Wild About Clifton

By Margaret Fisher • Photos courtesy of Margret Fisher

Five years ago, a group of volunteers got together to consider how to help Greater Clifton preserve and enhance the natural resources that make it a sanctuary in the midst of suburbia. We wanted to share our passion for protecting the local ecosystem and help our neighbors figure out how to be good stewards of their land.

Naturalist and Lake Braddock teacher Mark Khosravi generously lent our team the name he had been using on his Facebook Page - Wild About Clifton – and created a Facebook Group called Naturally Clifton, which now has over 800 members who post wildlife sightings and advice. We also created a website, [www.wildaboutclifton.org](http://www.wildaboutclifton.org), which includes an archive of articles written for the Clifton Living magazine, information about local trails and resources, and a habitat “To Do” list. We were very pleased when in 2021 the Clifton Town Council adopted a natural landscaping policy for town-owned land.

Other activities by the group have included staffing a booth on Clifton Day, sponsoring a City Nature Challenge contest, and collaborating with the Clifton Betterment Association and Lions Club on tree rescues on the CBA property. Those trees are now mostly free of invasive vines, and we plan to regularly schedule volunteer events to further restore the habitat of that area. Our team has also distributed door hangers to alert many Clifton residences that their trees are at risk of being killed by invasive vines such as English Ivy, Asian Wisteria, and Japanese Honeysuckle. Details about how to distinguish invasive vines from the native ones (which are a valuable component of our ecosystem and should be left undisturbed whenever possible) can be found on the Plant NOVA Trees website. Plant NOVA Trees promotes the planting and preservation of native trees in Northern Virginia. Both actions are important, but preservation has far more value in the short and medium run.

Habitat in the Clifton area continues to shrink as the woods are replaced by houses. We encourage everyone to do their best to restore the conditions that make it possible for our non-human neighbors to survive. That includes bringing in locally native plants, eradicating invasive plants such as Japanese Barberry and Chinese Silvergrass from both landscaped and natural areas, stopping the use of insecticides for mosquito control or other outdoor purposes, reducing lawn, leaving leaves in place wherever possible, and preserving and growing tree canopy. If you need help identifying your plants and strategizing about how to improve your property, you can request a free site visit from an Audubon-at-Home volunteer.

We welcome all Cliftonites to join our team, which is very loosely organized and mostly “meets” by email to plan our next activities. Contact [plantnovanatives@gmail.com](mailto:plantnovanatives@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping out.