

CHARLIE DORIAN (RIGHT)  
WORKING WITH CHILDREN  
IN THE ENVIRONMENT.



## Charlie Dorian

*Environmentalist*

By Carol Noury  
Photograph courtesy of the  
Audubon Naturalist Society

**CHARLIE DORIAN TALKS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AS** though it's simply part of who he is. After 15 years of contributing to the mission of the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS), an independent environmental organization headquartered in Chevy Chase, it clearly is. Dorian began by volunteering on weekends. What appealed to him about ANS was the chance to work outdoors. His enthusiasm for freshwater fishing adds to his dedication to restoring stream health. "I get to play in the streams. It's like being a kid again, except we're splashing around with a scientific purpose. It's still a whole lot of fun to turn rocks over and see who's crawling underneath," he says.

What Dorian does, though, is a big deal. "The work of a small, local nonprofit like ANS is absolutely dependent upon the energy and passion of volunteers like Charlie. We are so grateful to have him as part of our team working to protect and restore streams in the D.C. region," says Alison Pearce, volunteer coordinator for ANS.

To survey, Dorian dons rubber boots and wades carefully into creeks and streams to collect samples from the water. The resident species indicate the level of pollution in the water, since certain insects have a higher tolerance for it. Dorian records his findings, takes photographs, and then sets the critters free (still alive). Once in a while, he finds

something incredible. "When I was first testing our new Creek Critters app, I spotted a damselfly I'd never seen before. It was one that hadn't yet been listed in Montgomery County."

Real progress takes a little longer, though. Over the past decade, Dorian contributed to surveys by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection at Sligo Creek that determined what species of insects and fish were living in the streams at certain points. "Water quality improved significantly thanks to the county's efforts. We help fix the streams so children can play safely in them, and if we're lucky, carry that connection to nature with them into adulthood," says Dorian.

When it comes to volunteering for the ANS, Dorian says anyone can do it. "You don't need a science background. I learned as I went. ANS is happy to work with whatever you want to give."

In nature, he has a chance to do some advocacy. "We meet people while we work. They ask great questions, and I get to share some of the improvements I've witnessed." There's a financial impact, too. "Clean streams cost taxpayers less."

Dorian's approachability contributes to his work. "Charlie is amazing. Students and adults gravitate toward him. He imparts a sense of warmth and competence," says Gregg Trilling, Creek Critters project manager for ANS.