



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: December 2024

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge presently includes twenty-three different divisions and units, located in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge is located in ten locations on the mainland and near shore islands along the northern shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut.

DANGER! Don't Cross The Railroad Tracks

This is the message Refuge Staff and members of the Friends of Fannie Stebbins are trying to convey to the many visitors that cross over the railroad tracks while hiking at the Fannie Stebbins Unit in Longmeadow, MA. The hope is that the newly installed signs on each side of the tracks will deter visitors from crossing over the active tracks, which see frequent daily use by both freight and passenger trains. For people wanting to hike the entirety of the Refuge, there are trails on either side of the track, accessible by individual parking areas at each trail head, making it possible to avoid crossing the tracks.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



Photo: Friends of Fannie Stebbins



Photo: Native Plant Trust

Monitoring Ash Trees

Refuge staff, volunteer citizen scientists, the State of NH, and the Ecological Research Institute (ERI) are monitoring black ash populations at the Pondicherry Division as part of the MaMA network. This effort offers a framework for monitoring ash trees before, during, and after invasion by the Emerald ash borer - a non-native, invasive insect decimating ash populations in the Eastern US. ERI hopes to systematically identify so-called "lingering ash" that survive following invasion. This effort is crucial to perpetuating ash species into the future. For more information visit: www.monitoringash.org

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov



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Remote Wildlife Monitoring at the Nulhegan Basin

Twenty-one SiMPL cameras were checked and re-set this winter, and twenty-one audio moths were removed from plots within seven spruce-fir stands on the Nulhegan Basin Division. Data collected from these sites, as well as sites in the White Mountain National Forest are being used to inform a study evaluating whether biological diversity is higher in stands where young and mature forests coexist. The SiMPL cameras are monitoring small mammals, while the audio recorders are being used to survey migrating and breeding landbirds. This data, along with forest inventory data has been collected from these sites since 2021. The results will be used to inform forest managers on how they can increase biological diversity while maintaining economic benefit.



Photo: USFWS

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov



Photo: Scott Bailey

Native Willow Survey

A recent willow survey was conducted at the Pondicherry Division by Scott Bailey. The survey was funded by the Friends of Pondicherry. The survey found that "Pondicherry has an unusual diversity and density of willows, woody plants that are especially important to wildlife as habitat and food. Of the 13 lowland species native to New Hampshire, 7 are documented at Pondicherry. The populations on the refuge are relatively large and widespread, and include both male and female plants, suggesting that the refuge serves an important role in preserving species and genetic diversity of willows and as a seed source for the areas around the refuge."

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Managing For Young Forests

This month, refuge manager Rick Potvin and facilities assistant Sean Healy conducted habitat improvement work at the Salt Meadow Unit in Westbrook, CT. Using heavy equipment, the team of two cut several acres of young forest (shrubland) in accordance with the Refuge's early successional habitat management plan. This rotational cutting is done to provide and enhance habitat for species such as warblers, towhees, wrens, turtles, and pollinators. The project was done efficiently and with minimal disruption to visitation.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS

Christmas Bird Count At Nulhegan

Although the results were not as expected, we are thankful for all those who participated in the Christmas Bird Count this year at Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions. Six observers logged 27 different species of birds, including mallards, wild turkey, evening grosbeak, pine siskin, and dark-eyed juncos. The Christmas Bird Count is the nation's longest running community science bird project that occurs each year between December 14 and January 5th.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

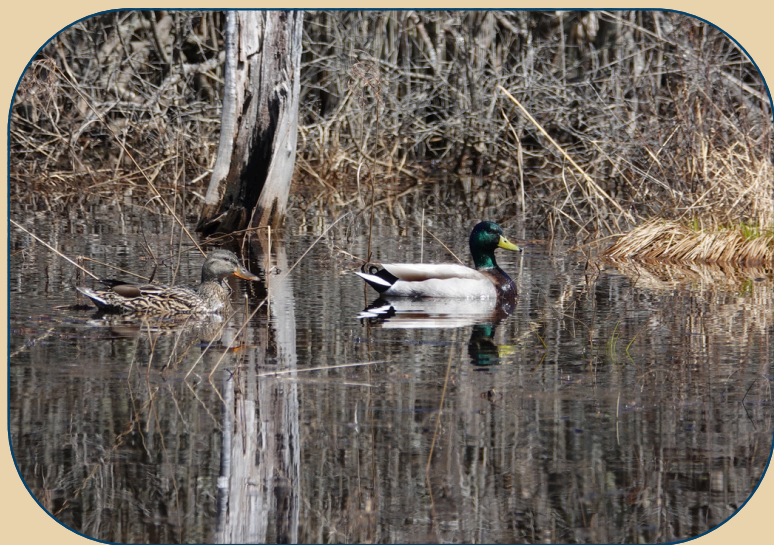


Photo: David Govatski