



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

June 2022: *The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations 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.*

Meet Our Seasonal Staff



Photo Credit: USFWS

Meet Ashley Castillo, a rising senior at the University of Massachusetts, and an intern working this summer at the Conte Refuge. Ashley was hired through the Hispanic Access Foundation, and is working with the Refuge's Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership. In addition, she is assisting with biological research, maintenance and other refuge functions. One of Ashley's main projects this summer is planning an event to celebrate Latino Conservation Week. The event will take place the evening of July 21 at the Fort River Division. Contact the refuge for more information about how to participate.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Deadbranch Division Habitat Work



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month Conte Staff spent time at the Deadbranch Division, working to assess the habitat and perform some restoration work at the old Bisbee Mill site located at the property. While there, we witnessed turtles nesting at the Division, and made the decision to plant more vegetation in order to improve the quality of habitat around the wetland.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Safe Archery Makes Campers Smile



Photo Credit: USFWS

Students at the Hampden County Sheriff's Youth Leadership Academy in Springfield learned how to shoot a bow and arrow this month, using the Hoverball Safe Archery inflatable Unit. Conte Staff set up the unit at the camp, which uses safe arrows that have soft foam tips. More than 100 young campers learned and practiced archery skills, most for the first time. In addition, students learned about native wildlife animals by studying animal pelts and skulls displayed at the event as well.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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In-person Field Trips Are Back At McKinney!



Photo Credit: USFWS

After two school years of virtual programming and video field trips, our *Nature of Learning* environmental education program came back in full force this year with in-school visits and in-person field trips. Over 400 students from six schools in Norwalk and New Haven participated in the program. Field trips consisted of boat rides to either Sheffield Island (Norwalk) and Outer Island (Branford) where students closely experienced coastal habitats and wildlife such as pollinators, songbirds, crabs, fish and water birds. We are so grateful to the Norwalk Seaport Association, the Friends of Outer Island and our refuge volunteers for making this program and these field trips possible!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

S.B. McKinney Partners Clean Up Sheffield Island



Photo Credit: Surfrider/Jack Egan

Non-profit volunteer organization Surfrider, organized a beach cleanup on Sheffield Island, located in the Norwalk Islands. Norwalk Marine Police transported volunteers, as well as the trash off the island. In addition, three USFWS interns assisted in the cleanup, getting the chance to meet partners and improve conditions on the island.

For more information contact Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Stebbins Stewards Step Up To Tackle Water Chestnut



Photo Credit: Friends of Fannie Stebbins

Controlling the invasive water chestnut plant is a priority for our Stebbins Stewards volunteers, who have diligently been monitoring the aquatic invader for several years. This month, 8 volunteers, along with Refuge Partners Biologist Dave Sagan, tackled the ponds at the Fannie Stebbins Division to be sure to keep the plant from spreading. The good news is that there were fewer plants found growing this year than last year. Keep up the good work Stebbing Stewards!

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov



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Keeping Trails Safe For Visitors



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte staff at the Fort River Division teamed up on a sunny June morning to clear over-grown brush from the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail that was quickly encroaching on the accessible path. With tools in tow, the team of 7, which included intern Elena Campbell from the Regional Office, tackled the thorny multiflora rose, viney bittersweet and itchy poison ivy along the one mile loop trail. Although tedious work, it made for an enjoying morning spent with co-workers to improve visitor experiences.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Post Treatment Sampling of Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change Research Proj



Photo Credit: Unknown

Field technicians from the University of Vermont have begun post-treatment sampling within the Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change study occurring on the Nulhegan Basin of the Conte Refuge. Sampling efforts include vegetation measurements in treated areas, including baseline measurements for each of more than 10,000 seedlings that were planted post-harvest. This allows researchers to track tree seedling growth and mortality over time. Technicians continue to characterize the bird community within the study site; a second year of species occurrence data has been gathered to evaluate treatment impacts.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Northern Conte Youth Conservation Corps Crew



Photo Credit: Northwoods
Stewardship Center

In June, the NorthWoods Conte YCC crew began working on the trails at the Conte Refuge. This season, the six-person crew will work at the Nulhegan Basin, Pondicherry and Blueberry Swamp Divisions on trail repair, road/building infrastructure and boundary posting projects. In addition, the crew will be working on a Partners For Fish and Wildlife project to improve public access to the Connecticut River at Lyman Falls in New Hampshire.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Media Interest In The Adaptive Silviculture For Climate Change Research



Photo Credit: UVM

There continues to be a considerable amount of public interest and media attention regarding the Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change research project at the Nulhegan Basin Division. In June, reporters from local and statewide newspapers reported on the climate change research project. WCAX (CBS affiliate) aired a piece on their evening news about the project. Additionally, National Public Radio had a segment about the project on the nationally syndicated 'All Things Considered'.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Monitoring Furbearer And Moose Populations Using Camera Traps



Photo: USFWS

Nine cameras were deployed within the Pondicherry Division's forested habitats in June to evaluate monitoring methods for furbearers and moose in New Hampshire. This state-wide research effort is a cooperatively funded partnership between the University of New Hampshire and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Cameras are being deployed across New Hampshire within various habitat types and elevation gradients to evaluate wildlife-habitat relationships and to improve predictive accuracy of species distribution models and abundance estimates. This information will be used to inform wildlife management and conservation in the state.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Barn Swallows Nesting At The Fort River Division



Conte Staff and volunteers are continuing to monitor barn swallow nesting behavior at the Fort River Division. To date this season, we have recorded a total of 32 active nests producing 93 eggs. Barn swallow have continued to thrive at the Fort River Division, using nesting structures designed and built by refuge staff that were modeled after nesting locations in a building that no longer exists. The new building where the birds nests has allowed them easy access to foraging habitat and materials for building nests.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS