



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

November 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.*

New Fishing Access In New Haven, Connecticut



Residents of New Haven, CT and surrounding communities now have more access to fishing with a new fishing dock installed at Beaver Ponds Park. Stewart B. McKinney Refuge partnered with the City of New Haven and Connecticut DEEP Wildlife Division's Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management to complete the project. The City installed a new concrete and asphalt ramp and the dock has been placed in the water. The last step of the project is installing hardware, safety equipment and the gangway. Come Spring, fishing access will be ready to go!

Photo Credit: USFWS/ Shaun Roche

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Inspiring A World Of Nature!



Nearly ten different countries were represented by the group "Woman Around The World" who visited the Fort River Division on a rainy November morning. Conte staff spoke with the group, many of whom are in the U.S. pursuing degrees in higher education, about conservation, natural resource management and the role of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Other participants included community volunteers who work with the organization to provide social and educational opportunities for members of the group. Despite the rain, the women enjoyed walking the trail and sharing stories about their own cultures and countries.

Photo Credit: Wikipedia

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

On The Lookout For Birds At The Big Sit



The Big Sit was a big hit, for eight volunteers who recorded 36 different species of birds at Cherry Pond in New Hampshire. The Friends of Pondicherry sponsored the annual event, which occurs across the country during the second weekend of October. The team of Big Sit birders greeted more than 100 visitors who made the mile and a half hike to get to the viewing platform. With fall foliage at its peak, the birding and colorful views made for a fun weekend.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Wildlife Population Monitoring At Nulhegan Basin



Effectively managing wildlife across large geographic areas requires an understanding of wildlife population dynamics. Conte Refuge staff and partners have deployed a large network of game cameras across a grid system to increase species detections in the northern part of the Connecticut River watershed. These cameras provide observational data for various research projects, including an investigation into climate change impacts on winter tick and moose populations, and another, studying species diversity where young forest and mature forest habitats overlap. The refuge uses the data to track species of concern such as Canada lynx. Camera species observation data is housed within a USGS database where it is tagged, organized and stored for later use. This data can then be used by the refuge and partners to create species distribution maps and track snowpack and phenological data.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Wetland Improvements At Fort River Division



This month, refuge staff made improvements to wetland habitat created on at the Fort River Division. Wetlands provide flood control, wildlife habitat, and help filter impurities from water. This work will increase the wetland surface area at Fort River by nearly 50 percent, double the range of the water column, and provide greater habitat diversity for wildlife. Moving forward, we hope visitors will be seeing a greater number of waterfowl and other wetland dependent migratory birds.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Conservation Partnership In The Mascoma River Watershed



The Mascoma River watershed is a Conservation Focus Area for the Conte Refuge. Refuge staff are actively collaborating with conservation partners Bearhill Conservancy, WildLandscapes, Redstart Consulting and Moosewood Ecological, to collect biological, ecological and infrastructure data on and off refuge lands in the watershed. The Mascoma River Division conservation easement is a unique opportunity to leverage federal and private funding opportunities to improve and conserve diverse habitats in northern New England.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov
Photo : USFWS

Winter Recreation Refuge Interpretation



As the seasons change, so do the types of uses that occur on refuge lands. To effectively communicate and educate the public about the work of the Service, Conte Refuge staff have been upgrading outdoor interpretive signage across the refuge. At the Nulhegan Basin Division, new interpretive signs have been installed in areas that are frequented by winter enthusiasts of the refuge. Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity on the refuge. The Lewis Pond overlook is widely recognized as being one of the most scenic views in northeastern Vermont that is accessible to snowmobiles. A large interpretive panel was recently installed at the scenic overlook to educate snowmobilers about the Conte Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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Photo Credit: USFWS



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Moist Soil Management At Fort River Division



Photo: USFWS

Refuge staff used the Marsh Master and disc to prepare the soil in the wetland area created a few years ago at the Fort River Division. The nonnative grass that has dominated the wetland since it was established is being managed in preparation for planting more than 25 species of native moist soil seeds. Some of the plants provide a high protein food source for wildlife while others provide high energy. The seeds will be stratified naturally over the winter, and hopefully will vigorously establish themselves next growing season when the water levels are conducive to germination.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Head Quarters Realty Chief Visits Mascoma Division Of Conte Refuge



Eric Alvarez, Chief of Realty for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visited the Conte Refuge this month, traveling to the Nulhegan Basin (VT) and Pondicherry (NH) Divisions (both approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission), the Mascoma River Division (NH), Dead Branch Division (MA), and Fannie Stebbins Unit (MA). During his visit, Eric met with Refuge Staff at Nulhegan Basin, David Govatski, President of the Friends of Pondicherry, and a landowner, David Roby, at the Mascoma River Division. Eric and Mark Maghini, Regional Chief of Realty, looked at a 2,470 acre parcel in the Mascoma River Division for potential inclusion in the FY23 Migratory Bird Conservation Plan, and the potential purchase of an easement in FY23 using Migratory Bird Conservation Funds. Also attending the meeting were other leaders and decision makers in conservation work, including, Dan Bergeron, Chief, Wildlife Division for the NH Fish and Game, Markelle Smith, Director of Friends of Conte and Conservation Partnerships Director with Mass Audubon, Jim Obrien, NH-TNC Director of External Affairs, and Tom Geser, Senior Realty Specialist, USFWS.

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Photo Credit: USFWS



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Shining A Spotlight On Conte Accomplishments



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chief of Realty, Eric Alvarez met with several Conte Partner organizations at the Fannie Stebbins Unit, located in Longmeadow, on the doorstep of Springfield, MA. Partners attending the meeting, included Brent Keith, TNC's Senior Policy Advisor, Dan Augustino, Springfield Science Museum, Dan Wright, MA State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Markelle Smith, Director of Friends of Conte and Conservation Partnerships Director with Mass Audubon, Cynthia Sommers, President, Friends of Fannie Stebbins, Kristen Sykes, AMC Executive Director of Southern NE Conservation Projects and Partnerships, Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director, Kestrel Land Trust, and David Santomenna, Senior Director of Land Conservation, Mass Audubon. The meeting provided an opportunity to highlight key projects, conservation accomplishments, and discuss plans for future work within the Connecticut River Watershed.

It was a beautiful fall afternoon, perfect for spending time outdoors, celebrating collaborative work made possible by everyone involved.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS

A Close Up View From Fannie Stebbins



Visitors to the Fannie Stebbins Unit will now have a close-up look at wildlife as seen from the viewing platform. Refuge staff installed a free accessible viewing scope at, allowing visitors to see wildlife in their natural habitat a little more closely. Reports of the scopes being used just after being installed was welcome news! Be sure to check it out!

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS