



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

#### Refuge Happenings

**September 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.*

#### Birding In Springfield Draws A Crowd



Photo Credit: USFWS

With tall buildings and traffic behind them, and the Connecticut River in front of them, participants at a birding and nature event in Springfield spotted gulls, egrets, great blue herons, cormorants and Canada geese. The birding and nature walk was attended by members of the community, and was sponsored by organizations in the Sustainable Springfield partnership, including the Springfield Library, Mass Audubon, and the Conte Refuge. Participants spoke highly of the program, and were surprised to see the number of birds and wildlife, which also included a groundhog and very large praying mantis! Everyone asked about future programs, possibly scheduled for the spring when bird migration is underway.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Grassland Management At Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

Mowing the hay fields at the Fort River Division is an important step in active grassland habitat management. This month, one of Conte's dedicated, long-time volunteers spent multiple days mowing the fields. Several species of birds use the grassland habitat for breeding and foraging, such as bobolinks, red winged black birds, tree swallows and barn swallows. In addition to mowing the fields, Conte staff conducted invasive species management, fighting unwanted vegetation including multi-flora rose and oriental bittersweet.

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#### Story Walks At McKinney



Photo Credit: USFWS

Looking for something different you can do with your kids? The Salt Meadow Unit at S.B. McKinney Refuge in Westbrook, CT now has a story walk for families to enjoy while spending time outside at the refuge. This month, visitors can read the stories *Honk! Honk! A Story of Migration* by Mick Manning and *A Day in the Salt Marsh*, by Kevin Kurtz and Consie Powell. The stories will change periodically throughout the year for visitors to enjoy.

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### Jessup's Milkvetch Restoration



Photo Credit: USFWS

Jessup's milkvetch is a federally listed species that is endemic to the Upper Connecticut River watershed. Jessup's milkvetch seedlings were planted in the spring of 2022 to augment current populations at various sites along the Connecticut River. Volunteers watered these seedlings and tracked their survival throughout the summer. Due to their efforts, there was a high survival rate across all sites, including 75 percent survival on refuge lands.

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### Meet Our Newest Refuge Member



Photo Credit: Beth Amendola/  
Audubon CT

This young fledgling American oystercatcher was born on Menunketesuck Island - part of the S. B. McKinney Refuge's Salt Meadow Unit. Our Audubon partners (who are trained and permitted professionals) banded this bird on August 26th. The bands are on the upper legs, are yellow, and read N73. Its parents are also banded - Yellow N49 and Yellow N50. They should be heading out to migrate south soon. If you see these birds or any other American oystercatcher with bands, please report them to this website: [http://ancperch.org/amoy/public\\_menu.php](http://ancperch.org/amoy/public_menu.php).

For more information contact: [Shaun\\_Roche@fws.gov](mailto:Shaun_Roche@fws.gov)

### Vermont Forest Roundtable Presentation



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conceived of and convened by Vermont Natural Resource in 2006, the Roundtable is a venue for the exchange of information relating to forest policy, and keeping Vermont's forests as forests, with particular attention focused on addressing parcelization and forest fragmentation. In September, the annual Vermont Forest Roundtable meeting was held in Waitsfield, VT. At the annual meeting, Refuge staff provided a presentation about the ongoing Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change research at the Nulhegan Basin Division.

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### Community Shows Support For Cleaning The Fort River



More than one hundred enthusiastic community members showed their support for a healthy environment by volunteering for the annual Fort River Clean Up Day this month. Teams of volunteers dispersed to various locations along the river, which runs through 5 towns, including the Fort River Division of the Conte Refuge, cleaning up trash and debris found along roadsides and the river's edge. The clean up is part of a larger, Source To Sea clean up event, sponsored by the Connecticut River Conservancy, which places volunteers in locations throughout the entire Connecticut River. Conte Refuge staff helped coordinate and participated in the successful Fort River event.

For more information contact: [Jennifer.Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Lapis@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: Christine Hatch/FRWA

### Muddy Study!



Photo Credit: USFWS

Hydrologists from the Service's Northeast regional team spent time this month working in the marsh at the S.B. McKinney Salt Meadow Unit in Westbrook, CT. The team is trying to determine depth of the marsh creeks at certain tide levels, how long the higher parts of the marsh stay submerged, and other data related to marsh habitat. Many things can impact how well a marsh ecosystem functions. One factor that determines health of the Salt Meadow marsh is the railroad that has transected the marsh for over a hundred years, and the narrow railroad bridge that allows the tide to drain into the Sound. The bridge is scheduled to be replaced in the next several years, so studying the health of the habitat now will help determine how best to build a new bridge.

For more information contact: [Shaun\\_Roche@fws.gov](mailto:Shaun_Roche@fws.gov)

### Weather Station Maintenance



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Nulhegan Basin Division is home to a Remote Automatic Weather Stations. This is one of more than 2,200 such stations strategically placed around the US. These stations monitor the weather and provide weather data that assists land management agencies with a variety of projects such as monitoring air quality, rating fire danger, and providing information for research applications. To accurately measure particular weather variables, the station's surrounding must be free of tall vegetation. In September, Refuge staff cleared the area around the station to more easily maintain vegetation growth into the future.

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