



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 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.

Exploring Nature With Community First!

Getting outside and exploring nature is a priority for the staff and students at the Community First School in Hartford, CT. This month Conte Visitor Service staff visited the school each week, engaging with students on a variety of topics. In the 5 visits to the school, students went birding in Keney Park, learned about how animals survive in winter, caught fish at the Keney Park pond, and played games that taught them about animal tracks, and the differences between reptiles and amphibians. We look forward to continuing our fun and educational programs with all the students.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS

Lessons On Pets VS Wild Animals!

Pre-K students from the Indian Orchard School in Springfield, MA learned about the differences between the domestic animals we have as pets, and wild animals seen in nature. After reading a book about having a cat as a pet, Park Ranger Daniels spoke with students about their own pets at home, and wild animals they may see outside. Students played an interactive game comparing the differences between pets and wild animals, while also learning about the importance of not releasing pets into the wild, and not taking wild animals for pets.



Photo: USFWS

For more information contact: Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 2024

Making Windows More Visible To Our Birds!

Members of the New Haven Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership came together this month to install bird collision deterrents on the windows of the East Rock Ranger Station at East Rock Park, New Haven, CT. Each year, tens of thousands of birds in our region accidentally collide with windows because they don't realize the glass is even there. Many of these strikes result in the bird's death. As a wildlife partnership within a USFWS Urban Bird Treaty city, we are taking the first steps in what we hope will be a larger effort city-wide to mitigate bird strikes. Partners participating in the project included McKinney Refuge, Audubon Connecticut, New Haven Parks, New Haven Youth & Recreation, Common Ground High School, Urban Farm and Environmental Education Center, the USFWS Coastal Program, and Lights Out Connecticut.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS

Innovative Pathways To Careers: Environmental Science

This year, The Renaissance School of Springfield, MA received the Innovation Careers Pathways designation by the State of Massachusetts. The program focuses on careers in Environmental Science and Environmental Activism. Conte Staff was invited to take part in this newly designed program this fall, and worked with both students and teachers on a forest monitoring project in the Abbey Brook Conservation area. Each week of the 9 week long class, students heard from experts in the field of water quality, invasive species, soil science, urban forestry and other ecological concepts. Students then put this knowledge into practice on the plots they were monitoring in the conservation area.



Photo: USFWS

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 2024

Beaver Deceiver Aids Water Management

Staff from NH Fish and Game, NH Trails Bureau, USFWS, and the Jefferson Conservation Commission met to discuss water management along the Presidential Recreational Trail which runs along the 6,5000-acre Pondicherry Division in New Hampshire. A fifth beaver deceiver device was installed at the Pondicherry Division, which allows beavers and water flowage to coexist with infrastructure, and in this case, the Presidential Recreation Trail. Skip Lisle of Beaver Deceivers International of Springfield, Vermont, installed the device. The Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail and Friends of Pondicherry funded the device and installation. Staff from NH Fish and Game.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



Photo: David Govatski



Photo: D Andersoni

18th Annual Pondicherry Big Sit

Twenty-six species of birds were recorded at the 18th annual Big Sit at the Pondicherry Division. Participants had a hard time hearing birds due to the strong winds. Of particular interest this year was a Northern shoveler. Since its beginning in 2007 at Pondicherry, Big Sit participants have recorded 91 species of birds.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov





U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 2024

Motus Tower

New Hampshire Audubon set up a mobile MOTUS tower for the fall migration at the Pondicherry Division. The MOTUS tower will be deployed throughout the fall to pick up the signals of tagged migrants passing by the White Mountains. The Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) is an international collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry to facilitate research and education on the ecology and conservation of migratory animals. Motus is a program of Birds Canada in partnership with collaborating researchers and organizations.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov



Photo: Dave Govatski



Photo: USFWS

Refuge System Leadership Visits Nulhegan Basin

Conte Refuge staff provided a tour of the Nulhegan Basin to members of the National Wildlife Refuge System Leadership Team, who represent National Wildlife Refuges both in the Northeast Region and across the country. The tour focused on the ongoing Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change research, Northern Forest Inflation Reduction Act aquatic and terrestrial restoration, and ongoing wildlife management/research. The beautiful weather this year did not disappoint, with the spectacular views of the mountains and vibrant fall colors.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov





U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 2024

Nulhegan Visitor Center Gets Facelift

A contract was awarded to Briar Marker to paint the Nulhegan Basin Office and Visitor Center. Due to the last two summers being abnormally wet, it was a challenge to schedule the exterior painting contract. Two employees from the company painted the entire building over the course of a week.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS

Second Chances: Old Golf Course Becomes Valued Wildlife Habitat

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program recently undertook a significant habitat restoration project at the 150 acre abandoned Hickory Ridge Golf Course in Amherst, MA. A large portion of the work involved removing five culverts that had been disrupting natural water flow. This collaborative restoration effort focused on revitalizing ecosystems that provide crucial habitat for several at-risk species. By removing these culverts, the program aims to improve water quality, reconnect floodplains, restore fish passage, and create a more resilient landscape. This project highlights a commitment to enhance natural environments for species conservation, addressing issues caused by past land use, and promoting biodiversity in area impacted by human development.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS





U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte

National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings: October 2024

Helping To Fight Fires

Conte Refuge's Maintenance Specialist Chad Roderick was deployed this month to assist with fighting the Rail Ridge Fire in Prineville, Oregon. As a Heavy Equipment Boss (in training), Chad oversaw the safe operation of equipment, such as cut shovels, log loaders, timber processors, excavators, and forwarders, which were used to create a hundred-foot shaded fuel break, which helps to contain the spread of fire. The fire was originally started by lightning and has already burned 176,619 acres.

For more information contact: Chad_Roderick@fws.gov



Photo: USFWS

Reading The Marsh

Since 2015 wildlife biologist Kristina Vagos has studied marsh elevation levels in the S. B. McKinney NWR. This month, assisted by Park Ranger Shaun Roche, they made their annual trek into the marsh to collect elevation data using a surface elevation table, or SET. Simply put, SETs consist of long rods that are driven into the marsh, a reader arm, and a set of pins that are used to measure the elevation of the marsh. With these devices – which are located in several areas of refuge marshes in Westbrook and Stratford - we measure the elevation over time to see whether our marshes are being built up or eroding away. This is important when trying to figure out the effects of sea-level rise on our refuges and on the wildlife that live in our marshes. The information is important data that contributes to research happening up and down the Atlantic coast.



Photo: USFWS/Shawn Roche

For more information contact: Kristina_Vagos@fws.gov