



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

August 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.*

Flowing Streams Support Outdoor Education



The Conte Refuge, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Fisheries and Aquatic Connectivity Programs worked with The Hartsbrook Waldorf School in Hadley, MA on the first phase of improving habitat for wildlife on the school grounds. A small team worked to restore a brook on campus and installed a low water crossing to improve access to grasslands on the property. One of the many goals of the project is to engage students at the school in habitat restoration techniques, as well as supporting their continued use of school grounds as an outdoor classroom.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

New Partnerships Expand Community Reach



Conte Refuge Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership program saw an increase in partnerships, programs, and participants this summer. With several new partners, in both Springfield, MA and Hartford, CT, Conte Staff expanded our reach within these communities, working with new youth organizations to engage young people in a variety of outdoor activities. Students explored ponds and vernal pools at the refuge, many catching frogs and learning about macroinvertebrates for the first time. Other students learned about bird biology and spent time birding in city parks, while others learned how to shoot archery using a safe, inflatable archery set. One highlight of the summer included a live birds of prey demonstration from a local bird rehabilitator, in which students got a close-up view of several raptor species. We are excited to continue developing programs and building relationships this upcoming year with all our partners.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Clean Up At Putney Mountain



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month Conte Refuge staff removed a truck load of old tires that had been dumped illegally at our Putney Mountain Unit. Unfortunately, illegal dumping is something that still happens on National Wildlife Refuges, detracting from quality habitat and quality outdoor recreational experiences. To help, please report any signs on dumping you might see.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov

Last Efforts to Tackle Water Chestnut



Photo Credit: USFWS

Tackling the invasive water chestnut is an on going battle. This month, Conte staff, joined by our amazing volunteer Denise, paddled through the ponds at the Fannie Stebbins Division to search for remaining plants that had grown since the last volunteer effort to pull plants earlier this summer. While much of the three ponds were clear thanks to earlier efforts, one section of the Division will definitely need some work next year. If you enjoy getting outdoors and being on the water, think about joining us on future pulls.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Law Enforcement Assists With Illegal Camping



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge law enforcement assisted Conte staff at the Mill River Unit in Massachusetts, to remove an illegal campsite from the property. The situation ended peacefully with the campers relocating to another location, although refuge staff were left to clean some of the items not removed from the campsite. Thanks to Refuge Wildlife Officer Jim Casey for helping with this situation at the refuge.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov



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Drought Hits Turtle Pond At Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Summer 2022 will be remembered by many people in Western Massachusetts as a summer with no rain. Unfortunately, the drought conditions affected not just people, but wildlife as well. Walking along the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail in Hadley, visitors clearly noticed the lack of water in the “turtle pond”, which is also important habitat for tadpoles (baby frogs). At one point during the summer the pond completely dried out, leaving tadpoles stranded. Refuge staff were able to move many of them to a neighboring wetland area, but unfortunately some did not make it. We can only hope for some wet weather to come and bring much needed rain.

For more information contact: Jennifer.Lapis@fws.gov

Outer Island Pollinator Garden Expands



Photo Credit: USFWS/ Shaun Roche

This month, staff at Stewart B. McKinney added 60 new native plants to the pollinator garden at Outer Island, expanding it further on the southeast side of the island. Plants include perennials such as wild bergamot, mountain mint, and thin-leaved sunflower, and shrubs like bayberry and beach plum. The native vegetation will feed birds, pollinators and will also be an attraction for our visitors. A HUGE THANK YOU to Jordan, Clare and Karen for volunteering to help us move, plant and water all the new plants. It was hard work in the summer sun, but worth it! Thanks also goes to the members of the Outer Island Fund Advisory Board, who made this purchase possible!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Pondicherry Aquatic Plant Inventory



Photo Credit: Dave Govatski

Local field ecologists inventoried aquatic species within Pondicherry Division's Cherry, Little Cherry, and Mud Ponds, and within the Nulhegan Basin Division's Lewis Pond. This inventory will provide baseline data including species composition and abundance, as well as locations of common, rare and invasive aquatic species. The ecologists are finishing up their field work, but an exciting find was rediscovering northern arrowhead, a state endangered species that was first discovered 115 years ago!

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov



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A Team Effort Removing Docks At McKinney



Thanks to all the volunteers, Conte staff, and Faulkner's Light Brigade members who helped take out the dock and gangway this month. The team effort made the project more efficient and everything ran smoothly.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS/ Deanna Broderick

Regional Moose Management Meeting



Conte Refuge staff attended the regional northeast moose management meeting at Dartmouth College's Second College Grant in Coos County, New Hampshire. The annual meeting was held to discuss ongoing moose research, habitat management and landscape level population management. In attendance were state biologists from Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont, the province of Quebec and the U.S. Forest Service.

Photo: Paul Cyr

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Great American Outdoor Act Deferred Maintenance Project



A four-person Great American Outdoor Act Deferred Maintenance Strike Team spent two weeks working on the exterior of the Nulhegan Basin Office/Visitor Center. The maintenance crew rebuilt the cupolas, replaced most of the trim along the roof line/windows, replaced rotten clapboards and re-flashed areas that required attention. A big thank you to the New Hampshire crew for their support of the Conte Refuge.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS



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Youth Conservation Corps End of the Season Celebration



The Northern Conte Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program wrapped up its season in early August. The six-person crew worked at the Nulhegan Basin (VT) and Pondicherry (NH) Divisions throughout the summer. The work focused primarily on repairing and upgrading trails on the refuge and general infrastructure maintenance. At the end of the season the YCC crew had an end of the year celebration with all the other 2022 conservation corps crews at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Woodcock Habitat Management



Refuge staff have been mowing woodcock roosting 'fields' in the three early successional demonstration management areas in advance of the upcoming deployment of satellite transmitters on woodcock. The research is part of a regional woodcock migration and habitat utilization project that is based out of the University of Maine. This is the third year that the refuge is partnering with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Nature Conservancy and the Wildlife Management Institute on the project.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS