



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

April 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.

Many Hands Accomplish Great Work!



What a treat we had this month when a large crew of staff from the Northeast Regional Office in Hadley volunteered to spend a day at the Fort River Division helping to prepare the refuge for spring visitors. In just four hours, the pollinator garden was cleaned for the 2022 growing season, the trail was shaped to better accommodate wheelchairs, walkers and strollers, a large section of the invasive multiflora rose was removed, 106 native berry producing bushes were planted and 15 cubic yards of mulch was spread along the planted saplings. A big shout out and thank you to all the folks who participated and helped refuge staff with much needed spring work.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Mascoma Division Infrastructure Inventory



In collaboration with Bear Hill Conservancy, WildLandscapes and Redstart Consulting, efforts are underway to collect baseline biological, ecological and infrastructure data for the Mascoma Division. Conte Refuge staff visited the division in April to survey infrastructure on the property. Numerous stone foundations, cellar holes, and stone walls are scattered across the property.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Cops & Bobbers, Hooks & Ladders Still Engaging Youth



Conte Refuge is so excited to be holding our Cops & Bobbers, Hooks & Ladders Youth Fishing programs again, after a COVID hiatus. This month we held two programs, one in Hartford, CT at Keney Park, and one in Springfield, MA in Forest Park. In total, we reached nearly 400 people between the two cities, making positive connections with nature and the outdoors, as well as with safety officials in each of the communities. Since our first program in 2015, the fishing events have brought smiles to many young faces as they hook a fish for the first time. The programs are made successful with all the partnering agencies in each community.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Interpretive Signs Installed At Fannie Stebbins Division



Refuge staff installed two new interpretive signs at the Fannie Stebbins Division. The signs explain the ecological and health benefits of wetlands habitats, as well as highlight several animal and plant species that use refuge habitats to survive. Thank you to the local photographers that donated their amazing photos to use in the signs.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Leopold Bench Installation at Pondicherry



The XNHAT installed two Aldo Leopold benches along the rail trail at Pondicherry on April 20th using llamas to haul in the materials. Each bench will have a QR code that describes a particular aspect of the Pondicherry environment. All of the benches are on the state owned rail trail that provides access to the refuge.

For more information contact Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Dave Govatski

Smile, You're On Camera: Spring Photo Contest



Get your cameras out! The Friends of McKinney Refuge are sponsoring a photo contest of pictures taken on the refuge or New Haven Urban Refuge Parks. Plants, animals, landscapes and people enjoying nature at the refuge are all acceptable subjects for your contest entries. Deadline for entries is June 30, 2022. To learn more or submit photos email friendsofsbmckinney@gmail.com.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Friends of SB McKinney



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Pondicherry Trail Clearing



Refuge volunteers worked throughout the month of April to clear downed trees from the trails at Pondicherry. Heavy rains and strong winds uprooted dozens of trees along the hiking trails. A big thank you to David Govatski, Joanne & Kevin Jones, Reuben Rajala and Susan Wentworth for all of their efforts to keep the trails safe and operational.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Reuben Rajala

Nulhegan Basin Division Tree Planting



Photo Credit: USFWS

A tenet of both restoration ecology and forest management for climate adaptation holds that ecosystems with a greater diversity of species is more resistant to change and better resilient in the face of change. The Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change research project at the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Conte Refuge has begun enrichment planting of four tree species within artificially created gaps. These species are thought to have occurred in these areas historically, but their abundance has severely declined due to past management practices. In total, more than 12,000 seedlings will be planted throughout the experiment. Seedling survivability, growth, browse pressure, and other attributes will be monitored for the length of the experiment.

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov



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Vermont Wildlife Photographer Donates Pictures to the Refuge



Tom Berriman, a wildlife photographer from northern Vermont donated one dozen large format framed pictures of birds found on the refuge. The pictures include black-backed woodpecker, gray jay, spruce grouse, evening grosbeak, barred owl and sharp shinned hawk. The pictures are being displayed on many of the walls in the Nulhegan Basin Visitor Contact Station.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Earth Day Celebrated At Springfield Museums



It was a pleasure to celebrate Earth Day “in-person” this year at the Springfield Science Museum’s annual celebration. Staff from Conte Refuge, along with members of the Friends of Fannie Stebbins participated in the event, hosting a table with information about the refuge, with fun and educational games and hands-on activities for visitors. The event brings together a number of different organizations that all have a connection to conservation and environmental health. It’s a great opportunity to connect with the Springfield and surrounding communities located in the Connecticut River Watershed.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Falkner Island Ready For At-risk Species Return



Photo: Jason Edwards

McKinney refuge staff and volunteers worked for many days this April - including two full weekends - to ready Falkner Island for its summer inhabitants. We expect 6,000 terns, including about 40-50 endangered roseate terns, to return to Falkner any day now. Before that happens, habitat areas needed to be mowed, nesting boxes placed, observation blinds repaired and the field station cleaned for the summer crew. Thankfully, the refuge's great volunteers and partner organizations came through with plenty of people-power to get it all done on time! Special thanks goes to the Southern Connecticut State Owls for sending 20 students and faculty this year!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov