



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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

**April 2023:** *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.*

### Celebrating Volunteers In April



April is National Volunteer Recognition month! We wanted to take the opportunity to thank ALL the volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to helping Conte Refuge reach amazing accomplishments. This year, volunteers helped with visitor service programs, fighting invasive species (e.g. photo of bagged garlic mustard), maintenance work, and collecting biological data. We could not be as successful as we are without all our volunteers! Thank you all!

For more information contact: [Dean\\_Rhine@fws.gov](mailto:Dean_Rhine@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: Gabe Siegel

### Earth Day Festivities



This spring, staff from Conte Refuge participated in two Earth Day celebration events in Springfield, MA, sharing information about the Conte Refuge, and the value our partnerships have in conservation and environmental health.

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

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Fishing Is Fun For Everyone!



The cold rainy weather did not stop nearly 200 people from fishing at this year's Elks Cops and Bobbers, Hooks and Ladders Youth Fishing event in Forest Park, Springfield, MA. Thank you to all our partners and all the individual volunteers for helping to put smiles on so many kids faces!

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

Photo Credit: Springfield Elks



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### **Springfield Sustainathon Success**



Conte staff was pleased to be invited back to the annual Springfield Technical Community College Sustainathon, which introduces high school students in the Springfield area to many aspects of environmental and conservation research and careers. Students from STCC helped plan the event and presented posters on their research, while high school students had a chance to speak with STCC students and career professionals about issues in sustainability, conservation, and natural resource professions.

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

Photo Credit: USFWS

### **Much Needed Trail Maintenance At The Fort River Division**



Conte maintenance staff, along with two FWS maintenance staff hired through the Great Outdoors Act funding, spent nearly two weeks making much needed improvements to the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail in Hadley. Visitor safety is the highest priority on this accessible trail, and at nearly ten years old, there were several areas of boardwalk that needed replacing. Thank you for the hard work of our team on this project.

For more information contact: [Dean\\_Rhine@fws.gov](mailto:Dean_Rhine@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### **Fighting Garlic Mustard At Fannie Stebbins**



A huge shout-out to all the volunteers that participated in the garlic mustard pull at our Fannie Stebbins Unit this month. Garlic mustard is a non-native invasive species that, if left to reproduce, will take over large areas of habitat, outcompeting native plant species. The plants must be pulled out of the ground before they flower and seed. We are so thankful to all the volunteers who helped with the critical project.

For More information contact: [Dean\\_Rhine@fws.gov](mailto:Dean_Rhine@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: Friends of Fannie Stebbins



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### Birding And Nature Walks At Fort River



Conte volunteer Bill Randolph led a series of “slow birding” and nature walks at the Fort River Division. Slow birding is based on the concept of taking time to observe birds, their behavior and other elements of their habitat, while moving slowly around the refuge. Each event was well attended with many folks attending multiple weekly programs. We are extremely thankful to Bill and his expertise, energy and dedication to share his passion and knowledge for birds and nature with others.

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

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Regional Refuge Project Leaders Visit Fort River



Refuge Managers from the Northeast Region met this month in Hadley at the Northeast Regional Office. The group took some time away from their meetings to visit the Fort River Division of the Conte Refuge, where they had the opportunity to sharpen their archery skills. Some Managers took advantage of the nice weather and walked the trails around the refuge as well. We are always happy to show-off our “little slice of paradise” within the Refuge family.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Shorebird Fencing Up!



It's that time of year again, when shorebirds are returning to Connecticut beaches, and we work with partners to install string fencing in order to better protect birds' nests that will appear soon. Our work in Milford went so smoothly this month thanks to awesome volunteers and partners - Jim, Craig, Michael, Lee, Deanna, Erika, as well as Matt from CAS and Will from Audubon CT!

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

Photo Credit: USFWS



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

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### **Friends Meet At Fort River**



The Friends of Fannie Stebbins held their annual meeting at the Fort River Division in Hadley this month. Prior to “conducting business”, the group toured parts of the Refuge, spending time at the pollinator garden, gathering ideas for when they develop a pollinator garden at the Fannie Stebbins Unit.

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

Photo Credit: USFWS

### **College Students Learn From Fort River Habitat**



For several years, Greenfield Community College professor Beth Moonstone has used the Fort River Division as an outdoor classroom and learning space for her students. This year, Beth’s students engaged in field studies around one of the ponds, taking inventory of the different plants and animals found in the wetland habitat. At first, most students seem hesitant to put on waders and get into the water, but once they “dive in”, they truly enjoy the experience.

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

Photo Credit: USFWS