



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

August 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.*

Congresswoman Balint Visits the Nulhegan Basin



Photo Credit: USFWS

Congresswoman Becca Balint visited the Nulhegan Basin Division in August. Refuge staff met with Representative Balint and her staff to discuss ongoing wildlife research, habitat restoration, climate change research, public access, infrastructure, and recreation on the refuge.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Managing Wetland Habitats At Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

In order to provide the best habitat for migrating waterfowl and other bird species, Refuge staff manipulated the water levels in the south pond at the Fort River Division this month. The drawdown allows sediment to compact, organic material to break down, and for the germination of high protein annual plants, which will be an important source of food for migrating birds during the spring. Species of birds recently seen using the habitat on their migration routes are great white egrets, wood duck, and sora.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Regional Director Visits Aquatic Species Passage Project

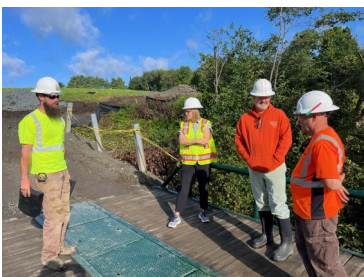
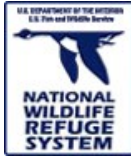


Photo Credit: USFWS

Kyla Hastie, the acting Regional Director for the Service's Northeast Region, took time to visit and speak with staff and partners working on the Beaver Brook aquatic species passage project in Vermont. The project, a collaboration with the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, improved fish passage for brook trout by removing an undersized culvert and replacing it with a 40 foot bridge.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov



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Canaan Conservation Commission Meeting

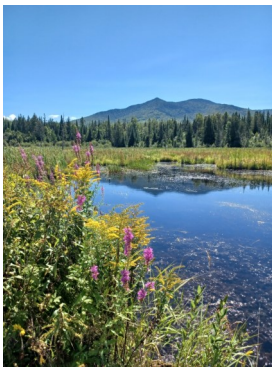


Conte Refuge staff were invited by the Canaan Conservation Commission to speak about the Mascoma River Division at a recent conservation commission meeting. The Mascoma River Division is a unique conservation partnership that includes the Bearhill Conservancy and WildLandscapes International. The Mascoma River Division has grown by more than 2,500 this year.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Controlling Invasive Species In Vermont and New Hampshire



Refuge staff are actively working to reduce the distribution of non-native invasive plants across the northern part of the Connecticut River watershed. In August, invasive plants at the Blueberry Swamp, Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions were removed through chemical and mechanical treatments.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Summer Butterfly Walk At Steward B. McKinney In Connecticut



Naturalist and Refuge Volunteer Tom Kelly led visitors on a nature walk at the Salt Meadow Division of the S.B. McKinney Refuge, showcasing the large number of butterflies swarming around the blooming flowers at the refuge. By the end of the hour long walk, the group saw a total of 13 different butterfly species.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



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Deferred Maintenance Projects Accomplished At Pondicherry Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff hired through the Great American Outdoors Act worked at the Pondicherry Division this month to repair the exterior of the crew quarters. The work included pressure washing the exterior of the building and rebuilding the wooden exterior staircases.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Deferred Maintenance Projects Accomplished At John Hay National Wildlife Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff hired through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) worked at the John Hay NWR this month to improve public access and safety at the refuge. Throughout the summer GAOA staff improved the foot bridge on the John Hay Ecology Trail and rebuilt the entrance gate to the Woods Trail. The John Hay NWR conserves the longest section of undeveloped habitat along the shoreline of Lake Sunapee in Newbury, NH.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Youth Conservation Corps In The North Country



Photo Credit: Dave Govatski

The Conte Refuge partnered with Northwoods Stewardship Center this summer to hire a Youth Conservation Corps crew to work at the Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions. The five-person crew focused on trail maintenance and upgrades, biological projects, and facilities maintenance. The Conte Refuge has been working with Northwoods Stewardship Center for over two decades to hire local youth and young adults to conduct trail maintenance and public use projects in northern New Hampshire and Vermont.

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Presidential Range Rail Trail Maintenance



In early August, Conte Refuge staff mowed the shoulders of the Presidential Range Recreational Trail. Mowing is conducted to remove woody vegetation and to reduce the encroachment of vegetation onto the gravel trail. Mowing was delayed until after the first of August, to avoid negatively impacting nesting birds and other breeding wildlife. The accessible trail receives roughly 25,000 visitors a year.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: David Govatksi

Road Maintenance At Nulhegan Basin In Vermont



The road network at the Nulhegan Basin Division continues to be improved to maintain and expand public access. Throughout the summer, the roads received a considerable amount of needed attention. Gravel was added to higher elevation sections of the Lewis Pond Road, while all of the primary public access roads were graded. In an effort to avoid negatively impacting nesting birds and other breeding wildlife, roadside mowing and brushing were delayed until after the first of August. Despite all of the rain that Vermont received this summer, all of the roads at the Nulhegan Basin Division remained open and accessible to motor vehicles.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov

Protecting Shorebirds On Eight Different Islands



Photo Credit: USFWS/Alexis Yashin

S. B. McKinney NWR acquired funding as part of a 20 year study to survey shorebirds on all their island units. Lily Messinger, the Falkner Island Tern Colony Specialist, was hired to work in this position, which involves traveling to all eight islands during specific tide times to collect data on species abundance and human disturbance. Lily has found American oystercatcher nests, killdeer nests and has discovered a federally threatened nesting pair of piping plovers. In addition, Lily will also be educating members of the public about her work and the value in protecting these delicate species of birds.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov