



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

## Refuge Happenings

**January-February 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.*

### Conte Staff Presents: Harriet Tubman's True Nature Presentation



Photo Credit: USFWS

In celebration of Black History Month, Park Ranger Tasha Daniels and Friends of Conte volunteer Denise Fiedler participated in the Springfield Science Museum's winter vacation week event. They presented information about Harriet Tubman, a conductor on the underground railroad and her keen use of natural resources to guide runaway slaves from the south to the north, to freedom. Harriet Tubman's knowledge of animal tracks and trails helped her navigate undetected through difficult terrain. The USFWS information and activity table provided interactive games for visitors to learn more about animal tracking. The visitors had to use a track identification card to determine which animal's tracks were in the pictures. The table had pelts and skulls of animals that Tubman would have seen on her heroic journeys. The story of Harriet Tubman and the interactive activities attracted over six hundred museum visitors!

For more information contact: [Tasha\\_Daniels@fws.gov](mailto:Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov)

### Frequent Refuge Visitor Paints Historic Buildings



Photo Credit: USFWS

A big "thank you" goes to Barbara Ann Kipfer, a regular visitor to the Salt Meadow Unit of the refuge, who walks the trails with her husband Paul. Barbara is also a talented amateur artist who recently painted a picture of Salt Meadow (which they call "their place") for Paul's birthday. In December, when Barbara found out that 2022 is the refuge's 50th anniversary year, she completed a beautiful new painting of the historic Lape-Read House (refuge HQ) and presented it to staff. It will now have a prominent place in the front hall of the building.

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

### Conte Corner at Fairbanks Museum



Photo Credit: USFWS

In January a new interpretive exhibit was installed at the Fairbanks Museum in Saint Johnsbury, Vermont. The newly installed 'Conte Corner' is a hands-on exhibit that provides information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and the Connecticut River watershed. The exhibit is the first of many collaborations between the refuge and the museum. Refuge staff are currently working with the staff at the museum to develop a Turtles of New England exhibit and an Illegal Exotic Wildlife Trade exhibit.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)



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### McKinney Refuge's Great Meadows Marsh Restoration Begins



Photo Credit: USFWS

The \$4 million restoration of one of Connecticut's largest salt marshes is underway. Excavation workers recently began removing tires, huge concrete chunks and other debris that were dumped in the marsh to create "solid ground" for development from the 1950-70s. Huge swaths of phragmites and other invasive plants and trees have been removed. The site's elevation is being re-graded to stimulate growth of healthy, native marsh grasses and raised hummocks have been created to encourage safer nesting for saltmarsh sparrows. There will also be better nesting spots for diamondback terrapins, and less hospitable conditions for mosquitoes to breed.

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

### Safety First—Snow Guards Installed



Photo Credit: USFWS

Maintenance Worker Brian Allen (left) and Refuge Operations Specialist Dave Sagan install snow guards on the metal roof of the arena building. Chad Roderick, Maintenance Worker, provides ground support to the operation by handing up snow guards and helping with the installation. Ice guards are designed to break-up large chunks of ice and snow that typically slide from metal roofs causing property damage or injuring people below.

For more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)

### Inspiring Students at Afterschool Programs



Photo Credit: USFWS

The visitor service team taught students at the Bowles Elementary School in Springfield, MA two lessons this month! On January 10, 2022 students were taught about food webs and how the cycle works in nature. Students then practiced these concepts by creating their own food webs using some of their favorite foods. The second program was presented on January 31st, and it focused on the different types of pollution created by humans and how pollutants affect water quality.

For more information contact: [Tasha\\_Daniels@fws.gov](mailto:Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov)



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### Stebbins Stewards Trail Work



A group of volunteers worked at the Fannie Stebbins Unit to blaze and reroute a trail to improve access and protect a rare plant community. This group of volunteers has done an amazing job this fall and winter keeping the trails cleared for the public.

For more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Pet Waste Disposal Station



Maintenance Worker Brian Allen (left) and Refuge Operations Specialist Dave Sagan install a Pet Waste disposal station on the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail. This station will make it easier for refuge visitors who bring dogs to the trail to clean-up after their pets.

For more Information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Motus Radio Telemetry Array Installed at the Nulhegan Basin Division



A Motus Wildlife Tracking Station was installed at the Nulhegan Basin Division. A second one has been located on the Fort River Division for several years. This new station uses automated radio telemetry antennas attached to a radio tower, and a receiver to record signals from passing telemetry tagged birds, bats and insects. Motus stations are located throughout the world to track migratory animals in an effort to learn about their ecology. This is a coordinated effort between researchers, educators and citizen scientists. Data captured from individual animals are uploaded and housed in a central database that is managed by Bird Studies Canada, a Canada-based nonprofit. These data can be analyzed and shared among partners and the public. To learn more about Motus, visit: <https://motus.org/>.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)



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### Osprey Platform Installed at Pondicherry



Photo Credit: Eversource

Eversource installed a 70 foot stand-alone osprey nest platform at the Pondicherry Division of the Conte Refuge. The structure was installed at no cost to the USFWS and was part of the company's electric utility pole upgrade project. Previously, a pair of osprey had nested on the cross arm of an electric utility pole. The existing pole was replaced in 2022, and the new pole no longer provided the necessary structure to support an osprey nest. Staff from the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, New Hampshire Audubon and the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Wildlife worked with Eversource to make this possible.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Mud Pond Trail Boardwalk Repair



Photo Credit: David Govatski

The Mud Pond trail is a popular year-round destination at the Pondicherry Division. The accessible trail provides visitors with an opportunity to experience a forested wetland and a fen (Mud Pond). Recently a tree fell on a section of the boardwalk that leads to the observation platform overlooking Mud Pond. A section of the boardwalk railing was replaced in February. In addition to the repair to the boardwalk, new signage was installed at the trailhead.

For more information contact: [Seve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Seve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Winter Snow Track Survey



Photo Credit: USFWS

Snow conditions were appropriate in February for Refuge staff to conduct a winter track survey. These surveys occur along linear transects within the vicinity of refuge cameras to document occurrence of Canada lynx. Surveyors use snowmobiles and snowshoes to assess tracks placed 48-hours after a snowfall or wind event. All species tracks are recorded in a notebook. Lynx tracks, if detected are GPSed, photographed and measured. Lynx were not recorded during this year's survey effort. Snowshoe hare and red squirrel were abundant, and it was noted that moose presence seemed to be low this year.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

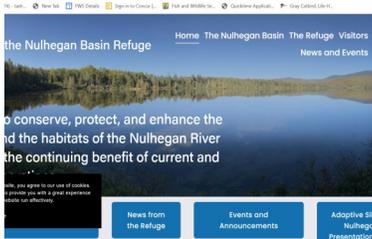


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### The Friend's of Nulhegan Basin NWR Website Online Now



The Friends of the Nulhegan Basin Fish and Wildlife Refuge's new website (<https://nulhegan.org/>) includes information for those interested in visiting the Refuge and enjoying its trails and overlooks, for those who want to learn more about the history of the Nulhegan Basin and River, and for those who want to know more about the wildlife and habitats on the Refuge and the many, varied work projects and research that are ongoing. In addition, updated news and event information is posted for public interest.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change- completion of timber harvest



Photo Credit: USFWS

As part of a collaborative effort to establish a series of experimental silvicultural trials across a network of different forest types, a variety of adaptation treatments were implemented at the Nulhegan Basin of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and monitored by researchers with the University of Vermont. Scientists, resource managers, and a variety of partners have developed a 550 acre trial site to research long-term ecosystem responses to a range of climate change adaptation actions within a lowland mixed conifer forest. The treatments are designed to test various approaches intended to increase structural complexity and species diversity within the forest, with the ultimate goal of improving habitat for specific wildlife species. Partners include the University of Vermont, University of New Hampshire, Dartmouth, US Forest Service, and the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. The timber harvesting component of the project was completed in February, 2022.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change Research Project at the Nulhegan Basin Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Approximately 20 members of the local community braved -45 F degree wind chills to participate in a field tour of an ongoing forest management project at the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Refuge staff discussed the land-use history of the project area, the origins of the partnership between the Refuge and academic partners, and the experimental design of the treatment. Tour participants spoke directly with loggers working for Stephane Inkel Logging, Inc. about their equipment and the difficulties associated with working in such extreme cold. To learn more about the research, visit: <https://forestadaptation.org/adapt/demonstration-projects/us-fish-and-wildlife-service-and-university-vermont-nulhegan-basin>

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)