



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

July 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.*

McKinney Refuge Celebrates 50th Birthday



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Stewart B. McKinney Refuge hosted nearly 150 people for its 50th birthday celebration on July 23rd. Visitors enjoyed live birds of prey, arts and crafts, face painting and henna with wildlife themes, an interactive children's book reading, air archery, and free ice cream and cake! Many visitors were drawn to the refuge for the first time by the event. Here's to another successful 50 years of conservation at the Refuge!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Bird Monitoring Program Gets Media Attention



Photo Credit: USFWS

For the past seven years, Randy Dettmers and Caleb Spiegel, from the Region's Division of Migratory Birds have hosted a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station at the Fort River Division. This year, thanks to our Division of External Affairs, the program garnered some media attention from two local outlets, New England Public Media (NPR), and the Daily Hampshire Gazette. Reporters and photographers joined the group on an early Friday morning in July to interview Randy and Caleb, as well as several of the students and volunteers helping with the project. The media coverage will hopefully bring more awareness to the plight of declining populations of migratory song birds and inspire people to help protect and conserve these fragile animals.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Recognizing Contributions Of Latinos in Conservation



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month Conte Refuge recognized Latino Conservation Week, a dedicated time to support the Latino community getting outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources. Hispanic Access Foundation Intern Ashley Castillo coordinated a family event at the Fort River Division that introduced visitors, in both Spanish and English, to a variety of wildlife seen at the refuge. Ashley's event included Latino foods from a local restaurant and crafts for the kids. We are thankful for all Ashley's great work at the refuge this summer and what she will bring to the world of conservation as she progresses in her career.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Pond Exploration Makes A Splash At The Refuge



This summer, the Fort River Division played host to more than one hundred students from both the Springfield Boys and Girls Club and the Springfield South End Community Center as they explored the diversity of life that makes the wetlands habitat at the refuge their homes. Students learned about the importance and value of wetlands for wildlife and for people, while also getting the chance to look for macroinvertebrates, frogs, tadpoles and a number of other wetland inhabitants. Students loved putting on waders and getting into the water with nets and buckets, many doing this for the very first time.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Smiling Veterans Are Fishing Again



For the first time since the COVID Pandemic hit in early 2020, Veteran's from the VA in Leeds, MA arrived at the Cronin Aquatic Resource Center to spend quality time outdoors fishing in Veteran's Pond. The outing was a much needed adventure after most of the VA's off-site programs had been suspended for the past two and a half years. Even more exciting was the number of brook trout reeled in by smiling participants. Also deserving attention are the volunteers who assist with program, without whom the event would not take place. We are looking forward to at least one more program this year.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

North Conte Youth Corps Makes A Difference



This summer, The Northwoods Youth Conservation Corps worked on numerous projects, making needed improvement throughout the refuge. Accomplishments included trail improvements in both New Hampshire and Vermont, which entailed removing downed trees, clearing brush, and replacing sections of a rotten bog bridge. A notable project they completed was constructing a public bike service station along the Presidential Rail Trail at the Pondicherry Division.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Bob Holdsworth



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Beardsley Zoo Conservation Volunteers Help Pull Invasive Spotted Knapweed



During the first two weeks of July, McKinney Refuge had the pleasure of having volunteers from the Beardsley Zoo help with invasive plant removal at Milford Point. They worked alongside our invasive plant intern - Jack Potash - removing spotted knapweed from the barrier beach so that native plants such as beach plum, panic grass, and a state endangered plant species, can grow and thrive. In addition to invasive removal, we toured them around Milford Point to show them native plants and wildlife that inhabit the area, as well as discuss refuge management responsibilities at sites like Milford Point. All in all, it was great having them assist with this project; they were a big help!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS/Shaun Roche

The Conte Cutter Strikes Again



The US Fish and Wildlife Service worked with First Light Power in Turners Falls, MA, to manage a patch of water chestnut in their generation canal. Staff used a specially designed piece of equipment we call *The Conte Cutter* to mulch water chestnut, leaving it unable to produce viable seeds for reproduction.

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Photo Credit: USFWS

Tern Chicks Running Wild



The chicks are going mobile on Falkner Island! As our colony of common tern chicks get close to fledging age, they are increasingly hard to track down for weighing and band-checking. This is encouraging because it means they're getting to the age when they can escape from predators without help from their parents and us, but it makes data collection a little trickier. We're now using "chick bins" to help keep track of chicks, so we can read off their bands and put metal federal bands on any newly hatched chicks. This has helped us reduce the amount of time we spend in the colony, and it also looks pretty neat!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Rainbows and Sunshine For Tiger Beetles



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Puritan Tiger Beetle (PTB) is a federally threatened and state endangered species in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Presently, only two populations are known in New England, one in Connecticut and one Rainbow Beach in the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. Much of their historically known habitat has been lost due to bank stabilization and irregular flow regimes on the River. Human recreational use and frequent periods of inundation of habitat from power generation may also negatively impact the tiny beetle. This month Conte staff joined Service employees from Ecological Services to conduct their annual surveys of the beetle population at the Rainbow Beach location. Survey results indicate that the Massachusetts population remains persistent, but unstable.

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Monitoring Pollinators



Photo: USFWS

Pollinators are declining globally due to climate change, pesticide use, and habitat loss. Recent and rapid bumblebee species declines has generated conservation concerns resulting in petitions for listing of several species under the Endangered Species Act. The Conte Refuge is participating in a regional pollinator sampling survey on divisions in New Hampshire and Vermont. In July, sampling stations were set up at the Blueberry Swamp, Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions of the Conte Refuge to assess pollinator species diversity on the refuge.

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Lepine Road Improvement Project



Photo: USFWS

In July, refuge staff began upgrading Lepine Road, located at the Nulhegan Basin Division. Over the years, the road has grown in with vegetation and was no longer accessible to vehicles or equipment. Road improvements will provide access for future wildlife habitat restoration and management projects in the central and northern sections of the property. Staff removed woody vegetation, added material to the road surface and replaced a large culvert in order to improve access. The road improvement project will continue throughout the month of August.

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