



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

May 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 Refuge Headquarters Moves Location



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month, Conte Refuge officially moved its headquarters office from Sunderland, MA to the Fort River Division in Hadley, MA. Refuge staff stationed at the Fort River Division will no longer need to travel back and forth from the Sunderland location in order to access necessary equipment and resources to do their jobs. It is a welcome change, making work at the refuge more efficient and streamlined. Staff working in our Nulhegan Basin Division and S.B. McKinney location all still remain in their current locations.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Partnerships In Hartford, Connecticut Continue to Grow



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge staff participated in the first Annual Butch Lewis Memorial Fishing event this year, which was held at Keney Park in Hartford, CT. Working with the Friends of Keney Park, CT DEEP and the Butch Lewis Memorial Fishing Event committee, refuge staff played an information and educational role at the event. Visitors to our table at the event learned about native wildlife and the role the Conte Refuge plays in conservation. Young anglers made fish necklaces and drew fish pictures while talking to park rangers about their favorite day of fishing. We were happy to be invited to this event and continue to work more closely with organizations in Hartford.

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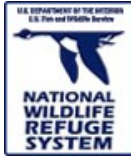
Installation Of Arch Culvert For Aquatic Organism Passage



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff replaced a failing corrugated metal culvert with a 6' wide arch culvert to improve aquatic organism passage at the Nulhegan Basin Division. The project is a continuation of ongoing work to install road crossing structures that are more resilient to severe weather events and to improve aquatic connectivity across the refuge. The new live bottom culvert is embedded with native materials to increase its utilization by native species. Thank you to Paul Thibodeau, Jason Young and Jeremy Goetz.

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Bee Survey In Vermont



Photo Credit: Kent McFarland

Ecologists from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies conducted a bee survey within conifer and bog habitats of the Nulhegan Basin Division. This effort is part of the Vermont Wild Bee Survey. The main objectives of this regional effort is to document bee species in Vermont, assess conservation status of species and identify habitats of statewide and regional importance. Approximately 40 species were documented in a one-day survey of the refuge including parasitic bees, bumble bees and miner bees. Another survey will be conducted mid-summer to document additional bee species.

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Youth Fishing Event



Photo Credit: USFWS

NorthWoods Stewardship hosted its annual Youth Fishing Event in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The free public event was an opportunity for local youth to fish a small pond for stocked brook trout. In addition to fishing equipment, instructions were provided on how to cast a spin casting rod and bait a hook.

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Vermont USFWS Managers Meeting with VT Congressional Staff



Photo Credit: USFWS

In May, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supervisors from across the state of Vermont met with Vermont Congressional staff at the Missisquoi NWR to discuss ongoing and upcoming projects throughout the state. The annual event is a collaborative opportunity to highlight biological, restoration and partnership projects that are taking place in aquatic and terrestrial habitats in Vermont. This was the first in person meeting held since the spring of 2019.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Adaptive Silviculture For Climate Change Tree Planting



Photo Credit: University of Vermont

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 14,000 seedlings were 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: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Stream Assessment For Future Culvert Replacement



Photo Credit: USFWS

USFWS staff from Hadley, MA (hydraulic engineer and fish passage biologist) conducted a site assessment of a failing road crossing on the Eagles Nest Road at the Nulhegan Basin. The structural integrity of the existing culvert (former RxR tanker car) has been compromised and new road crossing structure is being designed for the site. The site assessment included gathering topographic data of the road and stream corridor to aid in the design of a structure that is appropriate for aquatic organism passage.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

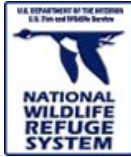
AND...THEY'RE OFF!



Photo Credit: USFWS

Two weeks of intern training - including motorboat operations, visitor services, biological protocols, and power and hand tool safety, took place this month with interns spending time the field and getting to work all across the coast of Connecticut! With their new skills, they build some beautiful new benches for the Kirtland Landing boat launch, which provides waterborne access to the refuge in Westbrook. Look for the benches in a few weeks, and look for our interns on the refuge starting today.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



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Prepping For The Birds



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff established a 10,000 square-foot moist soil test plot in the Moody Bridge Road wetland at the Fort River Division. A collection of native moist soil plant seeds were broadcast throughout the location after properly preparing the ground. This management strategy should attract more diverse waterfall species in the spring, as well as shorebird use when the mudflats are initially exposed in the summer.

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Black Ash Splint Pounding Draws A Crowd At Nulhegan



Photo: USFWS/

Black ash trees have been used for generations as a high quality pliable wood product that can be 'woven' into intricate products. In May, a cultural event was held at the Nulhegan Basin Division, teaching the public about pounding ash splints and the looming threat of the invasive emerald ash borer. Black ash (also known as brown ash) can be pounded to separate the annual growth rings from one another. The separated growth rings are pulled into strips called splints. The flexible splints are a versatile product that can be used to make an assortment of items from pack baskets to fancy decorative baskets. There is a growing concern that emerald ash borer will kill the majority of ash across the northeast and that black ash will be a species that disappears from the landscape. Part of the event focused on educating the public on how to identify the insect and its telltale 'D' shaped holes in ash trees.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov