



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

October 2021: *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.*

Stebbins Stewards: Making A Difference



Photo Credit: Friends of Fannie Stebbins

The Stebbins Stewards hosted their first outing this month at the Fannie Stebbins Division. This volunteer group was established to help monitor trails at the refuge, provide trail maintenance and provide refuge staff with updates on the condition of the property. This month a group of 6 Stewards worked with Refuge Partners Biologist Dave Sagan to learn more about trail upkeep. The group has developed a schedule and sign-up sheet for those who are interested in helping with trail monitoring. We are incredibly thankful to have such a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers to help us keep our public lands safe for everyone.

For more Information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Science Brought To Life At Abbey Brook



Photo Credit: William Decker

The Sustainable Springfield Partnership brought science to life for nearly 100 ninth grade students at the Renaissance School in Springfield. Working with the school's science teacher and science director, we developed a hands-on, real-world experience for students in the Abbey Brook Conservation Area, demonstrating the concepts they are currently studying in the classroom. We are thankful to members from the USFWS Division of Migratory Birds, Randy Dettmers and Caleb Spiegel, UMass Postdoctoral Researcher Desiree Narango, Volunteer Denise Fiedler, HAF intern Guillermo Alvarez and refuge staff for providing students with opportunities to learn about bird and insect research, water quality monitoring, and animal adaptations.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Lewis Pond Electrofishing



Photo Credit: NPS

Historically, Lewis Pond was a native brook trout pond. In the 2000s, smallmouth bass were illegally introduced into the pond. In October, refuge staff assisted Vermont Fish and Wildlife staff with sampling the aquatic diversity of Lewis Pond. The pond was electro fished as a means to collect and identify the diversity of fish in the body of water. Unfortunately, smallmouth bass have spread throughout the pond and 100% of the fish caught during the electrofishing event were smallmouth bass. Discussions are ongoing on the merits of restoring the pond.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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What Fuels You! Visits Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

Several locations of Conte Refuge were included on a national tour by award winning video producer Erika Gilsdorf. Erika's project, *What Fuels You!* focuses on what "fuels people to drive change in their own corner of their world". During her stops at national wildlife refuges, she interviewed staff and volunteers about their passion for working in natural resources. Erika visited SB McKinney, Fort River Division, and Pondicherry Division, and even participated in The Big Sit event taking place at the Refuge. Check out her project at <https://www.whatfuelsyouusa.com/>

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month Through Birding



Photo Credit: USFWS/ Guillermo Alvarez

Conte Refuge had the pleasure of partnering with Latino Outdoors Massachusetts this month, sponsoring a bird walk and education event in Forest Park, Springfield, MA. The program was designed for beginner birders, as well as families and community members who want to spend more time learning about nature in their neighborhoods. Fifteen participants enjoyed a beautiful fall morning in Forest Park, led by knowledgeable volunteers from the Latino Outdoors and the US Forest Service. Also provided were an array of educational materials from bird skulls and eggs, to feathers and sample bird calls. The Conte Refuge provided binoculars to those who needed them, as well as educational materials about birds and the refuge.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Connecting With Zeta Phi Beta



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff attended the Zeta Phi Beta sorority regional conference this month, held in Hartford, CT. As part of a nation-wide agreement with the sorority, Conte Staff spent time at the conference speaking with participants about volunteer and career opportunities, and ways that local chapters can visit our national wildlife refuges. As a fun activity, we set up an air archery game, which drew much attention from everyone attending the conference.

For more information contact: Rick_Potvin@fws.gov



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Reducing Wildlife Hazards in New Hampshire



The Conte Refuge worked with the New Hampshire chapter of the Back County Hunters and Anglers to help remove the remnants of a maple sugar operation on the Mascoma River Division. A small team of volunteers cleared thousands of feet of plastic tubing on about 4 acres which will reduce hazards to wildlife.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Final Steps For A Dam Removal Project



Employees from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Connecticut River Conservancy, along with several volunteers, revisited a dam removal site in Guilford, Vermont to complete the project. The team planted 150 plants to restore the vegetated buffer along the brook.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Maintaining Wetlands At The Fort River Division



Conte staff installed a culvert and water valve in the newly created wetland at Fort River Division. We are hopeful that rain and snowmelt will refill the pond for an active spring season.

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Photo Credit: USFWS



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Research Through INSPIRES Provides Valuable Data



INSPIRES (Leveraging Intelligent Informatics and Smart Data for Improved Understanding of Northern Forest Ecosystem Resilience) is a project funded by the National Science Foundation, which features a large, interdisciplinary team of scientists and educators across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The goal of the INSPIRES sensor network is to provide relevant data that advances science and monitoring of resilient forests, particularly in areas historically underrepresented by research investments, such as managed spruce-fir forests. As part of the larger INSPIRES network, sensors were installed in the spruce-fir forest that dominates the Nulhegan Basin Division. These sensors gather data that allow researchers to investigate seasonal changes in snow pack, soil moisture, and nutrient availability. Understanding how these metrics change under a changing climate will aid in understanding potential impacts to net ecosystem production and terrestrial carbon storage.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

McKinney Refuge and La Casa Refurbish Pollinator Garden



Shout out to Hispanic Access Foundation intern Shakira Jinez and the ladies of La Casa - the Latinx cultural house at Yale University - for a very successful replanting of one of our pollinator gardens in New Haven! The garden was established in 2017 and needed some new plantings. Now, the urban bees, butterflies and birds will be very happy when visiting Crown Street.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Westbrook's Kirtland Landing Has Gotten a Facelift!



The first phase of the Kirtland Landing boat ramp project is complete, giving a much-needed facelift to a public access point on the Menunketesuck River, and the waterborne gateway to the McKinney Refuge's Salt Meadow Unit. A USFWS MAT team used agency and Federal Highway Administration funds to remove overgrown plantings, expand parking and access, and beautify the site for paddlers, anglers, crabbers and others. Stay tuned for more updates on the work yet to come.

Photo Credit: USFWS/
Shaun Roche

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



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Predicting Density and Occurrence of Keystone and Umbrella



Photo Credit: Vermont FW

Refuge staff are working with a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Vermont to identify and predict structural conditions that are critical for both snowshoe hare (early successional) and American marten (late successional). The landscape scale data will be used to directly inform forest management in the region. In October, vegetation data from spruce/fir stands was collected as a part of the research project.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

American Woodcock Satellite Transmitter Deployment



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Nulhegan Basin Division was one of two capture sites in Vermont for the Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative, an international research collaboration led by the University of Maine to better understand the migratory ecology of the American woodcock along the Eastern Seaboard. This study is using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to track the seasonal movement and habitat selection of American woodcock as they travel from their breeding grounds in Canada and northeastern U.S. to their wintering areas in the southern part of the U.S. A total of six woodcock from the Division were captured and outfitted with GPS units in October. Field work was led by PhD students from the University of Maine. Visit www.woodcockmigration.org to follow tagged birds as they migrate to southern wintering grounds.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov