



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

September 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.*

Clean Shoes Help Fight Spread Of Invasives



Photo Credit: USFWS

In an added effort to help slow the spread of invasive species, Refuge staff installed a shoe cleaner at the head of the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail. The installation also includes an informational panel that helps explain why it's important for visitors to clean their shoes when entering and exiting the trail. Seeds and other parts of invasive plants and animals can stick to the bottom of shoes, then be spread to other locations. As stewards of our outdoor spaces, this is a small step that can have a large impact.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Educating Youth Outdoors



Photo Credit: Renaissance School

Members of the Sustainable Springfield partnerships worked together this month to host a field trip for 85 ninth grade students from the Renaissance School in Springfield, MA. Students participated in hands-on activities including mist netting birds, tree identification and learning about animal adaptation with pelts, skulls and live animals. Thank you to Mass Audubon, USFWS Migratory Bird staff, Springfield City Foresters, The Zoo at Forest Park, and ReGreen Springfield for helping make this a successful and fun learning experience for the students.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

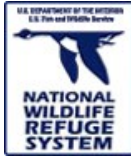
Improvements Made To CT River Paddler's Trail



Refuge staff made improvements to the CT River Paddler's Trail stop located at the Fannie Stebbins Unit. Work was done on both the information kiosk and the camping platforms where visitors set up tents and camping gear.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Hartford's KNOX Programs Visits Fort River Division



Photo Credit: KNOX

Apprentices from the KNOX program in Hartford, CT toured the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail with Refuge staff this month. The landscape and agricultural students learned about different management techniques used at the refuge to maintain optimal habitat for wildlife species. The group walked the accessible trail, spending time outside while learning about different ways outdoor landscapes are managed. Coming from an urban location, where they maintain gardens and urban landscapes, this tour provided the students with a different perspective of being stewards of our lands.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Conte As An Outdoor Lab



Photo Credit: USFWS

Professors from two local colleges in Western Massachusetts have used the Fort River Division as an outdoor lab for their students in environmental sciences. Refuge staff spoke with students about habitat and wildlife management practices, as well career opportunities in the natural resources. Students used the wetland habitat areas, grasslands and upland forest to learn more about ecosystems and biodiversity.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Be On The Look Out!



Photo Credit: Deanna B.

When S.B. McKinney NWR staff were in Milford this month, unfortunately it was not difficult to find the invasive spotted lanternfly that wildlife and agricultural experts have been warning about lately. Although eye-catching, this insect that originates in Asia, is quite destructive to native trees and crops. This time of year they are in their adult stage, and actively looking for places to lay eggs. One way to help slow the spread is to check your vehicles before traveling to other parts of the state or in New England. If you find a lanternfly, and are comfortable doing so, it is best to dispatch the bug by stepping on it.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



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Upper Black Branch Bridge In Vermont Gets A Facelift



The Conte Refuge maintains five public access bridges at the Nulhegan Basin Division in Vermont. The bridges provide year-round access for motorized and non-motorized recreation. The decks of the bridges are constructed of wood, and depending on their age, the deck timbers are replaced when they lose their structural integrity. In September, refuge staff replaced some of the deck timbers on the Upper Black Branch Bridge.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Vermont Congressional Staff Meeting



In September, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managers in Vermont met with staff from Congresswoman Balint's, and Senators Sanders's and Welch's offices at the White River National Fish Hatchery. Managers from each of the USFWS offices in Vermont provided project updates to the congressional staff.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Annual Road Maintenance Keeps Visitors Safe



The Conte Refuge manages more than 40 miles of public roads at the Nulhegan Basin Division in Vermont. The extensive road system requires maintenance on an annual basis. From replacing culverts to cutting encroaching brush along roadsides, the majority of the maintenance work is conducted in the fall after the breeding bird season has ended. This year, road maintenance was conducted along the Four Mile, Lewis Pond, and Tim Carroll Brook Roads.

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Planting Pink Into The Salt Marsh



S.B. McKinney NWR staff, along with partners from Audubon Connecticut and the Native Plant Trust planted saltmarsh pink (*Sabatia stellaris*) this month at the Great Meadows marsh restoration site. The project will help bolster this population of plants, with hopes of sustaining it into the future. This native species is an annual and is state endangered. Only one year post-restoration, this species has been spotted in several new locations throughout the site.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

A Tour Of The Light House Draws A Crowd



Over 200 visitors flocked to Falkner Island, off the coast of Connecticut, during an open house event sponsored by the S.B. McKinney NWR, Faulkner's Light Brigade and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Participants toured the inside of the historic light house and learned about the sea bird colony that nest on the island. We also want to thank Thimble Islands Cruise and Guilford Fire Department for their assistance with the event.

Photo Credit: USFWS/
Shaun Roche

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Wetland Management Is For The Birds!



Refuge staff fabricated and installed a water gauge at the Moody Bridge Road impoundment of the Fort River Division. The gauge will help us maintain optimal water levels for the growth of wetland and moist soil plants that provide habitat for waterbirds during breeding, brood rearing, and migratory periods. Since the creation of this impoundment, we have observed sora, wood duck, American black duck, American green-winged teal, Canada geese, green heron, great blue heron, great egret and other species of birds.

For more information contact: Brian_Allen@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Conte Refuge Takes Part In Multi-Year Pollinator Study



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 September, refuge staff completed the two year sampling at the Blueberry Swamp, Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions of the Conte Refuge to assess pollinator species diversity on the refuge.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Winter Trail Access Meeting



Bi-annually, land managers in northeastern Vermont, local snowmobile clubs and the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers meet to discuss winter access across more than 250,000 acres in state. In September, a meeting was held to discuss the upcoming winter season. With roughly 25 miles of groomed trails at the Nulhegan Basin Division, the Conte Refuge provides winter recreational opportunities for snowmobiling, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Because of the geography of the Nulhegan Basin, the basin's cold temperatures typically provide optimum snow conditions throughout the winter months.

Photo Credit: VAST

For more information contact: Steve_agius@fws.gov

U.S Senator Jeanne Shaheen Visits the Pondicherry Division in New



This month Senator Shaheen and her staff visited the Pondicherry Division in New Hampshire. The weather was picture perfect as Senator Shaheen toured the refuge and spoke with partners to discuss a variety of natural resource and conservation related topics. We are thankful that Senator Shaheen took time out of her busy schedule to meet with us, and enjoy the natural beauty of New Hampshire.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS