

**Silvio O. Conte National Fish and  
Wildlife Refuge**

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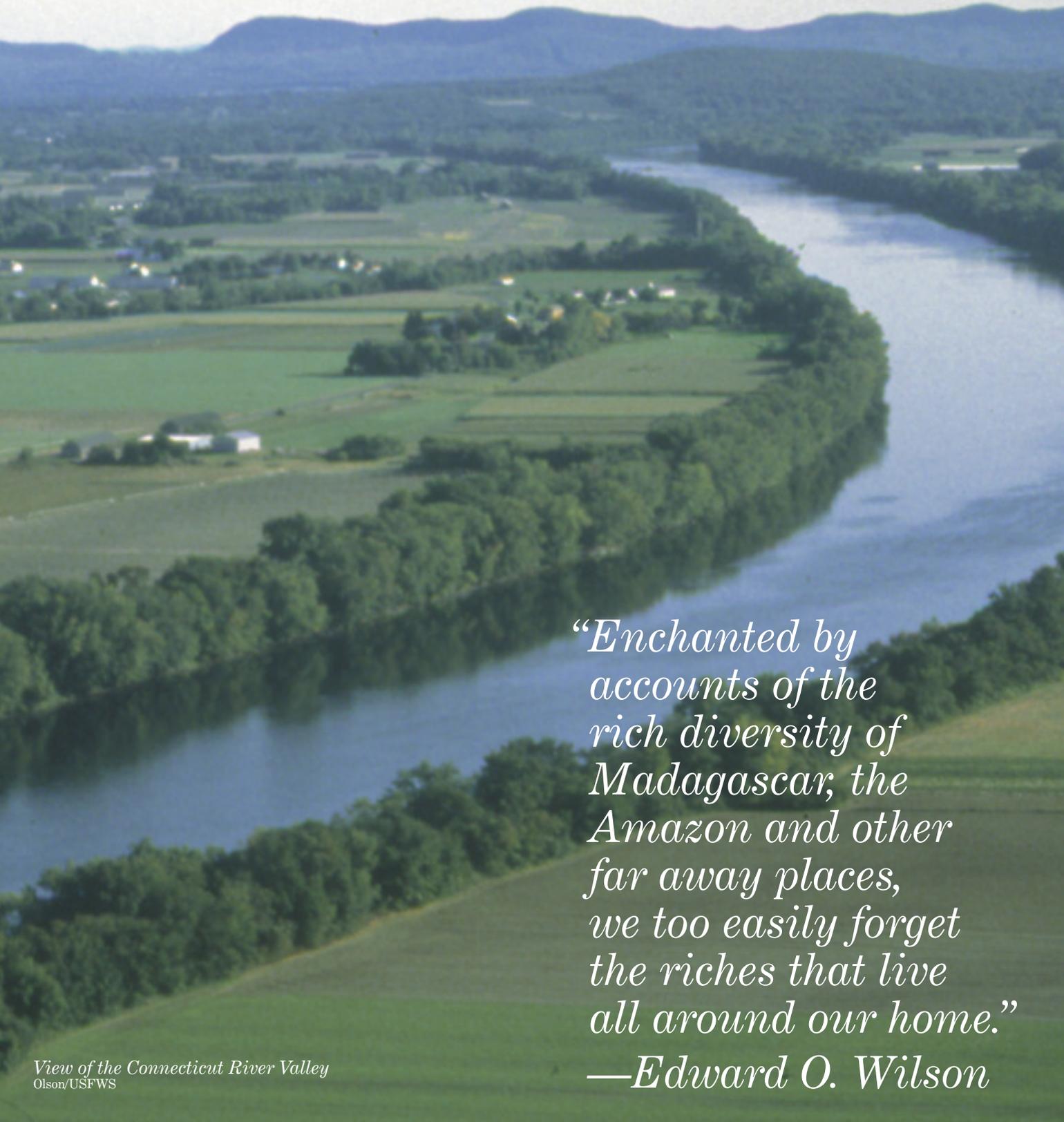
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Silvio O. Conte

*National Fish and  
Wildlife Refuge*



Cape May Warbler  
S. Maslowski/USFWS



*“Enchanted by accounts of the rich diversity of Madagascar, the Amazon and other far away places, we too easily forget the riches that live all around our home.”*

*—Edward O. Wilson*

# The Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge

CANADA

Working for the Watershed's Wildlife

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge conserves the variety and abundance of native plants and animals and their habitats throughout the Connecticut River watershed. Protecting plants and animals is quite a challenge in this 7.2 million-acre watershed, where hundreds of species and 2.3 million people coexist. Land acquisition, a traditional conservation tool, is limited to a few high priority sites. The refuge also uses innovative partnerships to improve conservation efforts, research important questions, foster conservation leadership and educate citizens about critical issues.

In these ways, the refuge serves as a leader and catalyst to help citizens protect the Connecticut River watershed's special nature and pass it on to future generations.



Cardinal flower



Timber rattlesnake



Bald eagle



Atlantic salmon



**Legend**

- ★ Education Centers
- Nulhegan Basin Division
- ▬ Watershed Boundary

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## Where the River Meets the Sea

The Connecticut River supports the Northeast's most extensive network of diverse, high-quality fresh, brackish and salt marshes. These marshes provide vital nurseries for marine fish; migratory pathways for salmon, shad, and herring; wintering areas for waterfowl; and nesting habitats for shore and marsh birds.

The refuge conserves these valuable areas by supporting research, invasive plant control, salt marsh restoration and habitat protection.



*Black duck*

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*Osprey*

USFWS



*Diamondback terrapin*

USFWS



## Underwater World

The Connecticut River and its tributaries provide a special underwater home for hundreds of animals, including Atlantic salmon, endangered shortnose sturgeon and rare freshwater mussels. Pollution, sedimentation and more than 1,000 dams impede these species' movement and survival. The refuge develops partnerships to build fish ladders, remove small dams, restore important habitats, control invasive aquatic plants and conduct endangered species research.



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*Mussel research*



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*Top:  
Fish ladder*

*Right:  
Invasive plant  
removal*

*Bottom:  
Shortnose  
sturgeon*



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*Underwater scene*  
Gilbert van Rykevorsel

*“The care of rivers is  
not a question  
of rivers, but of the  
human heart.”  
—Tanaka Shozo*



USFWS

*Wood thrush*

**The River's Edge**

Natural vegetation along the Connecticut River and its tributaries slows flood waters, prevents erosion and filters pollutants. Riverside areas are also critically important as resting and feeding sites for songbirds as they migrate. Through partnerships, the refuge restores river banks, controls invasive plants, studies these dynamic systems and educates riverside landowners.

*Opposite:  
Healthy  
stream*  
USFWS

*Belted  
kingfisher*



Isidor Jeklin

*Bank restoration*



VLC

## Pastures and Plains

Scattered throughout New England's extensive forests are grasslands, sandplains and shrublands. Many nesting birds, some small mammals and a variety of butterflies and other insects depend on these open areas. Unfortunately, these uncommon New England habitats have been reduced by urbanization, wildfire control and reforestation. The refuge encourages improved grassland management through assisting landowners with wildlife inventories, prescribed fires, alternative mowing schedules, invasive plant control and native plant restoration.

M. Fairbrother



*Gray hairstreak*

*Northern harrier*



Robert E. Barber

*Plant Restoration*



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*Prescribed fire*



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*Hay field*  
USFWS

## Woods and Wetlands

World famous for fall color, forests dominate the New England landscape. Oaks, maples and pines in the south give way to mixed hardwood and spruce-fir forests farther north. These northern forests, part of a 26 million-acre expanse of continuous forest, support some of the nation's highest densities of warblers and thrushes. The forest also harbors many wetlands, such as vernal pools, bogs, and beaver ponds. Frogs, salamanders, turtles,

dragonflies, herons, loons and ducks call these places home. Headwater streams provide habitat for young salmon and native brook trout. The refuge helps owners of large wooded tracts incorporate wildlife needs into forest management plans. The refuge's largest landholding, the 26,000-acre Nulhegan Basin Division in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, is managed in collaboration with adjacent landowners to provide many different habitats and public use opportunities in a 133,000 acre area.

*Opposite:  
Hardwood forest  
in fall colors*  
Charles Willey

*Young  
salmon*



USFWS

*Spruce  
grouse*



Robert E. Barber

*Black-throated  
blue warbler*



Bill Dyer

## At Risk

What do these plants and animals have in common? Each has been pushed to the brink of extinction. In addition, five other species in the watershed are also federally listed as threatened or endangered. At least 68 plants and animals have already vanished from the watershed; more than 300 other species are rare. The refuge conserves imperiled species by supporting research and management projects.



© Bill Byrne/Mass. Wildlife

*Puritan tiger beetles*—  
federally  
threatened

Once there were eleven colonies of the Puritan tiger beetle in the watershed; today there are only two. Researchers are attempting to reverse their declining populations.



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*Jesup's milkvetch*—  
federally  
endangered

The only place in the world to find Jesup's milkvetch is at a few sites along the Connecticut River. Scientists are exploring ways to save this plant, which is threatened by habitat loss and invasive plants.



© S. Middleton/D. Liitschwager

*Dwarf wedge mussel*—  
federally  
endangered

Dwarf wedge mussels have been lost from more than 70 percent of their known sites. Biologists have found two new large populations in the watershed and are working to protect them.



USFWS

*Northeastern bulrush*—  
federally  
endangered

Northeastern bulrush occurs on only a handful of sites in the watershed. The refuge recently purchased one of the areas to protect and manage the plants.



*Great Falls Discovery Center*

### **Come Visit!**

#### *Centers*

Overlooking the Connecticut River, The Great Falls Discovery Center offers visitors a walk through watershed habitat dioramas [Exit 27 from Interstate 91, Route 2 E, turn right at second light, cross bridge, building on right in Turners Falls, Massachusetts].



*Montshire Museum of Science*

Enjoy a walk along the Connecticut River and exciting exhibits at the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Education Center at the Montshire Museum of Science [Exit 13 from Interstate 91 in Norwich, Vermont].



*Great North Woods Interpretive Center*

Refuge exhibits at the Great North Woods Interpretive Center welcome visitors to the headwaters' region [Route 3, 3 miles north of Colebrook, New Hampshire].

#### *Lands*

Experience the northern forest and walk the Mollie Beattie Bog Interpretive Trail at the Nulhegan Basin Division in northeastern Vermont. The refuge also holds a number of smaller parcels in various locations. Public use opportunities vary. Contact the refuge for more information [Nulhegan lands: Route 105, between Island Pond and Bloomfield, enter at Stone Dam Road].

### **Part of a System**



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 530 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of plants, wildlife and wildlife habitat and is the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys, and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.