



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Highlights

January 2020: *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 island along the northern shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut.*

Introduction to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Habitat Management



Photo Credit: USFWS

In early January, thirty-five sophomore students from the North Country Union School in Vermont took part in an education program to learn about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Conte Refuge. Refuge staff discussed the ongoing Essex county winter deer yard survey and habitat management. As part of their education curriculum, students are assisting the refuge staff with snow track surveys. Thank you to the Coastal Program for the financial support to purchase snowshoes for the project.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Introduction to Native Wildflowers



Photo Credit:
Lyn Schmuker

Conte Refuge staff worked with twenty-two pre-school and elementary students in New Hampshire, who acted as botanists learning about native wildflowers. This past fall, each student selected and identified a plant and pressed it to preserve it. This month, each student worked with our refuge biologist to glue each species onto paper with the proper labels, indicating proper species, date and location collected, and collector's name. Each pressing was fit with contact paper and children talked about their plant during circle time before taking them home.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Winter Ecology 101



Photo Credit: Paul Cyr

Staff from Conte Refuge met with first grade students in the Kingdom East School District in Vermont to talk about wildlife and winter survival. Students learned about adaptation strategies that species use to survive throughout the winter

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Tent Tales for Tykes at LLBean



Conte staff recently partnered with the new LLBean store that opened in Hadley, Massachusetts in the fall of 2019. As part of the partnership, we were invited to be part of their weekly *Tent Tales for Tykes* program that engages young kids and their families around outdoor recreation and conservation issues. During our program we introduced participants to animal winter survival adaptations. We are excited to continue our partnership with another youth program scheduled for next month.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Expanding Our Springfield Partnerships.



Children at the Springfield Boys and Girls Club enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon learning about animals. Conte Refuge partnered with the Lupa Zoo, Ludlow, Massachusetts to present a program about animals. After listening to a story read by Conte staff, the group of five and six year olds saw a live armadillo, long-eared rabbit and baby capuchin monkey, all presented by Lupa Zoo. The children learned about the differences between herbivores, carnivores and omnivores while they had a chance to pet the animals. This is the first program in a series of three events scheduled at the youth club.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov

A FlyTying Extravaganza



Continuing our partnership with the Pioneer Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Conte Staff participated in their annual Fly Tying Extravaganza. Visitors to the event spoke with fly tying experts, watched demonstrations and had a chance to learn about the Conte Refuge. As a pleasant surprise for the evening, we had a visit from Larry Bandolin, the first Refuge Manager hired to manage the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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A Refuge Night Hike with Big Brothers Big Sisters



Photo Credit: Kestrel Land Trust

This month Conte Staff hosted a night hike at the Fort River Division with members from Big Brothers Big Sisters. Through a partnership with Kestrel Land Trust, who organized the event, five sets of “Bigs and Littles” enjoyed a quiet evening hike along the wooded Fort River trail. Although we did not see any wildlife along our hike, we were sure there were eyes upon us as strolled through the nighttime habitats. This spring the group will return for another walk and outdoor activity, and hopefully catch sight of the frogs, turtles and birds that call the refuge home.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Learning About Adaptations



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month we continued our work with Springfield Elementary After School Programs. One of the topics we explored was adaptations and survival. At the end of the lesson students created their own animals using paper mache. They had to explain what adaptations their animals had and how it helped them survive. The project was a huge hit with both the students and their counselors.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Stables at Fort River Division Removed



The 22,500 square foot stable building located at the Fort River Division was demolished and removed this month. It took seven days and nearly 24 dumpster loads to remove all the debris from the demolition. The footprint left from the building was cleaned, graded, seeded, and mulched and is now ready for the next growing season. At least sixty-five percent of what was taken away in the dumpsters will be recycled.



For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

During and after demolition
Photo Credit: USFWS



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Let There Be Heat!



Photo Credit: USFWS

Just in time for the next arctic blast of winter cold, we now have heat in our shop building located at the Fort River Division. Thanks to Conte Staff Chad, Dave and Max, who prepared the building just in time for the propane tanks to be installed. Each of the three bays in the building now have their own thermostat and heating unit.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Preparing For The 2020 Aerial Insectivore Nesting Season



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte staff are getting ready for the 2020 “birds to bats” aerial insectivore nesting season. In support of our education and outreach efforts, we will collaborate with youth, young adults and land owners to elevate the visibility and value of aerial insectivores. We are in the process of building a variety of nesting structures for a diverse group of animals, where young people can help monitor and learn about these amazing flying creatures.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Meet Steven Ochoa



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month we welcomed Steven Ochoa to the Conte Team. Steven was hired into a twelve month position at Conte, and will spend much of his time working with the Springfield Urban Refuge Partnership. He is one of several interns hired in the region through the Hispanic Access Foundation. Having been born and raised in Los Angeles, California, this is Steven’s first venture to the East Coast. He was initiated pretty quickly to New England weather with temperatures reaching only into the twenties his first week on the job. Welcome Steven!

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Volunteer Appreciation



Photo Credit:
Deanna Broderick

Patti Laudano has volunteered at the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge for more than twenty years. This month McKinney refuge staff surprised Patti at her “day job” at Westbrook High School, presenting her with a canvas tote embroidered with an American woodcock. Patti is an expert on birds and will be giving her famous woodcock presentation at the refuge again this spring. Thank you Patti for all your dedication and time to the refuge.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Friends Showcase Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge



Photo Credit:
Friends of Outer Island

Stewart B. McKinney’s Friends of Outer Island volunteered time during the Martin Luther King Weekend to showcase the work of the refuge at the Yale Peabody Museum. The Friends group set up interpretive materials that highlighted the work of the refuge, as well as the important role the Friends Group plays in supporting and advocating for the refuge. Thanks to the Friends of Outer Island, more community members are now familiar with our work and our conservation mission.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Conte Staff Participates in Law Enforcement Meeting



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge Managers Dean Rhine and Steve Agius both attended the annual New England Zone Law Enforcement meeting held at Park River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Regional Law Enforcement Chief James Casey and Refuge Supervisor-North Graham Taylor provided status reports and operational updates to all refuge managers in the New England Zone. Law Enforcement Zone Officer Steve Steniger moderated the session and reviewed prioritized law enforcement needs at individual refuges and identified upcoming visitor events at refuges where law enforcement officers could assist with outreach.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov