



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

July 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 islands along the northern shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut.*

Make Way For Purple Martins



Photo Credit: USFWS

We are already preparing for the 2021 nesting season, as we installed this purple martin nest structure at our Fort River Division in Hadley. Purple martins are aerial insectivores, and the grassland habitat at Fort River offers a viable feeding location. We will be keeping a close eye out for some new residence next year.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Kestrel Nest Box Project A Success at Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: Kestrel Land Trust

The Fort River Division of Conte Refuge is one of several locations in Western Massachusetts where Kestrel Land Trust posts kestrel nesting boxes as part of their Kestrel Nesting Box Project, which began in 2012. This year all four boxes placed on Refuge property had breeding pairs of kestrels. Project coordinators saw their highest numbers of used boxes this year, with 12 out of 21 boxes successfully occupied by kestrel pairs. To learn more about the project and opportunities to get involved visit: <https://www.kestrreltrust.org/care/kestrel-nest-box/>

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

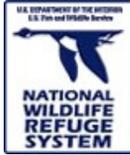
In The News: Barn Swallows At Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

A reporter from the Daily Hampshire Gazette paid a visit to the Fort River Division this month to learn more about the nesting barn swallows and other aerial insectivore projects at the Refuge. Refuge Manager Andrew French spent nearly two hours with the reporter, showcasing the artificial nesting structures, the live feed video cameras, the educational exhibit and other interactive features that connect people with nature.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov



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Native Wetland Plants Donated To Refuge



A local native wetland plants business kindly donated 750 great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*) plants to the refuge this month. The showy, bright blue flowers bloom in late summer and are recognized by pollination ecologists as attracting large number of native bees. We planted the small plugs around the wetland ponds at the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail and the Dead Branch Division in Chesterfield, MA.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Maintaining Grassland Habitat at Fort River Division



The Fort River Division provides valuable grassland habitat for a large suite of wildlife species. As part of our yearly grassland management practices we must mow a large section of fields at the division. The need to mow large hay fields is a perfect opportunity for the refuge to partner with local farmers who can use the hay for a variety of reasons on their farms. As in the past, we have announced the haying opportunity on the refuge and recently awarded the job to a local farmer.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Andrew_Fench@fws.gov

Nature Notes At Fort River Trail



This month we safely resumed our “pop-up” interpretive exhibits at the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail. More than fifty visitors learned about Puritan tiger beetle conservation and lady beetle life cycles at the interactive programs designed and conducted by refuge staff. Visitors have expressed their appreciation for the added activities at the trail and have shared some personal stories about what being in nature means for them. We will continue to offer these programs with visitor and employee safety as a top priority.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Partnering For Stream Restoration in Vermont



Conte Refuge partnered with the Connecticut River Conservancy and the State of Vermont on a stream restoration project that involved removing a dam and replacing a culvert with a more wildlife friendly bridge. The project took place on private land in Perkinsville, Vermont on a tributary to the Connecticut River. The restoration project will improve water quality and allow brook trout and other aquatic wildlife species to move more freely up and down stream.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Black Branch Boardwalk Project At Nulhegan Basin



The NorthWoods Stewardship trail crew completed the construction of an elevated boardwalk and observation platform at the Nulhegan Basin Division this month. The 300 foot long boardwalk is fully accessible and is part of the new auto/bicycle tour route that will allow visitors to explore the diversity of habitats that exist in northern Vermont.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Trail Improvements At The Nulhegan Basin Division



Trail improvements and upgrades are being completed by the NorthWoods trail crew throughout the Nulhegan Basin Division. The North Branch Trail, Nulhegan River Trail and Gore Mountain Trail are receiving much needed attention in 2020.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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A Team Effort At Outer Island



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month, McKinney refuge staff, helped by Outer Island Interns and two staff from Conte's Massachusetts Office reinstalled the Outer Island floating dock. Although the recent tropical storm may not have had a big impact in Connecticut, places like Outer Island are always vulnerable, and extra precautions are always taken just to be safe. Thus, prior to the storm we removed the floating dock at the island. The refuge manager thanked everyone who was involved in securing the dock and USFWS research boat and in putting things back in place efficiently and successfully.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Pavilion Upgrades At Fannie Stebbins



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff continued working on the pavilion located at our Fannie Stebbins Division in Longmeadow, MA. They added benches and have started adding a roof. Once complete, visitors will be able to enjoy the sites and sounds of wildlife while comfortably sitting in the shade or out of the rain. The pavilion will also be used for educational programs with a variety of school and youth organizations.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

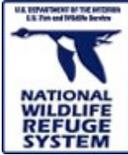
WoW Kiosks On Loan to Springfield Science Museum



Photo Credit: USFWS

The mobile educational kiosks from the Watershed on Wheels are on loan to our partners at the Springfield Science Museum. The kiosks are located with the museum's Connecticut River and live animal exhibits and add an interactive component to visitor experience while at the museum. Refuge staff will also spend time at the museum throughout the summer to help with interpretation and programs.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Improving Roads At Nulhegan Basin



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff are actively working to improve the roads at the Nulhegan Basin Division. The roads are open to the public and require annual maintenance to address water management issues and to improve road surfaces. With over 40 miles of gravel roads, the Nulhegan Basin Division offers outstanding wildlife viewing and recreational opportunities.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Nulhegan Basin Division- Yellow Bogs Orchid Survey



Photo Credit: USFWS

An orchid survey was conducted around the Yellow Bogs within the Nulhegan Basin Division. The Nulhegan Basin Division is the largest remaining intact lowland spruce/fir forest in the State of Vermont and protects exemplary wetland communities. These unique wetlands provide critical habitat for many rare species of flora and fauna.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Youth Fishing Event



Photo Credit: North Woods Stewardship Center

The annual Youth Fishing Day was held at the North Woods Stewardship Center. The event typically takes place on Mother's Day weekend, but due to Covid-19, the event was delayed to allow for the development of social distancing guidelines. The modified event was a great success and many families left with their limit of stocked brook trout. The Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery provided the fish for the event.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Conte And Umbagog Refuges Wilderness First Aid Course



Staff from the Conte and Umbagog Refuges participated in a one day wilderness first aid class at the Nulhegan Basin Division office in Vermont. The class covered first aid, CPR, AEDs, heat and cold related issues and minimizing risk in inclement weather.

more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge Law Enforcement Officers Keep Wildlife And People Safe



With the Conte Refuge being spread between four different states (VT, NH, MA and CT), it is not always easy to monitor or enforce regulations at all our locations. Given that there is no Federal Wildlife Officer assigned to the complex, law Enforcement officers from neighboring refuges cover the refuge and always try to quickly respond to needs, especially when it comes to the safety of wildlife and our visitors. This month officers spent time at our Northern New Hampshire Divisions investigating concerns about illegal camping, ATV use and illegal trash dumping, which are all hazards for humans and wildlife. Their work then took them to Southern Connecticut, where nearby residents of the Whale Bone Cove Division had concerns of people cliff jumping in locations up to 50 feet about the water. Since Refuge staff can not always be at every Conte location, we have the peace of mind to know that members of the community and our Law Enforcement Officers continue to work for everyone's well-being.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Steniger@fws.gov

Coming Soon: Mobile Law Enforcement Outreach Trailer



Steve Steniger, Federal Wildlife Zone Officer for New England, is leading a project to create a mobile law enforcement outreach trailer (similar to the one in the photo). The traveling exhibit will showcase the diverse work of wildlife officers and engage visitors with a number of hands-on activities that will introduce them to outdoor recreation and the important work of keeping wildlife and people safe, while spending time outside, and in particular in a National Wildlife Refuge. We are excited to have this new resource visit our many Conte locations once it is on the road.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Steniger@fws.gov