



## Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge om Refuge Happenings

**June 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.*

### Work Continues At Pondicherry



Photo Credit: David Govatski

Work continues at the Pondicherry Division, with improvements being made to the rail trail. Our partners from the New Hampshire Trails Bureau are using heavy equipment to complete the job. As part of the culvert replacement, they carefully placed heavy rocks, weighing hundreds of pounds, at the inlet and outlet ends to prevent the culvert pipe from lifting up from frost heaving. Once complete, the rail trail will be more easily accessible for people with strollers or using wheelchairs.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### A Family Affair At The Fort River Trail



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month brought us an exciting addition to the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail storybook series. A local family used the Fort River Trail as part of their home school lessons for their three children. Together, the kids wrote a series of Haikus about wildlife and nature they see on the trail. We matched each Haiku with a photograph and they are now displayed along the trail in our storybook cases for all the visiting public to enjoy. The whole family helped in putting the story out of the trail.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

### Relief For Visitors To McKinney's Outer Island



Photo Credit: USFWS

Thanks to the hard work of Rick and Allan, Outer Island has a portable toilet for visitor use. It will be changed out on a regular basis to ensure the most sanitary conditions possible for all users. Thanks also to our partners in Stony Creek, and at the sanitation company, for making this happen.

For more information contact: [Richard\\_Potvin@fws.gov](mailto:Richard_Potvin@fws.gov)



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### Migratory Bird Surveys At Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

A team of wildlife biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst are continuing the Monitoring for Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program this year at the Fort River Division. The program is designed to identify the underlying demographic causes of changes in bird populations and help direct bird conservation actions toward the life-stages that are most limiting population growth for different species. One thing we have already learned is that Fort River is not only a place that more than 30 species of birds rely on for breeding habitat, but even more species use it as a safe and enriching environment during the post-breeding period late in summer when birds molt their feathers before departing on fall migration.

For more information contact: [Randy\\_Dettmers@fws.gov](mailto:Randy_Dettmers@fws.gov)

### Teamwork At Fannie Stebbins Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

As refuge staff safely phase back into field work, the Fannie Stebbins Unit was one of the first locations we visited. Our team set out on a hot sunny day to walk the trails and remove fallen trees, mow around restoration project areas and post signs at the paddler's trail camp ground. Visitation at Fannie Stebbins continues to grow, with visitors coming to enjoy the peaceful sites and sounds of nature just a stones throw from a booming city. One positive thing we noticed while walking the trails; we found virtually no trash along the way! Thanks to the community for helping to maintain this National Natural Landmark.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

### One Ramp Closer To Completion



Photo Credit: USFWS

The outdoor classroom at the Fannie Stebbins Unit is one-step closer to completion. The Conte team has made the viewing platform ADA accessible with the addition of a ramp leading up to the platform. Now all visitors can enjoy the beautiful view or try their hand at fishing from the overlook.

For more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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### McKinney's Outer Island Is Now Open



After a short delay to complete important maintenance projects, Stewart B. McKinney's Outer Island is now open for public visitors. Visitors can follow a marked one-way route to explore the island on their own. University student interns were also at the island this month to provide basic visitor services, continue island research projects and perform cleaning and upkeep.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: [Shaun\\_Roche@fws.gov](mailto:Shaun_Roche@fws.gov)

### Fiber Optic Installation at the Nulhegan Basin Division



For the past 15 years, the Nulhegan Basin Division office has had a T1 line that provided phone and internet service. In June, the office switched to a fiber optic system. The new fiber optic system will dramatically improve the staff's ability to maximize cloud based internet programs and is more reliable than the former T1 line.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Vermont Congressional Staff Meeting



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managers in Vermont held a meeting with Vermont's Congressional Delegation in June. The annual meeting is an opportunity to update the congressional staff on completed and upcoming projects in the state. This year the meeting was held remotely due to Covid-19 concerns.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: State of Vermont



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### Upgrades to the New Hampshire Presidential Recreational Trail



The Presidential Recreational Trail at the Pondicherry Division is being upgraded in 2020. The popular trail is being resurfaced to improve accessibility for all mobility levels. In June, the drainage ditches were re-established and culverts were replaced to reduce the saturation of the base of the trail. Visit the website for more information:

<https://www.nhstateparks.org/visit/recreational-rail-trails/presidential-recreational-rail-trail>

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### Nulhegan Staff Improve Road Access



With over 40 miles of gravel roads, the road system at the Nulhegan Basin Division requires attention on a regular basis. After mud season ended and the roads dried out, staff worked to reset culverts and resurface roads. In the winter months, the road network is part of Vermont's snowmobile trail system. The Nulhegan Basin Division is popular for wildlife viewing, hiking, hunting and fishing.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

### The Return Of Jessup's Milkvetch



Staff from Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and Native Plant Trust planted Jessup's milkvetch seedlings this spring at various locations in the northern portion of the watershed. This milkvetch, a federally endangered species, is endemic to the Connecticut River. It requires rocky outcrops that are scoured by spring flooding and ice-rafting to remove competition. Conte staff are watering seedlings and monitoring seedling survival at three of these sites throughout the summer. This dry hot weather has been tough on the seedlings!

For more information contact: [Rachel\\_Cliche@fws.gov](mailto:Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: Native Plant Trust



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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### **Celebrating Everything Pollinators**



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge staff celebrated National Pollinator Week with a series of social media posts, and setting up an information and demonstration table at the Fort River Division. Visitors to the Fort River Trail learned about the importance and value of pollinators while browsing through the pollinator garden and making native plant seed balls to take home and plant.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

### **Keeping Up With Flood Plain Forest Restoration**



Photo Credit: USFWS

Now into the third season of our flood plain forest restoration project at Fannie Stebbins Division, staff are still actively maintaining the site to protect nearly 9,000 stems from browsing deer and other predatory animals. Staff cleared and maintained electric fence line surrounding five of the restored field, as well as cleared trails and for the public to be able to access this beautiful floodplain forest and National Natural Landmark.

For more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)

### **Removing Water Chestnut From Log Pond Cove**



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Conte Refuge, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Connecticut River Conservancy and Holyoke Gas & Electric have started our annual control of water chestnut in Log Pond Cove in Holyoke Massachusetts. This year refuge staff have refined the “Conte Cutter” to mechanically mulch water chestnut before it goes to seed in this 27 acre cove.

For more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)



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### Eagle Scout Coordinates Invasive Plant Removal From Stebbins Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

A member of Longmeadow's Boy Scout Troop 90 completed his Eagle Scout project by coordinating and executing the removal of water chestnut at the Fannie Stebbins Division. Water chestnut is a non-native invasive plant, that once established in waterways, can decimate the health of the natural ecology. Eagle Scout Charlie recruited volunteer help from his troop and coordinated all the materials and approval process. Thank you Charlie for making conservation of our natural resources an important part of your Scouting legacy.

more information contact: [David\\_Sagan@fws.gov](mailto:David_Sagan@fws.gov)

### Scanning The Waters



Photo Credit: USFWS

Thanks to the City of Northampton's Health Department for assisting at our Mill River Division. This month we scouted two small bodies of water for the presence of cyanobacteria, which can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and other animals. Although we did not find any obvious signs of the algae, we DID discover a few stocks of water chestnut, an invasive and highly aggressive water plant, which we promptly removed. Refuge staff will continue working with partners to monitor the area for both of these harmful invaders.

For more information contact: [Dean\\_Rhine@fws.gov](mailto:Dean_Rhine@fws.gov)

### Bat Cam At Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

A modified bat maternity box at the Fort River Division will allow us to get a sneak peak of what takes place inside these tight and dark nesting spots. We are using the infrared feature of our security cameras to live stream video to the aerial insectivore exhibit at the Fort River trailhead kiosk. We are keeping our fingers crossed that some female bats will find this new box cozy enough to raise her young.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)









