



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

September 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.*

Conte Refuge is growing!



Photo Credit: USFWS/ Tom Geser

The Conte Refuge recently received funding through the 2020 Migratory Birds Conservation Fund for the acquisition of two tracts, totaling 62 acres, adding to our Salmon River Division in Connecticut. The 62 acres proposed for acquisition are bisected by Pine Brook, a tributary to the Salmon River, and contain extensive shrub and emergent wetlands. The project will protect habitat for waterfowl, including American black ducks and wood ducks, as well as for wading birds and other migratory birds, and provide public opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Interpretive Signs Now At Fannie Stebbins



Photo Credit: USFWS

Visitors to the Fannie Stebbins Division will now have more to enjoy while they walk the trails. This month refuge staff placed several interpretive panels around the refuge, which highlight the restoration work and importance of flood plain forest habitat for wildlife and biodiversity.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

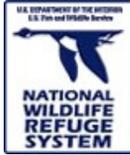
Fannie Stebbins Outdoor Classroom Nears Completion



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge staff spent time this month working on the roof and installing benches and railings on the overlook at the Fannie Stebbins Division in Longmeadow, MA. The structure provides visitors with a front row seat to wildlife viewing and will be the site of future educational programs at the refuge.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Refuge Staff Participate In Source To Sea



Photo Credit: USFWS

This year's Source To Sea clean-up was run a little different than in the past. Instead of holding a one day community event, coordinators at Connecticut River Conservancy encouraged groups and individuals to choose any day within the month of September to make their contributions. Some Conte Refuge staff and volunteers gladly participated in the clean up this year, cleaning a section of the Fort River just upstream from where it flows through the Refuge's Fort River Division. The Fort River Watershed Association, a group of concerned citizens, helped organize the clean up along the Fort River, which flows through five towns. After just two hours we hauled out several bags of trash and even an old bike.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Breaking Bad: Law Enforcement Continues On Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS/Steve Steniger

Federal Wildlife Officers were kept busy this month on several Conte Refuge locations. A stolen camper was found at the Nulhegan Division. Officers located the rightful owner who promptly removed it from the refuge. Also at Nulhegan, one of the kiosks was vandalized causing several hundred dollars worth of damage. Moving to New Hampshire, officers continue to investigate and find illegal camping sites at the Mascoma River Division. Campers build illegal fires, which in itself is a huge danger for possible wildfires during this year's dry weather.

For more information contact: Steve_Steniger@fws.gov

Rail Trail FLAP Project At Pondicherry



Photo Credit: Dave Govatski

The New Hampshire Trails Bureau received Federal Land Access Program funds in 2020 to improve four miles of trail surface on the Presidential Recreational Rail Trail. The trail is a 90 foot wide in-holding under the stewardship of the State of New Hampshire within the Pondicherry Division that provides primary access to the south end of the Refuge division in Northern New Hampshire. The fully accessible trail project was completed in September.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Support For National Public Lands Day

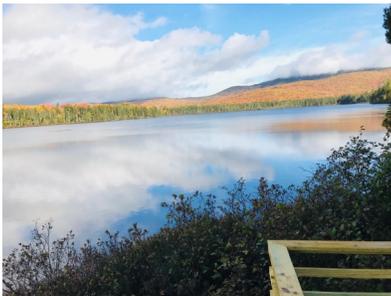


On September 26th, members of the Friends of the Nulhegan Basin, the VT Fish and Wildlife Conservation Group and the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers replaced the wooden deck timbers on the North Branch bridge. The bridge serves as one of two routes for the public to access the Nulhegan Basin Division. The project was a National Public Lands Day Event and was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Building Boardwalks Is A Community Effort



The Conte Refuge continues to expand recreational opportunities throughout the Connecticut River watershed. A trail crew from NorthWoods Stewardship constructed an elevated boardwalk and viewing platform at Lewis Pond in Vermont. The overlook is nestled within the vegetation along the shoreline to minimize the visibility of the structure from the water. This vantage point offers wonderful views of the pond, shoreline, and mountains, with an accent of fall colors. The 250 foot long boardwalk is a fully accessible structure and is part of the Nulhegan Basin Division's Auto/Bicycle tour route.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Mingle With Monarchs—Virtually



This month McKinney Refuge partnered with the Friends of Outer Island to host a virtual interpretive event on Facebook called "Mingle with Monarchs." Staff, volunteers and Friends members talked about monarchs as an at-risk species, detailed their important migratory journey, and then tagged and released butterflies live during the program! So far nearly 500 people have viewed the broadcast. The event was especially geared toward children and families, and students learning virtually. Refuge volunteer and retired teacher Ginny Baltay prepared a new monarch curriculum guide with activities for PreK-8, which is downloadable for all to use.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov



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Bridge Improvements At Nulhegan Basin



The lower black branch bridge on Stone Dam Road was repaired in September. The bridge was jacked in place and all of the anchor bolts were replaced with larger diameter anchor bolts. While the bridge was elevated from its abutments, new bearing pads were put in place to help cushion the impact of vehicles crossing the 72 foot long bridge.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Much Needed Roadside Maintenance Complete



Road side mowing took place at the Nulhegan Basin Division throughout the month of September. A wheeled excavator with a brush cutter was used to remove limbs from trees that were encroaching the road corridor. Thank you to Moosehorn NWR for the use of the wheeled excavator.

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Photo Credit: USFWS

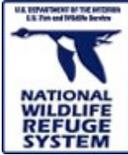
Still Working To Remove Invasive Species



Work continues at the Nulhegan Basin Division to remove invasive plants. Vegetation Control Services was contracted to spray phragmites at remote locations on the refuge. The multi-year project aims to reduce the spread of the plant with an ultimate outcome of eradicating the plant from the refuge.

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Photo Credit: USFWS



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Friends Host Fern Walk at Fannie Stebbins



The Friends of Fannie Stebbins Refuge Hosted a fern walk this month, led by Randy Stone of the Pioneer Valley Fern Society. Ten participants walked the grounds of Fannie Stebbins while learning about different species of ferns that grow at the refuge. With Fannie Stebbin's diverse habitats, we saw several different species of fern, observing the unique characteristics of each type. We look forward to more programs coordinated and offered by the Friends of Fannie Stebbins at this beautiful refuge location.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Star Gazing At The Fort River Division



As part of the *Welcome to the Wild* Refuge Campaign, Conte Refuge received a small grant to host a public program that would attract new visitors to the refuge. In partnership with the Springfield Science Museum, the star gazing event provided visitors with a different view from the refuge not often seen: the night time sky. Starlore expert Kevin Kopchynski introduced visitors to the history of star gazing, and how it led ancient people to develop our modern day calendar.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

McKinney Refuge Demolishes Old Buildings



In 1972, lands adjacent to McKinney Refuge's Salt Meadow NWR were acquired to expand forest and marsh habitat. These lands included a number of older buildings that have not been used by the refuge in over a decade. Thus, Refuge staff decided it was time for the buildings to come down. Over the course of several weeks, and with help from Regional Logistics Management Specialist Darren Stover, the buildings were demolished with debris properly disposed.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov