



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

October 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.*

The Big Sit At Stewart B. McKinney



Photo Credit: Friends of Outer Island

McKinney NWR was host to two teams participating in the 2020 Big Sit, held this month around the world. During the Big Sit, birders spend up to 24 hours in a 17 foot circle and try to identify as many birds as they can. This year, teams sat at the Salt Meadow and Milford Point Divisions of the Refuge. Birds recorded on the list included brown creeper, pine siskins, bald eagles, northern shovelers, American bittern and Swainson's thrush. Better yet, the event took place during National Wildlife Refuge Week.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Creepy Critters At Fort River Trail



Photo Credit: USFWS

Bats and Spiders often get a bad rap. But that wasn't the case at the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail during the second annual Creepy Critter Fun Trail Day. Visitors to the refuge learned about the value bats and spiders have to a healthy ecosystem as they walked the trail, locating the animal species cut-outs along the way. As they found each animal, visitors read about the importance each one has to keeping our planet healthy. At the end of the trail, each visitor got a fun animal mask to take home.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Time Lapse Photos Of Pondicherry Division Now Live



Photo Credit: D Govatski

Conte Volunteers installed the Refuge's third Chronolog Project, located at the Pondicherry Division in New Hampshire. Currently, we also have Chronolog stations at Fannie Stebbins and Nulhegan Basin. Chronolog is a citizen science project that lets visitor contribute to a time lapse photo collage of one particular area of the refuge. Conte is the first National Wildlife Refuge to participate in the program. Be sure to snap a photo at the project location next time you visit one of the three sites. <https://www.chronolog.io/project/Silvio-O.-Conte-National-Fish-and-Wildlife-Refuge>.

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Fall Clean Up Of Outer Island



This month, volunteers, refuge staff and Friends of Outer Island spent time cleaning up Outer Island of the McKinney Refuge. Working together they cleared brush, fallen limbs, and dead trees, which was then hauled back to Stony Creek by way of a refuge truck. One unplanned highlight to the day was the rescue of a distressed kayaker from rough waters near Horse Island. Thanks to everyone that helped out on this amazingly successful day.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Friends of Outer Island

American Woodcock Banding At Nulhegan Basin



The Nulhegan Basin Division was one of three Vermont capture sites for the Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative, an international research collaboration led by the University of Maine, to better understand the migratory ecology of the American woodcock along the Eastern Seaboard. This study uses Global Positioning System technology to track the seasonal movement and habitat selection of American woodcock as they travel from their breeding grounds in Canada and northeastern U.S. to their wintering areas in the southern part of the U.S. A total of 4 woodcock from the Division were captured and outfitted with GPS units in September. Field work was led by PhD students from the University of Maine. Visit www.woodcockmigration.org to follow tagged birds as they migrate to southern wintering grounds.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Roadside Mowing At Nulhegan Basin



With over 40 miles of publicly accessible gravel roads, annual road maintenance is a perpetual project at the Nulhegan Basin Division. During the month of October, the Refuge's tractor and boom mower were used to cut the roadside shoulders at the Nulhegan Basin Division. This preventative maintenance action reduces the amount of woody growth that accumulates along the roadsides.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Creative Commons



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Skid Steer Training For Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge maintenance staff trained additional Refuge staff on how to properly use the skid steer. The training took place at the Nulhegan Basin Division in October and included resurfacing the parking area around the Refuge's maintenance building and reshaping the Lewis Pond Access Road and parking area.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Making Progress On Archery Range



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff constructed frames and roofing for the targets being installed at Conte's on-site Archery Range. The targets will be movable on the range, in order to accommodate different range configurations. Once complete, the archery range will be available for instructional programs and partner use at the Fort River Division.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov

Improvements to Pondicherry Observation Platform



Photo Credit: Dave Govatksi

Conte Refuge staff, along with the Friends of Pondicherry, replaced the railing on the Cherry Pond observation deck and boardwalk. The heavily used structure was showing its age and was in need of minor repairs. With the upgrades to the Presidential Range Recreational Trail, the Pondicherry Division continues to experience an increase of visitation.

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Meeting With Mt Tom Adjacent Land Owners to Discuss Proposed Use of Quarry



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff met with adjacent Mt. Tom land owners to discuss a proposal by Mt. Tom Company to use the quarry as a disposal site. The quarry is no longer used to produce shot rock for construction purposes, and the owners are proposing to use the quarry as commercial disposal area for unwanted commercial soil. Refuge lands are in close proximity to the quarry and the road leading to refuge property would be heavily impacted by truck traffic if Mt. Tom Company's proposal is approved by State regulators.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov

Mollie Beattie Bog Boardwalk Upgrade



Photo Credit: USFWS

The NorthWoods ProCrew recently completed the construction of the Lewis Pond boardwalk and moved onto replacing the Mollie Beattie boardwalk. The Mollie Beattie boardwalk was named after the former Director of the USFWS and showcases an exemplary black spruce bog community. The replacement boardwalk will provide visitors the opportunity to experience being in a unique black spruce bog. The new structure is being built at a higher elevation to allow for native plant communities to grow underneath the elevated platform.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Opening Day Of Moose Season Comes With Snow



Photo Credit: T.Barriere

The opening day of Vermont's moose hunting season was unseasonably white. With snow accumulating to a foot at the higher elevations, hunters at the Nulhegan Basin were greeted with slippery roads, downed trees and less than ideal conditions.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov