



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

January 2024: *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.*

Restoration Partners of the Year



Photo Credit: USFWS

Connecticut River Conservancy is thrilled to celebrate our annual Restoration Partners of the Year! Several key members of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife staff are recognized for their incredible work on the Beaver Brook dam removal and culvert upgrade to a new bridge project in Wilmington, Vermont, completed earlier this year. Pictured above are Ron Rhodes, CRC's Director of Restoration; Dave Sagan from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program at U.S. Fish & Wildlife; Phillip Herzig and Julie Butler from the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program at U.S. Fish & Wildlife; and Becky Budd, CRC's Restoration Program Manager. This project wouldn't have happened without USFWS funding and their staff expertise in implementing river restoration projects like this. Restoring Beaver Brook (a tributary to the Deerfield River) to a free-flowing river will improve water quality, reconnect native Brook trout habitat, and support flood resiliency in the area.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Wild Animals and Camouflage



Photo credit: USFWS

The visitor service staff partnered with the Zoo at Forest Park in Springfield, MA to teach students at Bowles Elementary School about animal adaptations and camouflage. The zoo brought a turtle, corn snake, rabbit, and Madagascar hissing cockroaches to demonstrate how these animals blend into their habitats to survive. Students also played an interactive game, in which they had to find camouflaged butterflies shaped cards hidden throughout the gym.

For more information contact: Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov



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New Urban Partnership: Martin Luther King School



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Martin Luther King Charter School in Springfield, MA is now one of Conte NFWR's newest partners! The visitor service staff in collaboration with Kestrel Land Trust and Mass Audubon presented three programs to pre-kindergarten, science class students about the importance of pollinators. Students and teachers enjoyed the multifaceted, interactive lessons, where each student had the opportunity to pretend to be a bee and pollinate a flower!

For more information contact: Tasha_Daniels@fws.gov

Teaching 5th Graders the Vital role of watershed and the flow in ecosystems



Photo Credit: USFWS

Teaching kids about watersheds and the flow of water is an adventure that sparks curiosity and excitement. As we delved into the world of watershed, the fifth-grade class buzzed with enthusiasm. We began by discussing how glaciers initially formed our lakes and rivers and how rainwater travels through our neighborhoods, gathering in streams and rivers along the way. Using the watershed table, located in the Springfield Science Museum, the kids were thrilled to see firsthand how their actions impact the environment. By the end of our adventure the students left with a newfound appreciation for watersheds and a commitment to preserving our water for future generations.

For more information contact: Ashley_Castillo@fws.gov

Heavy Snow Takes Down Fencing at Fannie Stebbins



Photo Credit: USFWS

Heavy, wet snows in January took down trees and disabled the electric deer fences at the Fannie Stebbins Unit. Refuge staff cleared trees from trails and roadways and re-strung the electric fences surrounding the four agriculture fields being restored to floodplain forest. Electric fences are being used to protect the trees from deer browsing and/or rubbing.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov



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High Water Levels at Fort River



A rain-on-snow event in January caused flooding throughout the area, including the Fort River Division. Portions of the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail were submerged for several days as the water drained from the surrounding fields.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge Hires New Maintenance Employee



The Conte Refuge is pleased to have hired John Weber as a permanent maintenance employee at the Nulhegan Basin office. John transferred from the National Park Service and started with the Conte Refuge in January.

For more information contact: John_Weber@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Lyndon Institute Bird Class



In January, refuge staff gave a presentation at the Lyndon Institute about bird ecology. The presentation was provided to a group of students taking a winter term bird class.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Lyndon Institute



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VT Warden Winter Training



In January, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department held a winter training for newly hired wardens. The Conte Refuge provided housing and a conference room for the weeklong training that focused on winter survival, ice safety, and snowmobile safety and operations. USFWS refuge and law enforcement staff participated in the winter training.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: VTFW Logo

Northeast Wildlife Monitoring Network Meeting

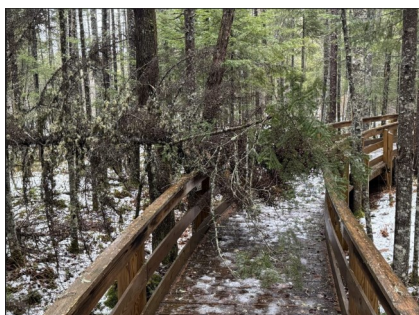


State, federal, academic and NGO conservation partners met at the Nulhegan Basin office for a meeting to discuss collaborative approaches to continue to conduct research projects under the Northeast Wildlife Monitoring Network. This network is collaboration of partners across New England and New York interested in short and long term research looking at impacts from habitat management and climate on wildlife populations. Past and current research has looked at effectiveness of using remote cameras for monitoring wildlife and snow depth, biotic and abiotic influences on range limits, and impacts of climate on winter ticks and moose.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

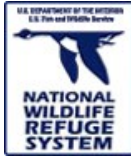
Tree Cleanup



Throughout the month of January, New England received multiple Winter storms that brought strong winds, ice, snow and rain. The Northern Conte Divisions were not spared by the storms and all the trails required the removal of downed trees and limbs. Thankfully, none of the trail infrastructure was heavily damaged by the storms or fallen trees.

Photo Credit: David Govattski

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov



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A Trip in January Will Bring a New Roof and Siding to the Falkner Island Boathouse



Photo Credit: USFWS

On January 19th, a cold and wintery day, refuge staff took Dave Miller out to Falkner Island to start the process planning repair work on the island's historic boathouse. This project is being funded in part as a Great American Outdoors Act Project. Staff members from around the Region will be gathering on this offshore island to complete the task in March. The Great American Outdoors Act provides major investments to address deferred maintenance needs, increase recreational access to our public lands, and conserve our nations lands and waters. We were excited to begin the first phase of this rehabilitation.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

McKinney NWR STAR VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED



On Saturday January 27th, the refuge held a thank you party and luncheon for anyone and everyone who had volunteered and partnered with us over the last year. During the celebration, we took the opportunity to thank our "star volunteers" - some of whom gave over a hundred hours of their time to help the refuge in 2023.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: Christine Howe/Friends of S. B. McKinney NWR