



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

May 2024: *The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge presently includes twenty-three different divisions and units, located 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.*

Annual Migratory Bird Day Events In New Hampshire



Photo Credit: John Keator

The 23rd Annual Migratory Bird Day event was held at the Pondicherry Division of the Silvio Conte NFWR on Saturday May 11th. An enthusiastic group of over 50 birders including several knowledgeable guides started at 6 am for a day of birding. The group saw 89 species including this male black-backed woodpecker (seen in photo) that was a “life bird” for many. This year’s theme was “*protect insects, protect birds*”, which highlights the important connection of insects to life on this planet. Free migratory bird day posters featuring this theme were handed out to participants to further their understanding of insects and birds.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

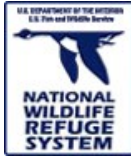
Spring Field Trips To Fort River



Photo: USFWS

The end of May is always a busy time for field trips to the Fort River Division of the Conte Refuge. This month we hosted students from third grade to seniors in high school, for a variety of educational experiences at the Refuge. Students learned about the value of wetlands, open green spaces, and the work we do to manage habitat for a healthy ecosystem. Examples of fun sightings along the trail were a kingfisher diving into one of the ponds to grab tadpoles, baby robins in a nest waiting to be fed, turtles basking in the sun on logs in the pond, frogs and crayfish in the pond, and newly popped up jack-in-the pulpit plants.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Willow Surveys At Pondicherry Division



Friends of Pondicherry member, and retired US Forest Service Geologist Scott Bailey is conducting a scientific inventory of Salix (Willow) species at the Pondicherry Division. The project will help define the range and variety of Salix species in Northern New Hampshire. The project is funded by the Friends of Pondicherry under a special use permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: David Govatski

Summer Birding Series Opener



The first of five birding programs in our Springfield Summer Birding Series was held at River Front Park in Springfield this month. Despite the rain, three individuals took time to stroll along the river's edge, along the bike path in downtown Springfield. The highlight of the event was spotting a yellow warbler. The series of birding programs will occur at other locations along the Springfield Birding Trail, and is co-sponsored by the Springfield Libraries. A huge "Thank You" to volunteer Bill Randolph who will be leading all the programs this summer.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Photo Credit: eBird

Birders Visit Mud Pond At Pondicherry



A group of 12 birders enjoyed an early May morning looking and listening for birds at Mud Pond on the Pondicherry Division. The birders were part of a 12 week on-line course in bird identification and conservation offered by UNH Extension. This popular course has 348 students enrolled and has 98 different field trips around the state of New Hampshire. The field trip size is limited to a dozen students. Instructor Matt Tarr is shown pointing out a Nashville warbler. The group saw 38 species including a sandhill crane in their two hour walk.

For more information contact: Rachel_Cliche@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS



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Improving Visitor Safety AND Turtle Habitat At the Fort River Division



A team of FWS maintenance professionals made much needed improvements to the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail this month. The newly extended and elevated walkway will remedy having to walk through a frequently flooded section along the accessible trail. In addition, the elevated walkway provides better access for turtles to reach newly created nesting habitat. We are grateful for and appreciate the assistance provided by staff from Parker River NWR, Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex, and the Rhode Island NWR Complex.

For more information contact: Chad_Roderick@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS

Managing For Grassland Habitat



The Fort River Division supports many grassland depended species such as Meadowlark and bobolinks, and provides foraging habitat for many aerial insectivores. Thus, managing and maintaining grassland habitat is a high priority at the Fort River Division. With woody vegetation encroaching into some of the grassland fields, we treated 5 acres of our warm season grasses in order to keep the broad- leafed woody vegetation from taking hold and spreading throughout the fields.

For more information contact: Chad_Roderick@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Early Hatching Chicks At Falkner Island



At the McKinney Refuge's Falkner Island Unit in Guilford, CT, common terns hatched about a week earlier than in past years! Most of the northeastern tern colony monitors are reporting that terns are laying eggs early this year. Refuge staff and technicians will soon be conducting a tern census of the island.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS/ Patience Christopher



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Cross-Program Collaboration For Student Field Trip



Photo: USFWS

The Silvio O Conte, Fort River Division hosted a field trip for 55 fifth grade students from the MLK Charter school in Springfield, MA. Students were energized and excited as they visited three different activity stations, participating in pond exploration, mist netting birds, and learning about pollinators with a close-up view of a honeybee colony. Students caught frogs and crayfish, held live birds and even held drone bees! The successful event was a team effort, thanks to Randy Dettmers and Caleb Spiegel from the Division of Migratory Birds, and Art Canterbury, Jim Casey, Jackie Sadowski, and Meghan Murphy from the NWRS who all helped lead activities for the students. Also assisting with the event was Emily Biggs from Kestrel Land Trust.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Refuge Operations Technicians On The Job



Photo Credit: USFWS

Seven new ROTs have started their summer work at the McKinney Refuge and will be with us through August. After two weeks of Training, the technicians are off to Falkner Island, Outer Island and the Salt Meadow Unit of the Refuge to begin their assigned responsibilities. Three of the technicians are working through Northwoods Stewardship Center, two through the CT State University System, and two through the Hispanic Access Foundation. Four of our current techs returned from last year and we were happy to welcome them back, giving them some new experiences!

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Field Trips To McKinney NWR Are In Full Swing



Photo Credit: USFWS

The refuge is hosting nearly 1,200 elementary school students in the span of only six weeks. The trips, which mostly take place on Outer Island and Sheffield Island, take a lot of coordination of buses, boats and proper staffing. Thankfully, the visitor services manager has help from volunteers, partners and seasonal refuge operations technicians to host these trips. In addition to the curriculum-based lessons they receive, the students, who are from schools in New Haven, CT and the surrounding area, leave the refuge with great memories of a unique experience that many have never before had.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov