



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Happenings

July 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.*

Heave Rains Cause Severe Damage In Vermont And New Hampshire Divisions



A heavy rain storm on July 11, 2024 and another a few weeks later, severely impacted many of the roads and trails located at our Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry Divisions in Vermont and New Hampshire. The severe weather event washed out several bridges and roads, impacting access to the Refuge in many locations. Refuge staff and volunteers are working diligently to remedy the damage as soon as possible, but it is estimated that some of the work may not be complete until the end of August. The Refuge staff greatly appreciate everyone's patience during this time of rebuild and repair.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Summer Camp Season Success!



Conte Visitor Service staff teamed-up with Massachusetts Audubon to present nine environmental educational programs to the City of Springfield's Park and Recreation Department camps at Camp Star Angelina, Camp ECOs, and Camp Van Sickle. The campers and staff enjoyed learning about the differences between amphibians and reptiles, birdwatching and bird adaptations, and mammal adaptations. Campers participated in interactive activities that had them physically on the move while thinking about nature! One camper commented on how much fun they had learning new information about reptiles, and that they looked forward to us returning to their camp.

Photo credit: USFWS

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Refuge Staff Recognized For Contributions To Project in Vermont



USFWS Partners Biologist, and member of the Conte Staff David Sagan, assisted Service staff from the Lake Champlain Conservation Office on a habitat restoration project in Vermont this month. Dave ran heavy equipment operations for the project, which helped expand habitat for migratory birds, brook trout, and wood turtles. Dave was recognized for his expertise in running heavy equipment, problem solving and positive attitude! Thank You Dave!

Photo credit: USFWS

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov



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Conte North YCC Crew To The Rescue!



Photo Credit: David Govatski

A huge shout out goes to our Conte North YCC Crew, who swiftly moved into action, and quickly repaired the Mud Pond Trail accessible trail, after it was severely damaged by a heavy rain event on July 11, 2024. The team of 5, and their leaders, hauled ledge pack, filled in holes, and replaced damaged boards in order to open the trail for visitors, less than two weeks after the storm occurred. We are thankful and grateful to these hard working youth who stood up to the challenge after this unexpected weather mishap. In addition, we are thankful to Friends of Pondicherry for helping to purchase some of the needed materials to get the job done so quickly.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Purple Martin Chicks At The Fort River Division!



Photo Credit: Mary McKitrick

Thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers who are actively managing and observing purple martin nesting gourds at the Fort River Division, one pair of martins have successfully hatched a clutch of eggs. Purple martin populations have been in decline in Massachusetts, partly due to habitat loss. These aerial insectivores only nest in pre-existing cavities, such as old woodpecker holes or hollowed out gourds, which need to be provided by humans. Refuge staff installed plastic gourds at the Fort River Division a few years ago, but there has been little activity from the purple martins until this year, mostly due to the great help from volunteers actively managing and monitoring the nesting boxes. Thanks to Mary McKitrick, Theresa Gessing, Eden Smith and Dave Matevosian for their continued efforts in helping these birds maintain their populations.

For more information contact: Dean_Rhine@fws.gov

Volunteers Tackle Invasive Species At S.B. McKinney



Photo: T.J. Altieri/Beardsley

This month, volunteers from the Beardsley Zoo helped control spotted knapweed, an invasive plant, at the Milford Point Unit of the McKinney NWR in Connecticut. This unit supports a state endangered plant (sickle-leaved golden aster), a state threatened species (bitter panicgrass), and a state species of concern (eastern prickly pear). Controlling invasive plants opens up more habitat for these rare plants to grow and thrive. The team of volunteers was led by the refuge's invasives assistant Jeremy Keeler, who has been working summers at the refuge for the past four years.

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