



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

#### Refuge Happenings

**May 2023:** *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.*

#### Urban Birding Program Draws New Crowd



Photo Credit: USFWS

May kicked off our monthly urban birding series, which takes place once a month at Riverfront Park in Springfield, MA. The park is located in between the Connecticut River and the heart of Downtown Springfield. Conte volunteer Bill Randolph is leading the programs, which are run in partnership with the Springfield Libraries. The first event drew ten participants, most of whom were new to birding and unfamiliar with the Conte Refuge. The highlight of the evening was watching a female Baltimore oriole weaving her nest in a tree along the bike path next to the river. All participants said they looked forward to joining future programs.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Partnering For Climate Change Education



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte visitor service staff partnered with Mass Audubon, contributing to a semester long project at the Renaissance School in Springfield, MA, that focused on the effects of climate change. The program was developed by school and MA Audubon educators, and exposed the students to the realities of climate change, its effect on wildlife and people, and asked them to help develop solutions for moving in a positive direction. Conte staff assisted with the field trip aspect of the course, helping lead students in a hands-on expedition in nearby Abbey Brook Conservation Area and the surrounding neighborhoods.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Places For Wood Duck

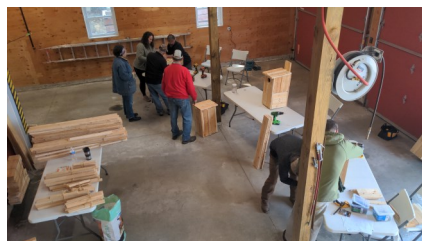


Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff hosted a wood duck box construction course in partnership with the State of Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Participants learned of wood duck ecology and worked collaboratively to construct boxes from northern white cedar. Each participant went home with their own box to mount on their property.

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#### Hartford, Connecticut Renews Urban Bird Treaty Agreement



Conte Refuge staff participated in a “Renewal” ceremony for the Urban Bird Treaty Program in Hartford, Connecticut. First designated in 2011, the program supports partners to conserve habitats, reduce bird hazards, and engage communities in bird education, recreation, science, and conservation. The resigning ceremony took place at Keney Park, and was attended by many of the contributing partners. Students from the nearby Community First School also participated, painting bird houses and learning how to watch birds using binoculars.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

Photo Credit: USFWS

#### Middlesex County, Connecticut Career Day a Success!



This month, McKinney Refuge Visitor Services Manager Shaun Roche attended the Middlesex County High School Career Fair - a time when multiple organizations come together at Wesleyan University to showcase potential career paths in many fields. High school students from many different towns attended, and Ranger Shaun spoke with over 100 of them about jobs in the federal government such as park ranger, wildlife biologist and maintenance professionals. It was a great time for young people to learn about rewarding careers that can lead to working in any number of beautiful refuges and parks across the United States.

Photo Credit: USFWS

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#### Partnering To Create Harmony



Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Massachusetts worked with People Aligning to Create Harmony (P.A.T.C.H.) to create a pocket park in Springfield. Conte staff worked with partners as part of the Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership efforts in Springfield, MA to restore a wetland and a pollinator planting in this environmental justice community. The area was planted with milkweed and other pollinator friendly plants by volunteers from the neighborhood and will be used as an educational greenspace for the community. This vacant lot is being restored for wildlife and the community including pollinator and rain gardens as well as used for urban agriculture.

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Photo Credit:  
USFWS



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### **Falkner Island Oystercatcher Shows Off New Band**



Photo Credit: Beth Amendola

McKinney Refuge partnered with Audubon Connecticut who assisted the refuge biologist to trap and band oystercatchers on Falkner Island. Oystercatchers are a state threatened species, and this month we counted five American oystercatcher nests on the island. The banding, which is done by trained professionals who are permitted through the Service, help us determine important biological information, such as, how long a bird might live, if the same birds come back to the same place each year, and where the best foraging areas might be along the coast. A big thank you to Beth Amendola from Audubon Connecticut for trapping and banding Yellow N74 (seen in photographs).

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

### **Volunteers Help Open Outer Island!**



Photo Credit: USFWS

Staff at McKinney Refuge had help this month from both veteran and new refuge volunteers to work on opening Outer Island Unit for the 2023 season. Work included trimming the pathways through the pollinator garden and around the Hird House, opening the education lab, taking inventory of science equipment and other supplies, putting up safety barriers, and placing tables and chairs outside for visitors. The opening will be just in time for school groups from New Haven and other area towns to visit us on field trips this week!

For more information contact: [Shaun\\_Roche@fws.gov](mailto:Shaun_Roche@fws.gov)