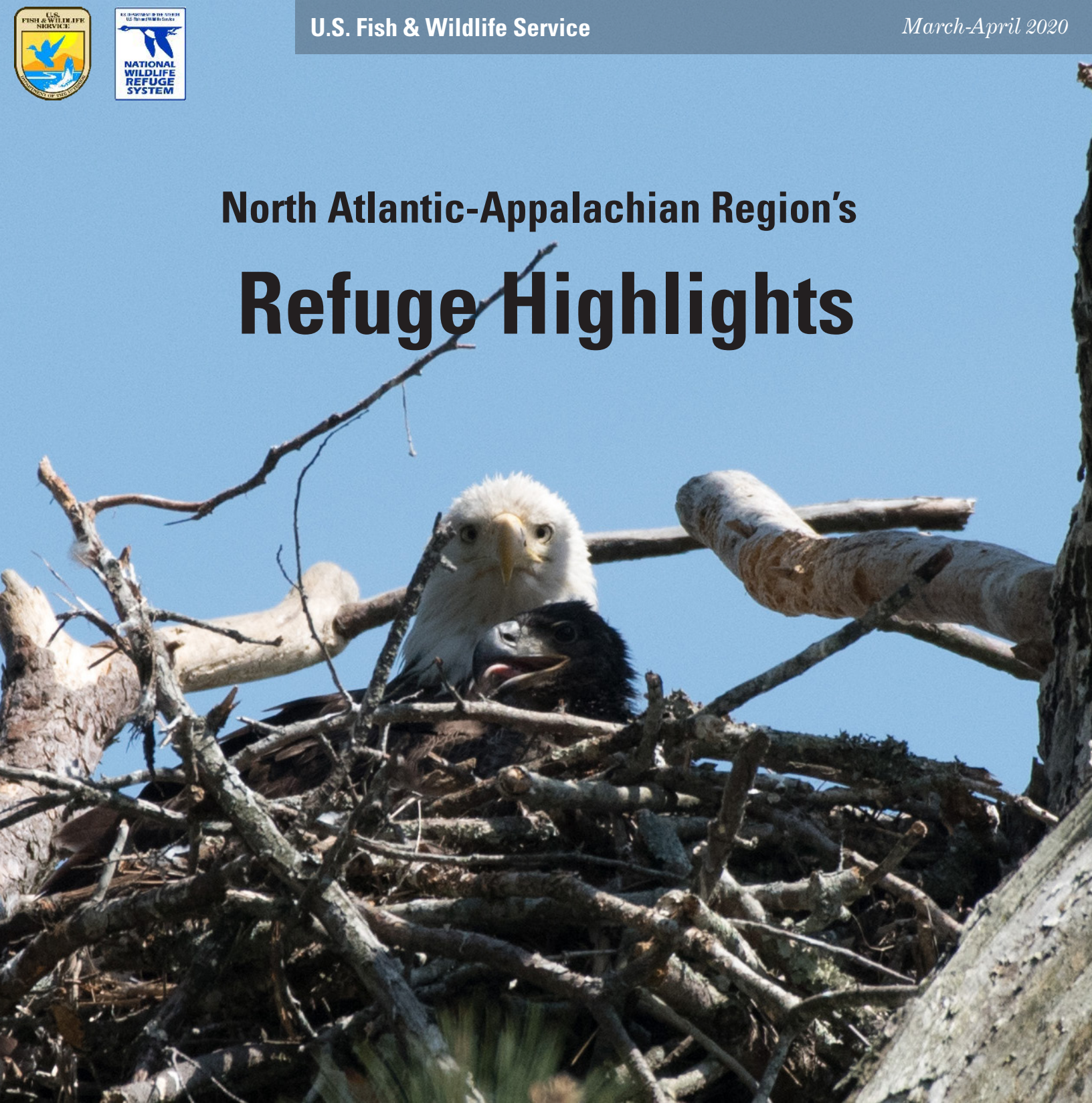




North Atlantic-Appalachian Region's Refuge Highlights



USFWS

We hope you enjoy learning about all of the great conservation and outreach work being accomplished on national wildlife refuges in our region! Our Regional priorities, listed to the right, represent the areas where we are focusing our work and investments. We have color-coded each story according to the key listed to the right in an effort to highlight how our efforts are supporting these priorities. For questions about Refuge Highlights, please contact Susan Wojtowicz at susan_wojtowicz@fws.gov.



Connecting People to Nature



Supporting Our Workforce



Strategic Conservation

Above: Eagle and eaglet enjoy the sunny weather at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in New Jersey.

Successful Beach Cleanup

On the frigid first Sunday of March, Stewart B. McKinney NWR partnered with the Connecticut Audubon Society, the City of Milford, and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) to remove nearly 1,000 pounds of trash in Milford, CT. The cleanup encompassed marsh, beach, and shrubland habitats around the refuge's Milford Point Unit on Federal, State and public trust properties. More than 50 volunteers participated in the effort, with Audubon providing refreshments and REI supplying free giveaway items. The Milford Deputy Director of Public Works personally operated a large City trash truck to haul away all the waste.



Volunteers, USFWS, and City of Milford staff pose in front of the nearly 1,000 pounds of trash they cleaned out of the marsh and beach.

Patrick Comins/ Connecticut Audubon Society

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

Embracing #RefugeAtHome with Crafting Fun

Each week during this past month, Shelby Stoll, intern at Parker River NWR in Massachusetts, has shared wildlife focused crafts with a remote audience via Facebook Live. Paper collages and homemade scratch art of piping plovers, toilet paper tube binoculars, paint splatter birds, and pinecone birdfeeders have been the featured projects so far. With the goal of providing entertainment and hands-on education, these livestreams have been a blast to create. The projects are currently being featured on the [Parker River Website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



Intern Shelby Stoll demonstrates how to use the toilet paper tube binoculars showcased in a crafting livestream.

Matt Pfannenstiel/USFWS

Learning to Garden for Pollinators

On March 5, before social distancing guidelines took effect, Stewart B. McKinney NWR in Connecticut was able to host an in-person interpretive program with Potapaug Audubon Society. Refuge Visitor Services Manager Shaun Roche lead the presentation, teaching about 30 attendees how to attract pollinators to their yards and gardens with native plants. Shaun showed dozens of examples of the pollinators one could attract, as well as the types of flowers, shrubs and trees that would provide multi-seasonal shelter and food sources. More than half of attendees made a point of saying that they learned a significant amount of new information.

Attract **POLLINATORS** to your garden with **NATIVE PLANTS**



Presented by Shaun Roche, USFWS Park Ranger

Introductory slide from the presentation on gardening for pollinators with native plants.

Shaun Roche/USFWS



“Forsythe in Art” Interpretive Panel Installed

On April 15, Maintenance Worker Roger Dutch installed the long-awaited “Forsythe in Art” interpretive panel in full view of the marsh at Edwin B. Forsythe in New Jersey and the Atlantic City skyline. Artist Alice Cook spent 8 months chronicling the seasons at the refuge through plein air paintings and sketches. Those paintings were used to create a panel that communicates the importance of natural spaces for wildlife and humanity. The Friends of Forsythe enthusiastically funded the project to further their mission of environmental education and interpretation.

The panel is situated with a full view of Atlantic City.

Rodger Dutch/USFWS

50th Anniversary of Earth Day Challenge

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, staff from John Heinz NWR at Tinicum in Philadelphia invited their digital audience to share why they celebrate the day. Participants were encouraged to submit a selfie with their reason written out using a printable template that reads “I celebrate Earth Day because...” or make their own from available materials. One memorable submission reads “This is not sand...” with the word “sand” made from plastic collected from a beach.



Staff and visitors pose with their reasons for celebrating Earth Day.

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Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

Virtual Education, Interpretation, and Outreach

Iroquois NWR in New York has shifted to communicating with the public virtually. Staff have been working on ways to convert existing refuge programs into online friendly formats. The team has created #MyActivityMonday, #AwarenessWednesday, #FloraAndFaunaFriday, and #StaffSaturday to provide interpretation opportunities through [Facebook](#). New activities are being added weekly to their [webpage](#). The intention of these hashtags are to connect with families at home, new visitors and existing visitors in both urban and rural communities. Refuge staff is currently working on a “Nature Journaling in Your Backyard” video tutorial.

A favorite #AwarenessWednesday Facebook post has made a few laugh, some cringe, and most importantly, informed the public of the threats of poison ivy. Be on the lookout!

Eric Schaertl/USFWS



Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Services Division

*****BOLO*****

Date: 4/14/20

Bolo Number 5445

Incident: Extreme Itching Behavior

Location: Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

Summary: The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge Division of Visitor Services (INWR DVS) is reporting incidences of extreme itching from *Toxicodendron Radicans*. INWR DVS has had reports of *T. Radicans* coming into contact with many people and leaving them with itchy bubbly skin rashes that leave the victim miserable, itchy, a pariah to those around them, and in extreme cases require leaving the victim hospitalized. Perpetrator has been seen along the trails disguising himself as Virginia Creeper vines or as a hairy growth on tree trunks. Also known to disguise as a harmless sapling growing from the forest floor. While *T. Radicans* is active and at large all year, the majority of contact incidences are reported during the spring and summer.



Name: *Toxicodendron Radicans*

Known Alias's: Poison Ivy, *T. Radicans*

Age: unknown

Height: 1" to scores of feet

Appearance: Grayish-brown hairy vine

Alternate Appearance: Green three leaved

Earth Week Bonanza

From April 20 to 24, Lauren, Shelby and Matt, interns at Parker River NWR in Massachusetts, put on a fun week of activities via Facebook Live in honor of Earth Week and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The activities included earth week bingo cards kids could fill out, outdoor themed projects for people to do at home, virtually exploring the refuge visitor center, and the announcement of the winners of our annual beach sign youth art contest. The live streams have been well attended virtually and a lot fun to reach a social distancing audience at home.



Interns Lauren and Shelby show off their homemade crafts.

Matt Pfannenstiel/USFWS



**John Heinz National
Wildlife Refuge At
Tinicum**
@johnheinznwr

Like Share ...

thing here. Then you'll have a nature journal that looks like

913 Views

Like Comment Share

Kelly Kemmerle, National Wildlife Refuge System Northeast Regional Chief, Kathy Remetta and 25 others like this.

5 Shares

Elizabeth Moraux · 5:33 Such an awesome ideal We are going to start ours today, we love nature. Thanks Miss Kelly! 😊

John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum

Adaptation to Digital is the New Normal

As March brought national school closures and the suspension of in-person programming our audiences have moved to the digital world. John Heinz NWR at Tinicum in Philadelphia adapted early to developing and publishing new and consistent digital content. In the spirit of doing the best we can with what we have, amid this incredibly challenging, unpredictable, and evolving situation there has been a silver lining — unprecedented growth reaching a local and national digital audience! Using Facebook live along with some short videos, over 30,000 people tuned in for programming in the month of April alone. From youth crew members sharing their work experience to the Refuge Manager identifying birds by sound, the digital programming has found staying power as part of the new normal.

Ranger Kelly Kemmerle and the staff at John Heinz have quickly adapted to developing and publishing programming for a digital audience and have had over 30,000 views in April.

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Lynn Firth Virtual Wildflower Walk

Spring is the time for peepers to chirp and wildflowers to bloom. In a typical year, it is also time for Erie NWR in Pennsylvania to cohost a nature walk with local partners in memory of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests' co-founder. Rather than cancel the event when COVID-19 interrupted normal operations, refuge. Refuge Biologist Melissa Althouse used her recent learning from the Geospatial Workshop at the National Conservation Training Center to create a StoryMap. Photos, videos, and maps guide virtual visitors along Trolley Line Trail. In only 2 days the StoryMap has already reached 4,000 viewers on Facebook and 500 through ArcGIS Online. To relieve some cabin fever, [give it a look!](#)



4 Spotted geranium

Geranium maculatum

Melissa: This showy relative of your garden geranium is often found in clumps in the woods or on the edge of fields. The 'spotted' in the name refers to the white specks on the leaves. Plants grow 1-3 ft. tall, with 1.5 in. flowers growing in small clusters above a pair of deeply-lobed leaves. Spotted geraniums are pretty easygoing as far as woodland wildflowers go - they'll grow in anything from full sun to dappled shade, and in moist hummusy soil to well-drained, poor soil. The nectar and pollen of this flower is an important springtime food source for our native pollinators.

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Spotted geranium sightings and where they can be seen on the trail.

Melissa Althouse/USFWS

Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge

American Black Duck Banding

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries concluded their sixth year of waterfowl trapping and banding at Potomac River NWRC this March. This collaborative effort between the Black Duck Joint Venture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and State wildlife agencies along the Atlantic Flyway, evaluates variances in survival rates of black ducks banded between pre- and post-hunting season by increasing post season banding on the wintering grounds. Banding was unsuccessful this year due to unfavorable trapping conditions and a stoppage of field work due to COVID-19. To date 359 American black ducks have been banded.



American black duck is held to observe the band from a previous year.

Ben Lewis

First Piping Plover Nest of the Season

The first piping plover nest of the year for Rhode Island NWRC was found on April 29 at Third Beach in Middletown, adjacent to Sachuest NWR. The nest belongs to female “6XW” who was banded by researchers from University of Rhode Island in 2015. From band resights, we know 6XW spends her winters in coastal North Carolina. She is always one of the earliest nesters, and our staff, volunteers, and local birders look forward to her return each spring. Rhode Island NWRC’s shorebird program manages nesting plovers, terns, and oystercatchers both on and off-refuge in southern Rhode Island.



Female 6XW nests at Sachuest Point NWR.
Rey Larsen



Edwin B. Forsythe
National Wildlife Refuge

Bald Eaglet Second Year in a Row

On March 15, a breeding pair of bald eagles at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in New Jersey successfully hatched an eaglet! This is believed to be the second year the pair has nested near refuge headquarters, though they have relocated their nest site to a more secluded locale this go-around. Mated pairs typically lay three eggs a year but it is rare that all three eggs survive. Fledglings leave the nest between 10 to 12 weeks but remain near the nest area to hone their flying capabilities, while continuing to rely on their parents for food after fledging. We expect this eaglet to become self-sufficient come early Fall.

An eagle and eaglet are photographed in their nest at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.

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Putting more “Swamp” in Great Dismal Swamp NWR

On April 9, 2020, Great Dismal Swamp NWR acquired 492 acres in Chesapeake, Virginia. The Living Rivers Restoration Trust donated the property to the refuge. This tract is located in the northeastern part of the refuge and is bordered by refuge lands to the west and south. The parcel consists of low-lying mature forested wetland that is considered older growth forest compared to recently logged and newer growth forests found elsewhere around the swamp. This large, contiguous block of forest provides important nesting, feeding, and resting habitat for waterfowl, raptors, neotropical migratory songbirds, and resident mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Flooded timberland
Chris Lowie/USFWS

Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge

Friends Celebrate Earth Day

Three Friends of Mashpee NWR board members worked together to spruce up the pollinator gardens at Jehu Pond and Pickerel Cove on Town of Mashpee Conservation lands in Massachusetts. Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines for wearing face masks and social distancing, Katelyn Cadoret, MaryKay Fox, and Glenn Davis planted a variety of perennials on partner lands within the refuge boundary. The plants will provide additional early to late flowering options for native pollinators and flowering bushes will produce fall fruit for migrating wildlife species, supplying something for everyone! The board plans to complete another planting in May.



Board members add pollinator-friendly species to existing gardens on partner conservation lands.

Friends of Mashpee NWR

Protecting Beaches for Piping Plover

During the first week of April, staff from Long Island NWR Complex in New York performed mission critical work to install closure signs and fencing to protect eggs, chicks and nesting habitat for piping plovers. Closures were implemented at the Amagansett and Elizabeth A. Morton NWRs, where plovers had arrived and established nesting territories. Interpretive signs were placed on the beaches to help educate the public about the piping plover and how to help this federally protected species during nesting and chick rearing. These closures safeguard important beach-nesting bird habitat along the Atlantic Ocean, Noyac Bay and Little Peconic Bay on the south shore of Long Island.



Biological Science Technician Katie Button installs signs along snow fencing to protect piping plover habitat at the Amagansett NWR.

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Division of Realty and Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

A Large Acquisition

Edwin B. Forsythe NWR acquired 546 acres of forested habitat from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife with funding from the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The site fills a 'donut hole' near other refuge areas, provides excellent habitat for breeding wood ducks and American black ducks, protects water quality, and will allow for marsh migration as sea levels rise. This is the largest acquisition at Forsythe since 1987. A special thanks goes out to Realty Specialists Kathleen Cox and Merry Bixby for getting the project over the line.

Forested habitat of the new acquisition is teeming with wildlife.

Virginia Rettig/USFWS

Refuge Shows Volunteers Appreciation Virtually

What would our refuges do without volunteers to help greet visitors, carry out special events and outreach, maintain trails and facilities, and conserve wildlife habitat? Less, much less! Last year, over 10,600 hours of volunteer time and talent was generously given to accomplish the Service's mission on Chincoteague and Wallops Island NWRs in Virginia! For volunteer week, April 19-25 the refuge used social media to recognize all of these kind individuals.



In September of 2019, volunteers pitched in to help the refuge host our Annual Beach Clean Up. This crew just wrapped up a successful morning of registering participants.
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Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge

Fiber Optics Coming to Fort River Division

This month a fiber optic cable was installed on Moody Bridge Road in Hadley, MA, making it possible to connect the Fort River Division of Silvio O. Conte NFWR. With the help of a contractor, staff ran nearly 600 feet of conduit from the road to connect the shop building, arena and bunkhouse. Access to fiber optics will allow the Fort River Division to connect people to wildlife at the refuge through live stream video.



Staff and a contractor dug this trench to run the conduit

USFWS

Remote Camera Technology to Apprehend Offender

In March of 2020, Federal Wildlife Officers (FWOs) at Great Dismal Swamp NWR in Virginia concluded a 2-year investigation into a person starting fires on the refuge. The investigation began in 2018 when a deployed remote surveillance camera captured a person starting fires. A second deployed camera captured the same person starting fires in the fall of 2019, and again in February of 2020 revealing a pattern of activity and behavior. On March of 2020, FWOs conducted surveillance on this subject and located the remains of a freshly lit fire. The subject was apprehended and ultimately admitted to starting the fires. Thanks to remote camera surveillance technology, and pro-active Federal Wildlife Officers the subject was charged and adjudicated in Federal Court.



In an image captured by remote camera a man can be seen starting a fire on the refuge.

USFWS



John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum

BEETLES in Philly

John Heinz NWR at Tinicum and their local partners were awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Better Environmental Education, Teaching, Learning & Expertise Sharing (BEETLES) Project, out of the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley. Local partners, Let's Go Outdoors, Riverbend Environmental Education Center, and the Wagner Free Institute of Science are working together on regional capacity building in environmental education. The grant is designed to build cohesive community driven, equitable, inclusive, and inquiry-based learning models in the Philadelphia region. The grant includes a series of professional development and collaborative working sessions modeling best practices with the School District of Philadelphia during the 2020/21 school year. Keep an eye out for more updates on this exciting project!

Here are the logos of all the partners leading this exciting regional initiative.

USFWS

Message from Sharon Marino, Acting Regional Chief of Refuges

I wanted to take this opportunity in writing to personally thank all of our employees who continue their commitment to our mission and each other during the pandemic. The changes and disruptions to work and personal lifestyles have been significant. There have been even tougher challenges for some, who are bravely supporting sick family and friends, or who are grieving the loss of loved ones.

I want to further commend our employees working on the front lines of the pandemic to accomplish mission critical work. No matter your job series, grade level, or assigned duty, you stepped up to ensure the safety of both people and wildlife on our public lands. As many open spaces were closed to the public, those seeking ways to safely enjoy the outdoors have discovered their local refuges for the first time, or renewed their appreciation for refuges. This silver lining also created challenges for those of you on the front lines of this difficult situation. I appreciate the professional way you met these challenges and your exceptional public service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you!

Please continue to take care of yourself and those around you - Sharon



Braian Escabi / USFWS

Fish and Wildlife Officer Braian Escabi (taking photo) managed many days of over-capacity visitation and illegal parking in April and May at Back Bay NWR as visitors were eager to be outside during the pandemic.



Lamar Gore / USFWS

Facility Manager Larry Balsamo clears a tree that fell across a trail at John Heinz NWR at Tinicum.



R. Gwiazdowski

Refuge Manager Matt Hillman conducts mission critical work alongside refuge partners to translocate tiger beetles from South Monomoy Island to Sandy Hook, NJ.