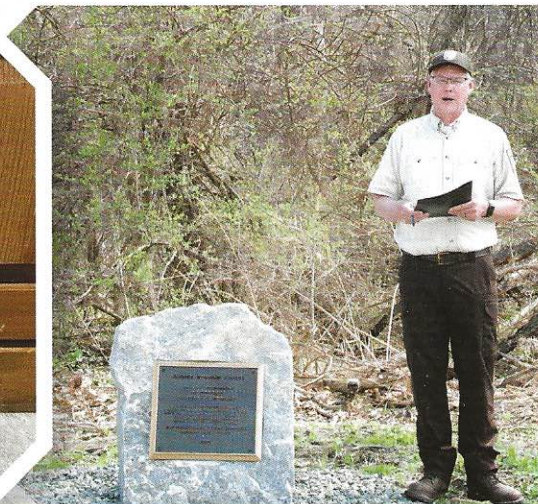
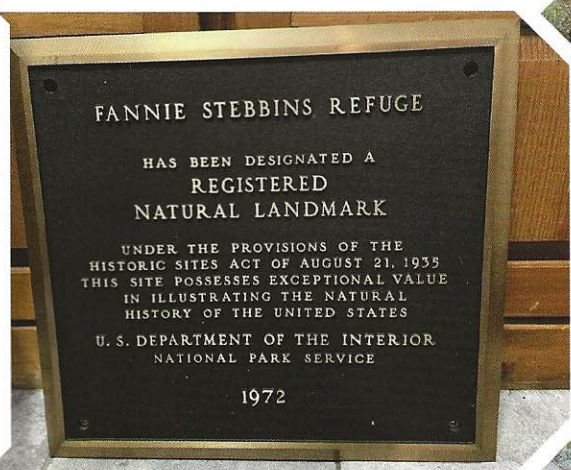


Celebrating 75 Years OF THE FANNIE STEBBINS WILDLIFE REFUGE

By Jim Dorschner
Photos by
Matt Soliwoda



This year partners from across our community are actively celebrating 75 years of the Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge in Longmeadow. With 371 acres of lovely woodland and meadows along the Connecticut River, and boasting an extensive, well maintained trail network, the Refuge is popular with bird watchers, nature photographers, school groups, and others interested in exploring nature, along with walkers of all ages. Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge was officially established by state charter in 1951, following years of effort led largely by notable Springfield educator Fannie Stebbins and other members of the Allen Bird Club, of which she became a charter member in 1912.

Since 2017 principal responsibility for managing and maintaining the Refuge has rested with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), with Stebbins as one of 12 units making up the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge. Longmeadow Town, the Nature Conservancy and the Allen Bird Club are also active, committed partners. With over 20 active part-time stewards the all-volunteer Friends of Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge are another important partner helping to look after trails, performing other routine maintenance, and offering regular opportunities for sharing information and the Refuge experience with the public.

The Friends of Fannie Stebbins Refuge launched this 75th anniversary year by organizing the formal dedication of a plaque rock honoring Fannie Stebbins at West Trail parking area on April 15. Dating back to 1972, the plaque was rescued by Longmeadow Town Manager Lyn Simmons in 2024 when the Town offices relocated to their current location on Maple Road. She then donated the plaque to the Friends organization with a recommendation that it be mounted on a suitable rock for public display in the Refuge. In 2025 Longmeadow Department of Public Works obtained the proper rock and installed it in the ground at the parking area, after which David Sagan from the Conti National Wildlife Refuge attached the plaque. The Fannie Stebbins plaque rock dedication began with remarks by Assistant Town Manager Michael Barbieri, representing Lyn Simmons, who was unable to attend, followed by William Arden, the USFWS Project Leader for the Conte National Wildlife Refuge.

Upcoming events this year to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Refuge include a Friends of Fannie Stebbins Refuge table at the Springfield Museums Earth Day Celebration on April 20, an open photography contest on May 2, a Beginner Bird Walk on May 5, a Poetry event in the Refuge on July 14, a group canoe and kayak event on the Connecticut River at the Refuge on September 5, a table at Longmeadow Pride Day on September 19, and an end of season trash clean-up day on September 30. Regular Saturday Walks open to the public are also scheduled for August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, and December 8.

Additional information is available on the Friends of Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge website (<http://friendsoffanniestebbins.org/>) and the Friends Facebook page.

About the Author: Jim Dorschner is the Fannie Stebbins Steward Coordinator and a member of the Board of Friends of Fannie Stebbins. Wildlife photographer Matt Soliwoda (mattsoliwodagallery.com) is a Stebbins Steward.

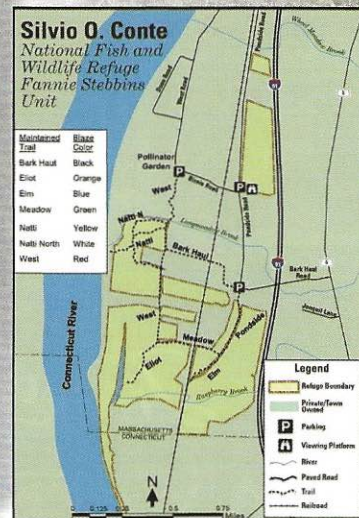


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On April 15 the Friends of Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge organized the dedication of a plaque rock honoring Fannie Stebbins at West Trail parking in the Refuge. From left to right: Jim Dorschner, Michelle Keane-Moore, Al Richardson, Lois Richardson, Bill Ardren (USFWS), Jen Falcone, Vince Yurkunas, Bill Platenik, Andrea Bugbee, Dennis Douglas, Janice Zepko, Jim Wang, Linda Leed, and a representative from the Nature Conservancy.

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