

## Going to Bat for Bats in Rye!

Rockingham County Conservation District Press Release October, 2018



In May 2018, the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) took on the challenging task of tackling the invasive plants on a historic WWII bunker as part of a continued habitat restoration project at Odirone Point State Park in Rye that began in 2009. The project goal at the bunker is a multitiered approach that works to restore native vegetation while also



positively influencing historic elements of the bunker and the bats, that once called it home. It is expected that restoration of native vegetation will provide better flight/travel corridors, roosting sites and may also benefit native insect populations that bats rely on as a source of food. Furthermore, restoration of native vegetation is important to reduce seed sources of invasive vegetation that threatens to reinvade 120 acres of nearby restored areas.

In early May, the lower slopes with the densest patches of invasive species were mowed by New England Right of Way Vegetation Management. This allowed RCCD an access through a portion of the impenetrable entanglement of Oriental bittersweet vines and multiflora rose to treat the surrounding invasive plants. Vegetation directly over the bunker acts as a source of insulation that may have direct

influence on the humidity and moisture levels within the bunker that are critical to bat survival. Due to the sensitivity, all work directly over the bunker was done by hand.



In June and July, a flourish of species, native and invasive, had resprouted in the mowed areas. Invasive resprouts were treated in August and volunteers took to seeding bare areas of the bunker slopes with a conservation grass seed and blackberry seed to promote a rapid regeneration of native species.

Future planting efforts on the bunker are expected with a focus on “bat friendly” native species. Focus species include trees like shagbark hickory and sugar maple to promote roosting sites for bats, and shrub species like Virginia rose, blackberry, shadbush and sumac to promote a diverse insect population.

Thanks to the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as well as to the Department of Agriculture, Markets and Foods for their partnership on this project.

