



Refuge Reporter

Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Volume 7, Issue 3

Kids' Free Fishing Day is Saturday, June 12

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

The 24th annual Kids' Free Fishing Day will be held at Ojibway Island in Saginaw on Saturday, June 12. The FREE fishing contest is for children aged three- to fifteen-years-old. The contest runs from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., with registration beginning at 7:30 a.m. At registration each child will receive small prizes and a ticket to have a chance to win more prizes. A ticket is also given for each fish caught and taken to the fish release area. The more fish a child catches, the better his or her chance to win one of about 100 prizes donated by Meijer Stores and the Saginaw Field and Stream Club!

Children need to bring their own fishing pole and bait. Fishing Day sponsors encourage catch and release and recommend that participants bring buckets to transport live fish

to the release area.

The Sons of Italy will again sponsor the refreshment stand. They will offer FREE popcorn, snow cones, cookies and McDonald's orange drink. They will also have hotdogs available for a small charge. Other sponsors assisting the Refuge with this event include: The Saginaw News, the City of Saginaw, Meijer, Saginaw Field and Stream Club, Dow Chemical Michigan Division Fishing Club, 7-11, and GKC Fashion Square Cinemas.

Volunteers Needed!

We need help in setting up, registering children and cleaning up after the event. Set-up people will need to arrive about 6:00 a.m. Registration people need to be there by 7:00 a.m. If you have any questions or want to volunteer, please contact Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669.

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Looking Back on What We've Done Together</i> | 2 |
| <i>Refuge Deer Hunting this Fall</i> | 2 |
| <i>Two New People Helping with Refuge Project</i> | 3 |
| <i>Inventorying Plant Communities</i> | 4 |
| <i>SITE Demonstration Visitors' Day on April 28</i> | 4 |
| <i>Friends Member Close-up</i> | 5 |
| <i>Water, Water Everywhere</i> | 5 |

Special Points:

- *Deer hunt applications must be postmarked by August 1. Visit our website for more information.*
- *September 11 and 12 is our annual Refuge Open House Weekend. The entire refuge is open to hiking, bicycling and deer scouting during daylight hours. An auto tour is planned for Saturday, as well as voting in the Photo Contest.*

Detour on Curtis Road due to Bridge Construction

Curtis Road remains closed to traffic just west of the Refuge Headquarters due to bridge construction. The road was closed in October, 2003, and will reopen this summer. Sorry, we don't know the date. Visitors can still get to the Ferguson Bayou trails on the west end of Curtis Road by following the detour. From Curtis the detour goes north one mile on Mower Road. Turns west onto Moore

Road for one mile and then goes south for one mile on Creswell Road. This will bring you back to Curtis Road beyond the bridge construction. Just head west on Curtis Road and go about two miles to the parking lot. If you have any questions, please call the Refuge at (989) 777-5930.

Looking Back on What We've Done Together

By Doug Spencer, Refuge Manager

Many of you have probably experienced difficult decisions during your lifetime, we all have. Recently I was informed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Region 1 refuge supervisor for the western portion of Oregon, that I was selected to be the new Refuge Manager for Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Corvallis, OR. At first I was extremely happy of the news. Yet within a short period of time, reality set in and I started to think of all my friends, our refuge staff and all the acquaintances I came in touch with while managing Shiawassee and Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuges and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. So many great memories and so many great people here in Michigan! This move is probably the hardest move for my family and me. One of the reasons is we have been here for nearly 13 years. My reporting date is June 13, but I don't plan to move my family out there until late July. Assistant Manager Ed DeVries will be acting in my place until a new Refuge Manager is hired. I feel very comfortable in having Ed oversee the management of the Refuge; he is a very good, dedicated person.

So many things have been accomplished and they wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the most dedicated, motivated, hard-working refuge staff that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has. These accomplishments not only were accomplished by the staff, but from good people like you. As a volunteer, Friends member, or interested individuals, you provided the decision-making and the muscle to get the job done. You all should be proud of what you have accomplished on these refuges. The communities are the back bone for refuge management. Without your support refuges couldn't function. Please continue to provide the support to the refuge in the years to come. Look at what you have accomplished in these last 13 years: the Great Lakes Discovery Center planning, the acquisition and lease for the Cass River Unit in Bridgeport, our Friends organization, the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan, acquisitions of Big and Little Charity Islands, improved water management units (new dikes, water control structures, etc.), partnership with the City of Saginaw to manage Green Point Environmental Learning Center, establishment of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, contaminant studies of Grassy Island, mosquito abatement on the refuge for health reasons, the planning of the expansion of the refuge by 7500-acres, a full-time Refuge Law Enforcement Officer, remodeling of the Refuge Headquarters, thousands of acres of wetlands restored, and the construction of comfort stations in three locations of the refuge. These are only a few things that have been accomplished. Thank you all!

It is very hard to say good bye, especially for Janine, my wife, who many of you know. She has enjoyed volunteering at refuge events, providing the services of secretary for the Friends organization and getting to know all of you. Our entire family wishes all of you the best and hope that you will continue to support refuge projects and events. We will only be a phone call or email away, so please keep in touch. I hope many of you will take the time and visit with us. I have been told that the Willamette Valley is beautiful and it is near great fishing, hunting and camping which our family enjoys doing.

We hope our paths cross again in the future. Please continue to enjoy your National Wildlife Refuges. Good bye.

Editor's Note: On behalf of our staff, volunteers and Friends members...THANK YOU, DOUG! We appreciate all that you and your family have done for our Refuges (Shiawassee, Michigan Islands and Detroit River) here in Michigan. We will miss you and wish you the very best.

Refuge Deer Hunting this Fall

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger



The Refuge will be offering 18 deer hunts this fall and winter, including two non-ambulatory shotgun hunts and one youth shotgun hunt. Others hunts include five archery, two shotgun and eight muzzleloader hunts. Applications for all of these hunts, except the youth shotgun hunt, must be post-marked no later than August 1, 2004. Youth who are interested in the youth shotgun hunt should visit www.MYHEC.org for more information on how to register by August 16, 2004.

Information sheets and maps can be downloaded from the Refuge website. Interested hunters can also pick up the sheets at the Refuge, Green Point and several area businesses that sell hunting licenses. The sheets will be available in early June.

Two New People Helping with Refuge Forest Inventory Project

By Courtney Hays & Benjamin Horney

Courtney Hays

I am working on a forest inventory project for the Michigan Islands NWR and Shiawassee NWR. Through the assistance of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) this opportunity was offered to me. I graduated from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC and Southwestern Community College in Sylva, NC. I received an Associate in Arts degree and a Bachelor of Science degree in Parks and Recreation Management with a concentration in Outdoor Leadership and Instruction. I am enthused about working in the field and contributing to research that will benefit wildlife conservation.

Originally, I was born in Lubbock, TX. My family moved to the Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina and lived there for much of my childhood. I graduated from high school at the Saint Johnsbury Academy in St. Johnsbury, VT.

Prior to acquiring this position, I have worked with the National Park Service in Tulelake, CA, the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation/Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources in Sapphire, NC, and the USDA Forest Service in Franklin, NC. I am very excited to begin work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Benjamin Horney

I am working on a forest inventory project for the Shiawassee NWR and the Michigan Islands NWR. I attended Lake Superior State University, majoring in Recreation Management and Natural Resource Technology. I am currently attending Mid Michigan Community College where I will complete the remainder of my classes. Growing up in Gladwin County and attending college in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, has given me a greater appreciation for wildlife and natural resources management.

I was previously employed with the Gunnison Valley Adventure Guide Services in Gunnison, CO. This position gave me an opportunity to work with the public in a variety of different ecosystems and climates.

Currently, I am planning to pursue a career in natural resources management. Someday I hope to work for a National Wildlife Refuge, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan State Forest Service or for a wildlife educational facility.



Inventorying Plant Communities in Shiawassee and Michigan Islands Refuges

By Rick McAvinchey, Biological Technician

Last summer we began a project to inventory the forested areas found on the Refuge. There are roughly 3,800-acres of forested land on this Refuge, most of which is a bottomland, floodplain hardwood mixture. Most of this forest appears to be second growth, ranging between 50- and 90-years-old. By learning more accurately what tree and smaller plant combinations are in the forests, we can do a better job of developing management plans for the various wooded areas based on the wildlife habitat goals outlined in the Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, while fine-tuning those goals with new information from the inventories. The challenge is to provide the best mix of habitats for general wildlife that use the Refuge, while trying to provide for species of concern that require specific habitat conditions. Another major goal of these vegetation inventories is to document locations of rare and special concern plant communities and the presence and locations of invasive plant species, which are increasingly a serious problem in habitat management.

After researching and comparing a variety of forest inventory methodologies being used in North America, we chose to use the U.S. Forest Service FSVEG, common stand exam program. The methodology is well established and we can compare and incorporate our vegetation data with theirs to add to the common pool of habitat information among our agencies. We have had very good cooperation with Huron-Manistee National Forest silviculturalists in developing this methodology and protocol for our particular forests.

This year we have added the project of inventorying the vegetation on the four islands we administer in Lake Huron: Big and Little Charity Islands in Saginaw Bay and Thunder Bay and Scarecrow Islands in Thunder Bay. The vegetation on the two smaller islands will be surveyed in day trips, while other Refuge folks survey nesting gulls, cormorants, terns, herons and other birds. Extended camping will be required while completing the inventories on the two larger islands.

The islands inventory project was made possible by a grant from the Michigan DNR. Our Friends group applied for the grant and will administrator the funds, cooperating with Michelle, Doug, Jim and me on the project. This requires considerable coordination, and allows the Friends organization to be of great help to

the Refuge.

For the islands project we hired two young recent and former university students, Courtney and Ben, for six months. You will read about them in separate articles. For continuing the forest inventory on the Refuge we are hiring two more student interns for three month internships through the Student Conservation Association (SCA), as we did last year. When Ben, Courtney and I are finished with the islands inventory and have entered and analyzed the data with the FSVEG programs, they will join the other two in the Shiawassee Refuge forest inventory.

“Furbearers such as muskrats need an insulating cover of deep water in order to be able to feed and travel under the ice.”

This is an exciting time here at the Shiawassee and Michigan Islands Refuges, because these long-overdue inventories are now happening. They will help immensely with better scientific management of these important wildlife sanctuaries.

SITE Demonstration Visitors Day on April 28



About 80 people participated in EPA's SITE Demonstration Visitors Day on April 28 at Green Point. Six developers each tested 209 dioxin samples on-site from April 26 through May 5. Their goal was to find new technologies for determining dioxin levels in soil and sediment. Photo by Rachel Sell, Battelle Institute.

Friends Member Close-up – Longtime Refuge Volunteer and Birder

By Robert Grefe, Friends Board of Directors

Ann and I will have been married 65 years this July. We have three children, 7 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. I retired from Dow Chemical in 1980 which gave me more time to volunteer at Green Point and the Refuge.

I have always loved the outdoors. Some of my earliest memories are of helping my uncle take pictures of wildflowers with his plate camera. I loved hunting and fishing when I was younger, but gradually, the guns and poles were replaced by binoculars and a camera.

I helped friends with banding birds for a few years and then applied for my own banding permit in 1965. I have banded all sorts of birds around the state, including the Refuge.

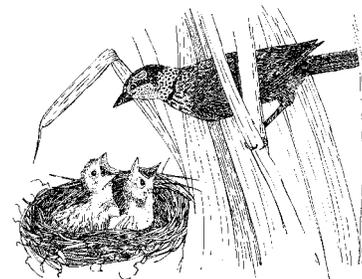
While I enjoy the huge flocks of waterfowl, my main interest is songbirds. My goal has been to keep a weekly account of their activities. On the Refuge I and several other volunteers are involved with a nationwide program called MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship). We are

entering our sixth year of the ten year program.

I have been a part of the Friends group for several years. One of the group's goals is to develop the Cass River Unit behind the Cracker Barrel Restaurant in Bridgeport. By the time this newsletter comes out, we will have opened "The Trailhead" bookstore. I encourage all of you to attend one of our monthly meetings and join our group. Let's make our projects for the Refuge a reality!

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Green Point ELC. Everyone is invited to attend. For more information about the Friends group or to become a member, contact the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, P.O. Box 20129, Saginaw, MI 48602. New Friends membership brochures are available at the Refuge Headquarters and at Green Point.



Water, Water Everywhere – And That's a Good Thing!

By Ed De Vries, Assistant Manager

The flooding which occurred on the refuge during the second week of March caused minor erosion damage on low dikes and displaced some of the wildlife, but that was a small price to pay considering the benefits the refuge received. The high waters were actually quite welcome after much too low water levels over the past few years. We needed the extra water badly, and when I say we, I guess I'm speaking on behalf of the critters. The sloughs, ditches, rivers, and wetlands within the refuge have seen a real dry spell over the last few years, which have translated into lower numbers of water-dependent animals. For instance, the numbers and diversity of frogs and toads has dropped over the last few years as breeding areas and tadpole rearing sites have dried up or been greatly reduced in size. The same is true for aquatic insects such as dragonfly larvae and various aquatic bugs. This spring we've been seeing evidence of turtle losses due to the hard winter freeze. This is most likely because there was a lack of deep water going into hibernation, resulting in insufficient insulating water between the mud bottom they bury into and the ice cover above. The other problem with drought years in these wetlands is it results in cattail and bulrush

taking up too much space, and out-competing more desirable food plants, thereby reducing food, nesting, and cover diversity.

When the waters rose in March it was a welcome sight. The greentree reservoirs (flooded woods) were full of mallard ducks. Formerly dry moist soil units and marshes along the Shiawassee and Cass River filled as the rivers topped the dikes. As the river levels fell we were able to retain water in these units because dikes in the area were repaired last year. Ditches and wetlands which were rank with plant growth filled with water and provided optimum feeding conditions for waterfowl. Two weeks after the flooding, wood frogs and chorus frogs could be heard singing in shallow, temporary wetlands created by the influx of water.

So it appears that if all goes well we'll have a banner year for all wetland-lovers. That means more frogs croaking, more toads trilling, improved nesting areas for marsh birds such as rails and bitterns, and more sights and sounds for all of us to enjoy as we experience spring at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

Shiawassee NWR
6975 Mower Rd.
Saginaw, MI 48601
Phone: 989-777-5930
Fax: 989-777-9200
Hours: M - F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Refuge Reporter is published quarterly
by the Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

We're on the web!

[Http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee](http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee)



Two Children's Day Camps Offered at Green Point this Summer

by *Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

Grab your backpacks and get ready for another summer adventure at Green Point! Green Point will be offering two different day camps for children this summer. You must register for each camp by calling Green Point at (989) 759-1669.

Summer Discovery Camp - June 23 & 24, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
For children aged 4- to 6-years-old

Explore the wildlife of Green Point through crafts, hikes, stories and other fun activities. This year's camp will focus on birds and bugs. A snack will be provided each day. Cost of the camp is \$5.

Jr. Refuge Manager Academy - July 13, 14, & 15, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. For children entering the third and fourth grades this fall.

Learn some of the skills that Refuge Managers use everyday

to help wildlife and the habitat they need. Lots of fun activities are planned. On the last day of the camp a graduation ceremony and a special guided tour of the Refuge will be available for Academy participants and their families. A snack will be provided each day. Cost of the Academy is \$15.



Biological Technician Rick McAvinchey shows 2003 Academy participants how to use a compass. Photo by Becky Goche

Calendar of Events

2004 Refuge Photo Contest

September 1, 2003 to August 31, 2004

It's not too early to start planning for the 2004 Photo Contest! Visit the Refuge and take some photos and then enter our 2004 Photo Contest. Up to 3 entries total per person may be submitted.

Kids' Free Fishing Day

June 12, 2004, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Ojibway Island, Saginaw

Fishing contest for children aged 3 to 15 years. Lots of food, fun and prizes! Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. See article for more information.

Summer Discovery Camp

June 23 & 24, 2004, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

For children aged 4 to 6 years. See article for more information.

Jr. Refuge Manager Academy

July 13, 14, & 15, 2004, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

For children going into the third and fourth grades this fall. See article for more information.

Once in a Blue Moon Hike

July 31, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

Parking lot at west end of Curtis Road

Join us for the "Blue Moon" of July. The moon isn't really blue; it's just what it's called when there are two full moons in the same month! We will offer a guided tour of the Refuge trails under the light a full moon. The hike is open to all, but we ask that parents with small children use their best judgment whether to bring them or not since we will be walking several miles, late at night.

Looking Ahead – Mark These Dates

August 1 – All deer hunt applications must be postmarked.

September 11 & 12 – Refuge Open House Weekend

October 29 – Nature's Halloween Hike

