

Refuge Reporter

Volume 8, Issue 3

Summer 2005

Bob Grefe Celebrates 22 Years as Refuge Volunteer

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

Robert 'Bob' Grefe became an "official" volunteer at the Shiawassee NWR on February 24, 1983. We say "official" because Grefe had already been bird watching and helping Refuge staff band birds for 20 years prior to this! This year marked Grefe's 22nd anniversary with the Refuge. He was recognized at the Volunteer and Friends dinner on April 27, 2005. He was awarded his 4,000 hours pin. To date, Grefe has donated 4,168.5 hours.

Grefe was a maintenance foreman for Dow in Midland, MI, retiring in 1980. Following retirement, he had more time to devote to his passion – birding. Grefe has been instrumental in doing Refuge bird surveys. He has seen 255 of the Refuge's nearly 270 recorded species! Grefe saw both white ibis ever recorded on the Refuge that somehow meandered here from their typical Gulf and Atlantic coastal ranges. Grefe commented that

"Every time is a new experience. You never know what you will see. Sometimes you don't see anything."



Bob Grefe shows a young boy a bird after he had banded it during a demonstration.

Grefe and his group of five volunteers coordinate the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Produc-
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Special Points:

- *The deadline for Refuge deer hunt applications is August 1, 2005. NEW THIS YEAR—APPLY ON-LINE!*
- *Looking for volunteers to help with children's summer camps.*

Volunteers Needed for Kids' Free Fishing Day on June 11

Kids' Free Fishing Day is Saturday, June 11, at Ojibway Island in Saginaw. Children aged 3 to 15 years enter this fishing contest to win all kinds of prizes and to eat snocones! We are looking for volunteers to help in a number of areas:

- Set up beginning at 6:30 a.m.
- Registration from 7:30 to 10:00 a.m.

- Fish Return area from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- Clean up from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

If you can help, please call Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669 for more information.

Shiawassee NWR—Providing Quality Habitat for Waterfowl and Nongame Birds

By *Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager*

The highest priority for refuge management activities is to provide habitat for waterfowl. This family of birds includes the swans, geese, ducks, and mergansers. Thirty-two waterfowl species have been observed at the refuge, including 10 nesting species. More importantly, the refuge provides a resting, and feeding area for up to 40,000 ducks and 25,000 geese during migration. The refuge provides important migration stopover habitat for the southern James Bay population of Canada geese. Consequently, the refuge is part of a focus area of the Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Joint Venture in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Further, the refuge was designated a globally significant “Important Bird Area” by the American Bird Conservancy and Partners in Flight.

The refuge also provides habitat for a tremendous diversity and abundance of other birds. Currently, the refuge’s bird list includes 273 species. The refuge is a stronghold for declining marsh birds in Michigan, including pied-billed grebe, American and least bittern, Virginia rail, sora, American coot, common moorhen, and black tern. Two pairs of bald eagle nest at the refuge and as many as 65 eagles have been counted here in winter. Shorebirds are imperiled as a group. Yet, up to 1,500 sandpipers and plovers have been counted at the refuge during migration. Some of the most abundant shorebird species here include pectoral sandpiper, dunlin, and lesser yellowlegs. Wading birds find important habitat in refuge wetlands, including great egret, black-crowned night-heron, and green heron. Further, the refuge protects a great blue heronry with over 100 nests. Forest interior songbirds that winter in the tropics, such as veery, black-billed cuckoo, American redstart, scarlet tanager, and rose-breasted grosbeak, find important breeding habitat in the refuge’s large woodlands. In addition, 17 birds on Michigan’s list of endangered or threatened species can be found at the refuge.

Our efforts to provide habitat for waterfowl do not present a “species face-off” with our efforts to benefit other birds. For example, the refuge periodically drains marsh impoundments to promote an abundance of annual wetland plants. The seeds of these plants provide an especially rich carbohydrate food resource for migrant ducks and geese. Further, these plants provide an optimum invertebrate food base. These invertebrates are a critical protein source for waterfowl. However, as we drain these impoundments, we create mudflats and shallow waters that are critical habitats for migrant shorebirds. Further, fish become concentrated as the water goes down, creating a smorgasbord for herons, egrets, eagles, gulls, and terns. When we subsequently return water to the impoundments, ducks and geese find a full menu of seeds, insects, snails, and worms. Additional examples include our maintenance of cattail marshes for migrant dabbling ducks and breeding marshbirds; management of grasslands for nest-

ing mallard, blue-winged teal, bobolink, and sedge wren, and managing waters in our forested impoundments to benefit migrant dabblers, nesting wood duck, and forest interior songbirds. Indeed, the refuge strives to maximize opportunities to integrate our management activities so we can benefit ducks and geese and a wide diversity of nongame birds.

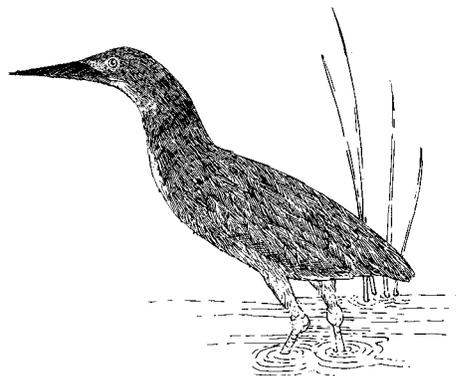
Refuge Recognizes Volunteers at Dinner

By *Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

Shiawassee NWR recognized its volunteers and Friends members on April 27, 2005, for hours that they donated in fiscal year 2004. Thirty-six volunteers and Friends enjoyed a catered meal followed by a special program hosted by Assistant Manager Ed DeVries and Park Ranger Becky Goche.

In FY2004, the Refuge recorded 4,898 volunteer hours donated by nearly 100 people. One of the “big” volunteer projects was a forest inventory conducted on Michigan Islands NWR and Shiawassee NWR. A portion of this study was funded by a grant that the Friends of Shiawassee NWR received. Volunteers were also instrumental in the numerous special events that the Refuge hosted throughout the year including Kids’ Free Fishing Day, Annual Refuge Open House, summer camps for children, guided tours/hikes, and the non-ambulatory deer hunt.

Each volunteer received a special water bottle to use on future volunteer projects. In addition, twelve individuals were recognized for donating 40 or more hours during the year. Volunteer Dan Patillo received a 1,500 hour pin. Patillo began volunteering at the Refuge in 1999 and this past fall and winter brought many minority students out to the Refuge as a part of his student internship through Central Michigan University. Bob Grefe was awarded a 4,000 hour pin. Grefe started doing bird surveys on the Refuge on February 24, 1983. Larry Hess was awarded the 2004 Refuge Volunteer of the Year award for his efforts in caring for the Woodland Trail.



Green heron

Refuge Offers 15 Deer Hunts this Fall

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger



The Refuge will accept applications for its 2005 deer hunting season beginning June 1. We hope to offer an online application system for

our hunters this year. Hopefully, this will cut down on the number of applications that are voided because of incomplete information. Visit our website for more information. Hunters' applications will be entered into a drawing based upon a priority point system started in 2001 for the specified hunt period. **Applications must be postmarked by August 1, 2005, to be eligible for the drawing and associated priority points.**

The Refuge is offering the following 15 hunts this year:

Archery Hunts

Hunt 201, October 29—November 2

Hunt 202, November 3—November 7

Hunt 203, December 1—December 5

Hunt 204, December 19—December 23

Hunt 205, December 27—December 31

Non-Ambulatory Hunts (Must be in a wheelchair)

Hunt 206, November 15—November 16

Hunt 207, November 19—November 20

Shotgun Hunt

209, November 19—November 20

Special Youth Hunt (Must attend MYHEC program)

November 26—November 27

Muzzleloader Hunts

210, December 9—December 10

211, December 9—December 10

212, December 11—December 12

213, December 11—December 12

214, December 13—December 14

215, December 13—December 14

More information about each hunt can be found on the hunter information sheets. This information and maps of the various hunt areas are on our website. People may also pick up information sheets at the Refuge Headquarters, Green Point Environmental Learning Center and at select licensing outlets and other sites around the state.

Refuge deer hunting permits cost \$10. Hunters who are selected in the drawing will be notified in early September. Deer scouting will be possible during the annual Refuge Open House Weekend, September 10 and 11, 2005.

Above photo: A Refuge buck by Kim LeBlanc

Bob Grefe Continued...

(Continued from page 1)

tion and Survivability) study on the Refuge. The study is entering its sixth year of the total 10 year study. This group of dedicated volunteers leaves home by 4:00 a.m. to ensure that the mist nets are set up before sunrise.

Grefe has been instrumental in recruiting and mentoring other birders for the Refuge. He is seen as a bird expert in the region. When not on the Refuge, Grefe spends a great deal of time volunteering at local nature centers and State parks. He has done hundreds of bird banding demonstrations through the years for school children and adults alike. He currently serves on the Friends of Shiawassee NWR Board of Directors.

Bob is a humble man and in his words, "I haven't done anything special." The staff at Shiawassee NWR knows otherwise.

A Bed of Rose Leaves

Article and illustrations by David Peters, Tractor Operator

Even when we don't always encounter the actual inhabitants of the natural world around us, evidence of their presence abounds. Physical signs such as tracks left by a squirrel bounding through the snow or a neat row of holes left in tree bark by a sapsucker are simple and sure indicators of an animal's occurrence.

Though less obvious, insects also leave ample signs of their activities. This is commonly seen on plants when a leaf or a portion of it has been eaten away. Knowing just what insect was responsible for this is often not possible, but when the notch in the edge of a leaf is a neat, smoothly curved oval shape, it is not likely the work of a hungry caterpillar or beetle at all, but that of a bee. Not just any bee, but one of the genus known appropriately as leaf-cutter bees. And this bee didn't eat the piece of leaf, she carried it away whole to line her nest.

There are 118 known species of leaf-cutter bees native to North America. They are medium sized, from ten to twenty millimeters in length. Like the majority of bees, leaf-cutters are solitary and each female builds and provisions her own nest. She chooses a narrow linear cavity as a nest site – typically a tunnel excavated in dead wood by a beetle, a hollow plant stem, under loose bark, or in various suitable nooks and crannies both natural and man-made.

The leaves chosen by the leaf-cutter bee are usually somewhat stiff and smooth on at least one side. When available, rose leaves are often a favorite selection. A few species also use flower petals. Regardless of which she chooses, the bee begins by positioning herself on the edge facing the base and uses her jaws to shear off a piece, cutting in a smooth arc. Just before the last cut, she vibrates her wings rapidly so she is ready for flight as soon as the piece is fully detached. The entire process of cutting one piece takes only two to three seconds. The piece is then flown back to the nest site.

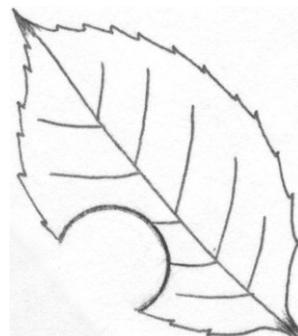
Depending on which part of her nest she is building, the bee has several different shapes she will cut. The first pieces are about the length of her body and somewhat of an oval rectangle. These are pressed together in layers at the rear of the nest forming a cup shape. As pieces are pushed into final position, she crimps the edges so that sap oozes out, effectively gluing the layers together. Once this first segment of the nest is completed, the bee begins cutting elongate oval pieces that are longer than her body. She lines the walls of the cavity with these, positioning them with the smooth side in. Once the back and walls are completed, the bee provisions the cell with a paste like food mixture of pollen and honey, and then lays a single egg. Finally, she cuts circular shaped leaf pieces and pushes them into place, plugging this first cell

and forming the back of the next cell at the same time.

Each cell takes an average of one day to complete, the total number of cell per nest varying by species. The egg inside hatch in 12-16 days and the larva feeds off the provisions until spinning a cocoon 17-18 days later, where it remains until emerging as an adult the following year.

Conservation of leaf-cutter bees is important to preserving the integrity of life. Like all bees, they are critical to the pollination of much of the world's flora, including crops. Shiawassee NWR, with its abundant supply of the natural nest sites leaf-cutter bees require, as well as flowers for their pollen and nectar needs, contributes significantly to maintaining healthy leaf-cutter bee populations. Actually they don't require large refuges to thrive. Chances are you can observe leaf-cutter bees, or more likely the oval notches they've left in leaves, in your own yard*. And you can help them out there as well, by providing their two essentials – nectar and pollen via a variety of plants that blossom throughout the year; and places to nest such as dead plant stems or a big old branch that wood boring beetles have used. Just a simple place where the leaf-cutter bee can carefully construct her wonderful, leaf lined nest.

* Please rest assured that leaf-cutter bees, like all native bees, are docile. Though they do have the ability to sting mildly, they do so only when their lives are severely threatened. By far, the vast majority of people who claim to have been stung by a "bee" are likely the victim of a yellowjacket, hornet, or honeybee.



Mobile Bookstore Taking Shape and Upcoming Programs

By Janet Martineau, Activities Committee Chair

Work has begun on the Refuge-donated trailer which the Friends of the Shiawassee NWR is turning into a mobile bookstore/gift shop/concession stand. Friends volunteers have ripped out the interior of the three-room dwelling and are beginning to install book shelves and other containers which will hold items for sale. They also applied for a \$5,000 start-up grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as well as additional start-up funds from Saginaw area foundations to stock the store and outfit the kitchen for concession use. And come fall, students at the Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy will paint the exterior in a colorful montage depicting Refuge critters.

Anyone willing to help volunteer in the retooling of the trailer (work usually takes place Saturday mornings at the Refuge headquarters), with ideas for books and other nature products to sell (especially those created by Michiganders) or willing to volunteer to work once it opens (hopefully by mid-summer) please call Trailhead Store chair Janet Martineau at 790-7341 or e-mail her at jmartineau@thesaginawnews.com.

Upcoming Summer Events

Looking for something to do this summer in the great outdoors? The Friends of the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is hosting three events of interest — two of which need advance reservations.

Saturday, June 25, "Monarch Magic" workshop

- Starts at 1 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple.
- Join Denny Brooks, an amateur naturalist and nature photographer from Midland, on a "hunt" for beautiful butterflies and darting dragonflies — nets and other materials provided
- For the first 45 minutes Brooks will discuss, inside, the basic life cycle and habitat of the Monarch and its yearly migration to central Mexico. And then for an hour following he and his participants will take to the field to catch and identify butterflies and dragonflies.

All ages are welcome, but pre-registration is required by June 20 since the field tour is limited to 20 participants. The fee is \$2 a person, free to Friends members. Call 759-1669 to make a reservation.

Wednesday, July 6, "Cooking in the Great Outdoors" presentation

- Starts at 7 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning

Center, as a part of the "Nurturing Nature" First Wednesday lecture series.

- Tonya Thompson, the outdoor recreation and event coordinator for the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, will rustle up two or three recipes aimed at campers and other outdoor types, discuss cooking over a fire vs. a stove, and offer tips and tricks for the outdoor enthusiast.

Pre-registration is required by June 30, and the charge is \$5 for all those attending since Thompson will cook food to sample. Call 759-1669 to reserve a spot.

Wednesday, August 3, Summertime at the Refuge Friends Picnic

- Bring a dish to pass and your own serviceware/beverage to the refuge headquarters, 6975 Mower, for a 7 p.m. picnic followed by a private drive-through at the refuge as the sun starts setting.

REFUGE REPORTER

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Volume 8, Issue 3

Editor: Becky Goche

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Established in October, 1953 and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Shiawassee NWR provides resting, nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other birds. Its mission is to preserve or manage an undeveloped expanse of floodplain forest, marshes, rivers, and associated habitat within an agricultural and urban landscape through habitat management, encouraging public stewardship, educational programs, and private lands activities.

Refuge Manager—Steve Kahl

Assistant Refuge Manager—Ed DeVries

Biologist—Jim Dastyck

Private Lands Biologist—Michelle Vander Haar

Biological Science Technician—Vacant

Park Ranger/Volunteer Coordinator—Becky Goche

Administrative Technician—Mary Ann Gillette

Maintenance Staff—Marion "Butch" Nowosatko and David Peters

Law Enforcement Officer—Jonathan Priday and Kevin Shinn

Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

A nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization established in 1999 to promote the preservation of the natural and historical resources of the Refuge, foster its use and enjoyment by the public consistent with the protection and preservation of its environment, and engage in such educational, scientific and civic activities as will assist the management of the Refuge in carrying out its mandates.

Refuge Website: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/shiawassee>

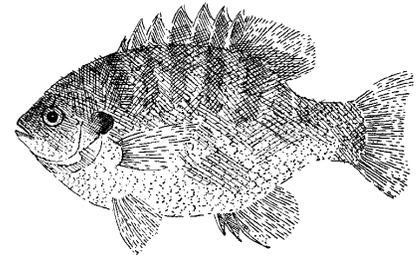
Shiawassee NWR
6975 Mower Rd.
Saginaw, MI 48601
Phone: 989-777-5930
Fax: 989-777-9200
Hours: M - F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We're on the web!

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



Kids' Free Fishing Day is Saturday, June 11, for children aged 3 to 15 years



Summer Camps for Children Planned at Green Point

by Becky Goche, Park Ranger

Summer is a great time for kids to get outdoors and learn about nature. Two camps will be offered for children this summer at Green Point.

The **Summer Discovery Camp for Kids** will be held on June 25 and July 23, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. This camp is designed for children aged 4 to 6 years. Each Saturday session will feature different activities, crafts, hikes, stories, etc. Children can attend one or both Saturdays. Each session costs \$2 per child. Registration is appreciated, but not required. Call Green Point at (989) 759-1669 to register or for more information.

The **Jr. Refuge Manager Academy**, slated for July 19

and 20, is for children entering the third and fourth grades. The Academy runs from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. each day. The first day will be held at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center and the second day will be "in the field" at the Refuge. Children will learn about habitat, wildlife and other skills that a Refuge Manager uses every day. Of course they will have fun while they're doing it! The Academy fee is \$5 per child. Children will need to bring a sack lunch both days. Registration for the Academy is required by July 15. Call Green Point at (989) 759-1669 to register.



Nurturing Nature First Wednesday Series

- All programs begin at 7:00 p.m. and last 60 – 90 minutes.
- Held at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street, Saginaw, unless otherwise noted.
- Admission: \$2 for individuals or \$5 for a family. FREE for members of the Friends of the Shiawassee NWR.

Wildflower Folklore

June 1, 2005

Valerie Blaschka from the Bay City State Recreation Area will discuss superstitions connected to wildflowers, as well as their medical “signatures.”

Cooking in the Great Outdoors

July 6, 2005

Tonya Thompson from the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission will share recipes and samples aimed at campers and other outdoor types. Dutch oven cooking, fire vs. stove cooking, and more will be explored. **Registration is required by June 30. Call (989) 759-1669. Fee is \$5 per person.**

Summertime at the Refuge Friends Picnic

August 3, 2005

Meet at the Refuge Headquarters, 6975 Mower Road

Bring a dish to share, your own beverage and table service. Afterwards, go on a guided tour of the Refuge.

Upcoming First Wednesday Programs:

Just what is a Refuge and why is there one in Saginaw? – September 7
Studying and Carving Birds – October 5
Woodland Indian Life – November 2

Workshops

Drawing in Nature – June 4, 2005

Register by May 31 – Call (989) 759-1669

Monarch Magic – June 25, 2005

Register by June 20 – call (989) 759-1669

Looking Ahead in 2005

Refuge Deer Applications due – August 1

Refuge Open House Weekend – September 10 & 11

Calendar of Events

Kids' Free Fishing Day

June 11, 2005, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Ojibway Island in Saginaw

Fishing contest for children aged 3 to 15 years. Lots of prizes to win – the more you catch, the more you could win! Bring your own pole, tackle and bait. Refreshments will be available. Register from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Awards given at 11:30 a.m.

Summer Discovery Camp for Kids

June 25 & July 23, 2005, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

For children aged 4 to 6 years. Come to one or both sessions, each will have different activities – hikes, crafts, stories, etc. Each session costs \$2 per child.

Night Hike

August 12, 2005, 8:00 p.m.

Meet at parking lot at west end of Curtis Road

Two different hikes will be offered: a shorter one for children and a 5-mile one for avid hikers. Bring water and mosquito spray. In the event of severe weather, the hike will be canceled.

Jr. Refuge Manager

Academy

July 19 & 20, 2005, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC & the Refuge

For children entering 3rd and 4th grades. Cost is \$5 per child. Registration is required. See article for more information.

For more information, contact Green Point ELC at (989) 759-1669.