

# Refuge Reporter

Volume 10, Issue 1

Winter 2006-2007

## DRAW on Your Skills for the Junior Duck Stamp Program

By Becky Goche, Michigan Junior Duck Stamp Coordinator



This marks the fifteenth year of the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program. Thousands of students nationwide participates in this program and art contest each

year. Last year 378 students in grades K through 12 participated in Michigan alone! Public schools, private schools and students from home schools were represented. Every year students, teachers and parents from across the country learn about wetland habitat and

waterfowl conservation through this program. As an added benefit, each year there is a national art contest where students, teachers and schools compete for scholarships and other prizes. All of the national winners first must win their individual state's competition.

The Junior Duck Stamp Program is based on the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the "Duck Stamp." Federal Duck Stamps are pictorial revenue stamps and although called "stamp," they are not valid for postage. Created in 1934 as the Federal migratory waterfowl hunting license and as a way to purchase and conserve our Nation's wet-

(Continued on page 2)

## Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series Returns for 2007

By Janet Martineau, Friends Board

The Friends of the Shiawassee National Refuge bring a familiar face back to kick off its **2007 Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series** at Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. Kyle Bagnall, the manager of historical programs at Mid-

land's Chippewa Nature Center, will present "A Lake Superior Journey with Bela Hubbard" at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2007.

Bagnall's first in-character **Nurturing Nature** presentation covered the explorer's 1837 journey from Detroit to

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### Special Points:

- *Do you feed birds? Make sure that you clean your feeders with a mild bleach solution (rinse well!) and remove old seed hulls from below your feeders. This will help cut down on spreading disease among our feathered friends.*
- *Cross-country skiing is a wonderful way to view wildlife along refuge trails, provided there is enough snow. A special guided ski tour is being offered on January 27 at Green Point. See the calendar insert for more information.*

# Michigan's Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program Continued

lands, Federal Duck Stamps also serve as an entrance pass to national wildlife refuges that have an entrance fee. Since it started, the sales of Federal Duck Stamps have generated more than \$670 million, which has been used to help purchase or lease more than 5.2 million acres of waterfowl habitat in the U.S. These lands are managed by the refuges just like Shiawassee NWR. Proceeds from the Junior Duck Stamp support conservation education and provide awards and scholarships for the students, teachers and schools that participate in the program. You can purchase Federal Duck Stamps (\$15) and soon Junior Duck Stamps (\$5) at the refuge.

The Junior Duck Stamp Program uses art and science to teach students the value of wetlands. A curriculum guide is available online or from me for teachers to use. A new curriculum guide is now being developed which will include Federal Science benchmarks for each activity. This new guide should be available for the 2007-2008 school year. Using scientific and wildlife observation skills, the program helps students communicate visually what they have learned by creating an entry to the Junior Duck Stamp art contest. A prime location to help students visualize and artistically represent waterfowl in its habitat is the Shiawassee NWR! Jaye Boswell, a teacher in Sanibel, FL, stated, "As the Art Teacher, I loved being able to introduce the various aspects of the natural environment emphasizing the importance of saving wetlands, preserving natural vegetation, and maintaining safe habitats for our magnificent ducks, swans, and geese."

The Junior Duck Stamp art contest begins each spring when students submit their artwork to the refuge by March 15. Students at the state level are judged in four groups according to grade level: Group I: K-3, Group II: 4-6, Group III: 7-9, and Group IV: 10-12. Three first, second, and third place winners are selected for each group. In addition, 16 honorable mention winners are picked in each group. Judges select the "Best of Show" from the 12 first place winners, which is then submitted to the national Junior Duck Stamp Contest. The first place design from the national contest is used to create the Junior Duck Stamp for the following year.

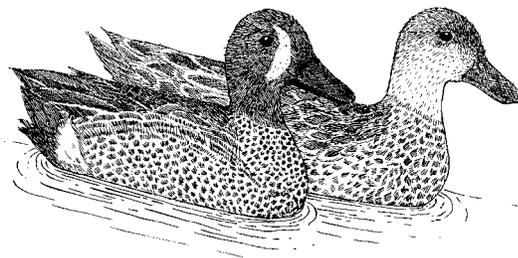
All entries will receive certificates of participation and winners will receive special ribbons and prizes. New this year, Bass Pro, a national sponsor will award \$100 to each State Best of Show winner! All artwork will be returned to the students or schools. The Best of Show entry is included in a national traveling display. In addition, the top winning artwork in Michigan will travel around the state for up to one year following the contest.

To learn more about the Jr. Duck Stamp Program, download curriculum or get the entry form and rules, visit the website: [www.fws.gov/duckstamps](http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps) and click on the Junior Duck Stamp link. I also can mail the 2007 informational brochure to you – either call me at (989) 759-1669 or email me at [Becky\\_Goche@fws.gov](mailto:Becky_Goche@fws.gov).

## Quick Requirements for Design and Submission\*

\*This list is not complete, please see official rules for more information.

- Artwork must be 9" x 12", in horizontal format.
- Images must be a live portrayal of a Native North American duck, swan or goose (42 species are eligible).
- Entries should not be matted nor have a border.
- Entry may be multi-color, black-and-white, or a single color; rendered in ink, paint, pastel, crayon, or pencil.
- No lettering, words, signatures or initials may appear on the front of the design.
- Design entries must be contestant's original, hand-drawn creation and may not be traced or copied from published photographs or other artists' works.
- Deadline for submission is March 15, 2007.



## Nurturing Nature Series Continued

Saginaw and Midland. In 1840, Hubbard was among a party of scientists who surveyed Michigan's rugged and remote shoreline of Lake Superior. The report on their trip to the region set off the mineral rush to Copper Country.

At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 7, 2007, Michelle Vander Haar, Private Lands Biologist for the refuge will discuss wetland conservation and how landowners can restore wetlands and grasslands on their property.

We are still hammering out the rest of the *Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series* for 2007, but expect to meet some live bats; go on a short hike looking for amphibians and reptiles; learn about planting perennials, shrubs and trees that are native to Michigan, and brush up on wilderness survival skills.

Don't miss our December offering of poetry and cocoa!

## How Clean Is Your Bird Feeder?

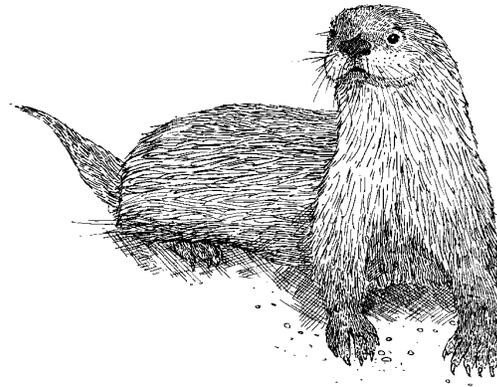
Is your bird feeder a breeding ground for disease? Salmonella bacterium could be lurking there, if you're not careful. Salmonella is responsible for numerous die-offs of song birds nationwide each year. The National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI offers three important recommendations regarding salmonella bacterial infections in birds.

First, this bacterium can infect nearly all pets, livestock and persons; therefore, pets (especially cats) should not be allowed to eat or come in contact with sick and dead song birds because they could develop salmonella bacterial infections.

Second, persons can be infected by salmonella bacteria, so strict personal hygiene must be practiced by persons that handle the bird feeders, sick and dead birds, and any bird droppings around the bird feeders. Good personal hygiene means thoroughly washing the hands after handling birds and bird feeders, and washing any clothing that comes into contact with bird droppings.

And third, the National Wildlife Health Center and

Members of the River Junction Poets and a nature photographer will present "Poems and Pictures from the Natural World" in 2006's final *Nurturing Nature* offering at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 6, at Green Point Environmental Learning Center. Free cocoa and cookies are a part of the evening's relaxing festivities.



many other wildlife experts recommend that only those bird feeders that are easily removed, washed and disinfected should be used to feed song birds. Washing and disinfecting bird feeders should be done at least weekly, and more often if bird droppings tend to accumulate on the feeder. After thoroughly washing the bird feeder with soap and water (to remove droppings and moldy feed), the feeder can be disinfected in a bleach solution (half cup bleach in one gallon of water). In addition, bird feeders should be moved around in the yard regularly to prevent build up of potentially contagious bird droppings under the feeders. You should also dispose of seed hulls beneath the feeders to prevent build up. If any persons or pets develop "symptoms" of salmonella bacterial infection (cramps, intense diarrhea, weakness, fever) after handling sick/dead birds or the bird feeder, it might be desirable to seek medical or veterinary care.

# The Refuge Year in Review

By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

As 2006 draws to a close, the time for reflecting upon the prior year is upon us. All of us who value this wonderful refuge should celebrate the successes of the year. Importantly, we also need to remember the setbacks we suffered. By keeping both the positive and negative in proper perspective, we can enter 2007 in better position to maintain and improve the refuge for the benefit of wildlife and people.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is "Wildlife First." Thus, I am glad to report that this has been an especially good year for managing water levels in the refuge's 18 wetland impoundments. Staff diligence and cooperation from Mother Nature enabled us to keep water levels at targeted elevations for virtually the whole year. Consequently, these impoundments yielded optimum wetland habitat conditions for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and other wildlife. In fact, in spring migration we counted a new record high of 2,152 of our most common shorebird – the dunlin. In October we counted over 11,000 mallards in one impoundment alone – Pool 1A. Also, good habitat management helped our sandhill crane numbers to continue to increase and we reached a new high of 108 this fall. Other wildlife high points include a new record high count of 18 short-eared owls and several new species added to the refuge's lists of vascular plants, insects, amphibians, and mammals.

The refuge's public use program continued to grow in 2006. The refuge expanded its offerings of birding auto tours, nature walks and night hikes. The public response to the Eagles and Owls tours coordinated with the Saginaw Valley Audubon Society was particularly great. Overall, 28 special events, programs, tours, or hikes took place on the refuge this past year. The refuge documented over 9,000 visitors to our Cass River Boat Launch which was newly renovated in 2005. Further, we continue to receive accolades and appreciation from visitors, neighbors and community leaders for demonstrating quality stewardship of the site and providing a healthful recreational opportunity for the public. Total refuge visitation increased from 54,000 to 58,000.

The refuge began a partnership with the Saginaw Correctional Facility to develop a perpetual seed source of native plant species of local genotype and ecotype. The correctional facility currently has a gardening program that produces hundreds of flats of annual flowers that are planted at local municipal facilities. This partnership will expand the gardening program to provide seeds of native plants that will be used for prairie and wetland restorations at the refuge. Species currently being propagated include prairie cordgrass, New York ironweed, tall sunflower, and Indian hemp. This partnership is being facilitated by grants from Saginaw Bay

WIN and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The refuge had several other important wins in 2006. With the help from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, we seeded 138 acres to native prairie grasses and forbs on the Sawatski tract which is visible from M-13. With the help of volunteers and the Michigan DNR we were able to resume duck banding efforts this year after a one year hiatus. This banding was coupled with efforts to monitor refuge ducks for avian influenza, which thankfully was not found. The refuge continued its efforts to be a visible part of the community and appeared in 35 articles printed in Michigan newspapers and magazines in 2006. Our new Refuge Officer completed a full year of law enforcement duties with over 720 law enforcement incidents recorded in FY2006. Several illegal activities were stopped including poaching of garter snakes, deer baiting, commercial harvest of earthworms, low helicopter overflights, and marijuana cultivation.

Unfortunately, 2006 also had its share of losses. Over 1,300 feet of our Pool 5 dike was eroded to the road edge and even undercut in places by high water in the Spaulding Drain during April floods. This dike enables the refuge to manage water levels in 820 acres of forested wetland and provides important management access for refuge staff. Further, this dike is an important stretch of the auto tour route that is open to the public during our annual Open House event. Over 820 visitors used this route during the 2005 Open House. Unfortunately, the auto tour had to be cancelled in 2006 to preserve public safety. Moreover, future flood events may soon breach the dike entirely.

A more chronic problem for the refuge and the entire Refuge System is the continued erosion of our base budget. Refuge System budget increases have not kept pace with increasing costs since our 2003 Centennial. The primary means to bridge this budget gap is to leave positions vacant as employees retire or leave refuges for other jobs. This affect is being felt at the refuge as the biotech position remains unfilled. Although refuge staff and volunteers try to do more with less, it is virtually impossible to lose 40 hours of work per week without negative affects to the quality of refuge habitats, programs and facilities. Unfortunately, I do not think we have seen the worst yet. As overseas conflicts continue, the strain on the federal budget will also continue. Thus, I predict any future vacancies that may come up at the refuge may not be filled for a long time.

I look forward to a productive 2007. With the help of volunteers and our conservation partners we can continue to make the refuge a better place for wildlife and people.

# Friends of Shiawassee Annual Meeting set for January 17

At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17, 2007, the Friends of the Shiawassee NWR Board of Directors will conduct its annual meeting at Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw.

On the agenda are approval of new bylaws reducing the size of the board, the election or re-election of new or returning board members, and the election of the executive board of officers for 2007. All current Friends members are invited to attend

## Hunting Expo Volunteers Needed

The Friends of Shiawassee NWR are sponsoring a booth at the "Hunting Expo" again this year. The Expo will be held at the Birch Run Expo Center on February 2—4, 2007. We will be promoting visitation to the refuge. We need help staffing the booth on Saturday and Sunday. Workers need to be able to cover at least a 5 hour shift. Both Friends members and refuge volunteers are welcome to help. If you would like to help, please contact Richard Hodge at 989-652-9019.

## 2006 Refuge Amateur Photo Contest Winners

Ten photos were entered into the contest by 6 people, which ran from September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2006. During the Refuge Open House Weekend on September 9, visitors voted for their favorite photos in each category.

Winners in the Wildlife and Plantlife Category were: First place – Kim LeBlanc, St. Charles; Second place – Mike Sonnenberg, Saginaw; and Third Place – Steve Gasser, Saginaw. Winners in the Habitat Category were: First place – Steve Gasser, Saginaw; Second place – David M. Blanford, Alma; and Third place – Kim LeBlanc, St. Charles. There were no entries in the People or Young Nature Photographer categories. David M. Blanford won the "Refuge Manager's Choice" with his entry entitled "A Hiding Place" featuring a well-camouflaged frog. Winning photos are posted on the refuge's website.

**Be sure to renew your Friends membership. Use the form enclosed in this newsletter.**

## 2006 Trail Closures for Deer Hunting

### Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

December 2—3, December 8—11, December 20—24, and December 27—31.

### Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road

December 2—3 and December 8—11.

### Cass River Unit in Bridgeport Township

December 20—24 and December 27—31.

Trails at Green Point remain open for your use! Keep in mind, no bicycles or pets are allowed on these trails.

## REFUGE REPORTER

Published quarterly by the Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge for the refuge.

Volume 10, Issue 1

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

### Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

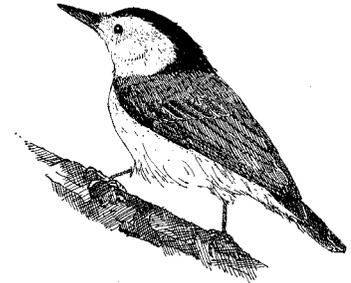
A nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization established in 1999 to promote the preservation of the natural and historical resources of the Refuge, foster its use and enjoyment by the public consistent with the protection and preservation of its environment, and engage in such educational, scientific and civic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



***Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series Kicks Off for 2007 with a Familiar Face***

## New Classroom Trunk Featuring Invasive Species Available in January

*By Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

You've asked for it, and soon you will have it! When I met with Saginaw School District Science Coordinators earlier this fall, they expressed interest in a program about invasive species. A new classroom trunk for students in grades 4 to 8 has been developed to help meet this need.

The ***Experience the Great Lakes*** trunk, donated by Michigan Sea Grant in Ann Arbor forms the backbone of this trunk. Included is Sea Grant's ***Project FLOW—Fisheries Learning on the Web***. This curriculum covers Great Lakes food webs, aquatic invasive species, water, and fish. Specific benchmarks and standards that are explicitly covered by each lesson are documented for two age levels: elementary (4-6 grade) and middle (6-8 grade) and the state and national stan-

dards/benchmarks. Posters, DVD's, specimens, and additional information about non-aquatic invasive species are also included.

The ***Experience the Great Lakes*** trunk is free for teachers to use and may be borrowed for up to two weeks at a time. Your only cost is picking up and returning the trunk to Green Point. Call (989) 759-1669 to reserve the trunk.

This trunk joins a collection of others covering a variety of natural resources-related topics. Each trunk contains a variety of items to enhance your curriculum including books, videos, posters, puppets, skulls, and more. Visit our website or request a copy of our Educator's Guide for more information.

## **Nurturing Nature 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.

### **Poems and Pictures from the Natural World**

**December 6, 2006**

Members of the River Junction Poets and a nature photographer will explore the natural world in words and imagery. Free cocoa and cookies.

### **A Lake Superior Journey with Bela Hubbard**

**January 10, 2007**

Kyle Bagnall, the manager of historical programs at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center, returns with the continuing saga of Bela Hubbard. In 1840, Hubbard was among a party of scientists who surveyed Michigan's rugged and remote shoreline of Lake Superior. Their report set off the mineral rush to Copper Country.

### **Add Some Wildlife Habitat to Your Home**

**February 7, 2007**

Michelle Vander Haar, Private Lands Biologist from the refuge, will discuss wetland conservation and how landowners can restore wetlands and grasslands on their property.

### **The Avifauna of Shiawassee NWR**

**March 7, 2007**

The refuge provides habitat for a great diversity and abundance of birds – 277 species have been documented here! Refuge Manager Steve Kahl will describe the refuge's birdlife and the habitat management programs that make it so attractive to our feathered friends.

## **Short-eared Owl Hike**

**February 3, 2007, 5:00 p.m.**

**Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road**

See and hear the owl that sounds like a small barking dog! Refuge volunteer Steve Gasser will lead you on a sunset hike to see the endangered, short-eared owls that winter at the refuge. Dress for the weather, bring a flashlight, and be prepared to walk about 5 miles on snow/ice covered trails.

# Calendar of Events

## **Winter Tree ID**

**January 13, 2007, 1:00 p.m.**

**Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road**

Refuge Manager Steve Kahl will help you identify trees when all the leaves are gone. Dress for the weather and wear boots appropriate for walking in snow.

## **Wildlife Watching from Cross Country Skis**

**January 27, 2007, 10:00 a.m.**

**Green Point ELC**

Strap on your skis and explore the wildlife found along Green Point's flat, winding trails with Park Ranger Becky Goche. You must provide your own equipment. Reservations are required because space is limited. Call (989) 759-1669 by January 25. If snow conditions are poor, this will become a walking tour.

## **Night Hike**

**March 2, 2007, 6:30 p.m.**

**Ferguson Bayou Trail**

Refuge volunteer Steve Gasser will lead cold weather lovers on a 5-mile hike on refuge trails. This hike is not recommended for children or the faint of heart. Dress for the weather, bring a flashlight, and be prepared to walk on snow/ice covered trails.

## **Junior Duck Stamp**

**Design Contest**

**Deadline is March**

**15, 2007**

Contest is for students in grades K-12. See article inside for more information.

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

# FRIENDS OF SHIAWASSEE NWR MEMBERSHIP PAGE

## Friends of Shiawassee NWR Membership

Renewal       New membership

General Membership

\$10 – Individual (1) vote.

\$25 – Family (2) votes. (Member, spouse and children under age 18)

- Each membership receives quarterly newsletter - "Refuge Reporter."
- Each membership includes voting rights and opportunity to hold office.

Supporting Levels (includes 1 year individual membership): "Goose" \$50, "Blue Heron" \$75, "Owl" \$100, "Bald Eagle" \$125 & over

No membership at this time, but please accept my contribution.

\*Membership is for calendar year. Dues paid after October 1 include remainder of current year plus the following year.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to "Friends of Shiawassee NWR", PO Box 20129, Saginaw, MI, 48602.

Contributions to the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, are tax deductible according to IRS guidelines.

### Friends' Volunteer Opportunities

### Do you have any of these skills?

\_\_\_\_\_ Staffing Trailhead Store

\_\_\_\_\_ Leading walking tours

\_\_\_\_\_ Helping with workshops

\_\_\_\_\_ Assisting with refuge auto tours

\_\_\_\_\_ Doing outreach events, i.e. fairs

\_\_\_\_\_ Assisting with First Wednesday

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing newsletter articles

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing/developing grants

\_\_\_\_\_ Serving as Committee member

\_\_\_\_\_ Leading children's activities

\_\_\_\_\_ Developing trails

\_\_\_\_\_ Computer skills

\_\_\_\_\_ Photography

\_\_\_\_\_ Carpentry skills

\_\_\_\_\_ Business organizational skills

\_\_\_\_\_ Research

\_\_\_\_\_ Artistic skills

\_\_\_\_\_ Fund raising

\_\_\_\_\_ Grant writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Researching/Ordering merchandise

\_\_\_\_\_ Other – please list:

Board meetings held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. General meetings with special programs are held at various times throughout the year. Friends Board of Directors Officers are:

President – Charles Hoover

Vice President 1 – Dick Von Berg

Vice President 2 – Susan Scott

Treasurer – Wil Hufton II

Secretary – Vacant