

Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Reporter

Volume 10, Issue 2

Spring 2007

Shiawassee Refuge Faces Reduced Staff

By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Regional Office announced in January a plan to reduce staffing at the Region's national wildlife refuges by 71 positions, approximately 20 percent of its workforce over the next three years. The personnel reductions are the result of nationwide budget shortfalls in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only network of federal lands in the world dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation. The Midwest Region National Wildlife Refuge System covers eight states and includes 54 national wildlife refuges, 12 wetland management districts and more than one mil-

lion acres of public land and water.

Since fiscal year 2004, the Midwest Regional Refuge System budget has remained relatively static. At the same time, personnel costs have increased annually. Operational costs, such as fuel, equipment and other expenses have also increased. To offset these rising costs, the Region has already left 35 positions vacant and will reduce staff by an additional 36 positions -- to reach the total of 71 positions -- over the next three years.

The losses will occur in each of the eight states in the Midwest Region. Minnesota will take the largest loss with a reduction of 27 full-time positions. Wisconsin will lose 10 positions, Illinois will lose

(Continued on page 2)

International Migratory Bird Day Activities Planned

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

The refuge is hosting two events over two weekends in celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. To kick the celebration off, a guided bird tour will be held at the Ferguson Bayou Nature Trail on Saturday, May 12, beginning at 8:00 a.m. Refuge volunteer Steve Gas-

ser and Park Ranger Becky Goche will lead participants on a caravan-type tour, with planned stops along the way, to highlight some of the refuge's bird life. In the event of severe weather, this tour will be canceled.

On Saturday, May 19, Assistant Refuge

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

<i>Shiawassee Refuge Faces Reduced Staff Cont.</i>	2
<i>International Migratory Bird Day Cont.</i>	2
<i>Arctic Refuge</i>	3
<i>Friends Annual Meeting</i>	3
<i>Volunteer Note</i>	3

Special Points:

- *The snow and cold weather has been great for cross-country skiing. It's a wonderful way to view wildlife. Seven people attended the guided ski tour on January 27 at Green Point. The highlight was seeing two Carolina wrens.*
- *Junior Duck Stamp Contest judging will take place on March 30 at 9:00 a.m. at Green Point. Five judges will review hundreds of pieces of artwork submitted by students in grades K through 12 to pick 100 winners.*

Shiawassee Refuge Faces Reduced Staff Continued

nine, Iowa will lose eight, Indiana and Missouri will each lose six, Michigan will lose four and Ohio will lose one position. Once these reductions are completed two refuges in Minnesota, Hamden Slough and Crane Meadows, will no longer have staff on-site.

“The Region has developed a plan to focus our current budget toward areas that produce the maximum habitat and visitor use benefits,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson. “But make no mistake, some hard decisions will have to be made and some important work will not get done.”

“The National Wildlife Refuge System has always operated with fewer staff and less funding than any other federal land management agency,” said Regional Refuge System Chief Nita M. Fuller. “Now, faced with reducing our Refuge System field workforce by 20 percent, the National Wildlife Refuge System is forced to reduce wildlife and habitat management efforts, as well as services offered to the visiting public.”

Fuller stressed that while staff will be reduced by 71 positions, there is no plan to involuntarily remove any Refuge employees in the Midwest Region. “Our employees, along with our Friends groups and volunteers, are, and have always been, our most valuable assets. We’ve been doing more with less for some time. Now, however, we’ve reached a breaking point where we can no longer do more with less.”

Shiawassee Refuge will directly feel the affects of the workforce plan. The refuge’s biological technician position has been vacant since April 2005. Consequently, the refuge has reduced, postponed, or eliminated many of its biological and public use programs. For example, the refuge reduced its goose hunt from 7 days per week during the hunting season to four. We implemented invasive species control on 50 percent fewer acres. Our forest inventory program that was initiated in 2004 ceased with over 80% of our lands left to be surveyed. And, the refuge will no longer be able to participate in the Youth Conservation Corps program.

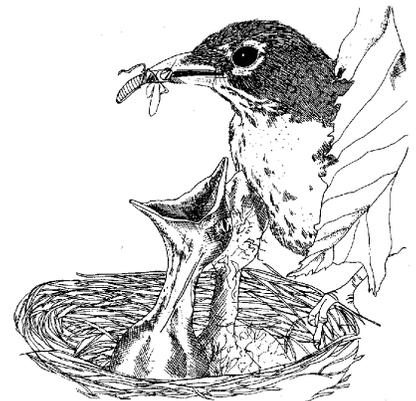
Further, it is likely that at least one more position will be left vacant. Refuge Officer Jonathan Priday departed for Blackwater NWR in January. Jonathan

documented over 900 law enforcement incidents in 2006 including marijuana cultivation, a suicide attempt, a missing person, and a shooting. Certainly, it will be difficult to protect the wildlife resource and refuge visitors if this position is not filled. Moreover, the refuge could face still bleaker times. Three refuge staff are eligible for retirement and more are destined to move onward and upward in the Fish and Wildlife Service. This workforce plan is based on previous budgets and the current continuing resolution. If budgets are worse than predicted or costs rise greater than anticipated, it is likely more vacancies would go unfilled.

International Migratory Bird Day Cont.

Manager Ed DeVries will be leading guided horseback tours of the refuge from the Evon Road parking lot, beginning at 9:00 a.m.. Riders must furnish their own horses. Space is limited to 10 riders per group. Reservations MUST be made by calling Ed at (989) 777-5930, ext. 13. In the event of severe weather or poor road conditions, this tour will be canceled.

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the incredible journeys of migratory birds between their breeding grounds in North America and their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central, and South America. The event, which officially takes place on the second Saturday in May each year, encourages bird conservation and increases awareness of birds through hikes, bird watching, information about birds and migration, public events, and a variety of other education programs.



The Arctic Refuge

By Wil Hufton, III, Johnny Panther Quest Tours

If you have ever been out on the refuge or state game area this time of year, you know what I am talking about. Walking, cross country skiing, or boating, the Shiawassee Flats can be brutal during winter. We have broken ice for what seemed like miles with twenty below wind chills, winds gusting to thirty. The only wind breaks are dikes and forests. Some places the ice can be over a foot thick, others only inches or open water. There are many different tributaries and depths that can make winter going very deceptive. For those unlucky enough to be caught on thin ice, or while trespassing to avoid it, the consequences can be costly.

With proper planning and equipment, the “flats” can be an incredible experience. The feeling of solitude, the natural encounters and stark beauty are very rewarding. Venturing out this time of year is awesome! There aren't many people who want to put on a snowmobile suit to go out in a boat, but those who do never forget the experience. Now the rivers are impassable by boat, but skiing or hiking are viable alternatives. Practice your skills, get some exercise, maybe shoot some priceless photos, or as my grandpa used to say; “blink a lot to preserve the panorama in your mind”. We call it “Johnny Panthering”, no matter what you call it, get out there and enjoy it!

Friends Hold Annual Meeting

The Friends of Shiawassee held their annual meeting on January 17. The group approved a modification of its bylaws, mainly downsizing the board to six members. New officers are President—Chuck Hoover, Vice President—Susan Scott, Secretary—Janet Martineau, and Treasurer—Wil Hufton, II. Dick Von Berg and Ed Becker are the two at-large members.

In other regular business, the Friends will continue to sponsor the Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series, continue to print the refuge quarterly newsletter, sponsor Junior Duck stamp judging lunch and awards ceremony refreshments, and complete their traveling bookstore project. Be sure to renew your membership to keep these projects going! Use the enclosed form.

Attention Refuge Volunteers

Be sure to keep track of your hours and submit your volunteer time logs to Volunteer Coordinator Becky Goche. If you do not have a time log, contact Becky at (989) 759-1669. Tracking volunteer hours is important to the refuge because it can mean more dollars in our budget.

Plans are being made for this year's annual volunteer dinner which is tentatively scheduled for May 17. We are hoping to find a new venue to host this event in an effort to cut down on food waste. Watch your mail for your official invitation!

REFUGE REPORTER

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

Volume 10, Issue 2

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

Park Ranger/Volunteer Coordinator—Becky Goche

Administrative Officer—Mary Ann Gillette

Maintenance Staff—Marion “Butch” Nowosatko and David Peters

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)



International Migratory Bird Day Events Planned for May 12 and 19

Federal Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest Deadline is March 15, 2007

By Becky Goche, Junior Duck Stamp Coordinator

The Junior Duck Stamp art contest deadline is fast approaching, but there is still time to enter. All artwork must be postmarked 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.

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 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.

All entries will receive certificates of participation and winners will receive special ribbons and prizes. New

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. FREE for members of the Friends of the Shiawassee NWR.

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.

Practical Wilderness Survival

April 4, 2007

Could you survive if you had to spend an unexpected night in the wilderness? Join Chippewa Nature Center's Dennis Pilaske as he provides an overview of basic wilderness survival skills necessary to enjoy the outdoors comfortably and safely. This indoor program covers shelter making, staying hydrated, basic navigation, tools for a survival kit, and the development and implementation of a survival plan.

Landscaping with Native Michigan Plants

May 9, 2007

Birds, butterflies, and other wildlife thrived with the plants of this region for thousands of years, so why change the menu on them? Chippewa Nature Center Senior Naturalist Janea Little discusses native plant options, the pros and cons of various species, where you can find them, and what to expect once you plant them.

Night Hike

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

Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

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.

Calendar of Events

Guided Bird Tour

May 12, 2007, 8:00 a.m.

Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with us! Refuge volunteer and Park Ranger Becky Goche will lead participants on a caravan tour with planned stops to highlight some of the refuge's bird life. In the event of severe weather or soft road conditions, this tour will be canceled.

Guided Horseback Tour of the Refuge

May 19, 2007, 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Evon Road Parking Lot

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day from atop a horse. Assistant Manager Ed DeVries is once again taking riders on a guided tour through an area of the refuge that is normally closed to the public. Participants must furnish their own horses. Reservations are required by calling (989) 777-5930, ext. 13. Each tour is limited to 10 riders. In the event of severe weather or soft road conditions, this tour will be canceled.

Junior Duck Stamp

Awards Ceremony

May 5, 2007, 2:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

First through third place winners in the Michigan Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest are honored at this invitation-only event.

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 – Susan Scott

Secretary – Janet Martineau

Treasurer – Wil Hufton II