

## Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

# Refuge Reporter

Volume 11, Issue 4

Fall 2008

## Refuge's FIRST Wild Goose Chase Run/Walk is October 4

By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager

Lace up your running shoes! Whether you thrive on competitive running or walking or just enjoy getting some exercise, the **Wild Goose Chase** is for you. The **Wild Goose Chase** is the refuge's first 5 K run/walk. The Friends of Shiawassee NWR and other partners are assisting the refuge with this event. Runners and walkers of all ability levels and ages are welcome to participate on Saturday, October 4, 2008, at the Ferguson Bayou Trail. Race start time is 9:00 a.m.

The 5 K course winds its way along the Ferguson Bayou Trail and through parts of the refuge that are normally closed to the public. The course includes knee-friendly surfaces: grass, dirt and gravel.

## Green Point's Summer Weekend Hours End

By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager

Opening Green Point on the weekends was a great success thanks in large part to the efforts of Park Ranger Tom Horb. Throughout the summer, hundreds more visits were recorded and many new people enjoyed what Green Point has to offer. All good things must come to an end and

Runners and walkers will have a unique opportunity to view wildlife as they compete for prizes in their age group.

Early registration is open through September 24. The entry fee is \$17 with a shirt or \$12 without a shirt. The late registration fee after September 24 through race day is \$15 and no shirts are available. Registration flyers with more information can be picked up at the refuge headquarters, Green Point ELC, several sports stores, or downloaded from the refuge website.

We need volunteers to help with the **Wild Goose Chase**. We will need people to help with packet stuffing, registration, water stations, and finish line refreshments. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Becky at (989) 759-1669.

Green Point will end its summer weekend hours on Sunday, September 28. Beginning September 29, Green Point will be open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., closed federal holidays. We hope to offer weekend hours again next summer.

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### Special Points:

- Learn more about deer at a program featuring video footage, photos, and helpful tidbits at Green Point beginning at 9 a.m. on September 13.
- If you've got a horse, reserve your spot for the Guided Horseback Tour planned for September 27 at Evon Road.
- Bring the kids to look for owls at the Family Owl Hike at Green Point on October 24 beginning at 7 p.m.

# Shiawassee Refuge Studies Eastern Fox Snake

By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is partnering with the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, Central Michigan University (CMU), and Potter Park Zoo in Lansing to study one of the most threatened and least understood reptiles in the Midwest, the eastern fox snake. The global range of this imperiled species is confined to the coastal plain of parts of Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario. Further, this once common species has declined drastically from loss of coastal wetlands, habitat fragmentation, and persecution due to mistaken identification as a venomous species. Consequently, Michigan and Ontario rank this snake as a threatened species and it is a species of special concern in Ohio.

Shiawassee Refuge provides extensive areas of wetlands, grasslands, and riparian habitats occupied by the eastern fox snake. Additionally, Shiawassee Refuge is one of only three NWRs in which this species is known to occur. Thus, the refuge has an important opportunity to maintain, enhance, and restore eastern fox snake habitat. However, very little is known about the refuge's eastern fox snake population, including abundance, age and sex ratios, genetic diversity, habitat preferences, nesting sites, hibernacula, daily and seasonal movements, and mortality factors. Further, no formal program to monitor population trends exists for this species at the refuge. Meanwhile, all observers state that refuge fox snakes have declined significantly in abundance.

The refuge has formed a partnership with CMU to study the refuge's eastern fox snake population. A Master's degree candidate, Kile Kucher, began conducting a radio-telemetry based study in spring 2008 which will continue in 2009. This study will help fill in the many gaps in the general life history information for this species. Moreover, it will provide information about eastern fox snake population demographics, movement patterns, and habitat use specific to the refuge. This assessment is a critical first step to develop a conservation strategy for this imperiled species at the refuge.

Currently, twelve snakes are roaming the refuge with radio transmitters surgically implanted by the Potter Park Zoo. This study is already revealing important

information. For example, road mortality could be an important threat to refuge snakes. Although the refuge is crossed by few public roads, the few intersections of roads and rivers appears to be a fatal funnel for fox snakes. One transmittered snake was originally caught adjacent to M-13, near the Cass River. This snake only spent three weeks in the area before it was run over by a vehicle. Another snake was found dead on Center Road near the Tittabawassee River. Better news is that the refuge may have more eastern fox snakes than previously thought. Kucher and his crew have captured 35 snakes so far. Of these, only two were captured more than once. Also interesting, the majority of refuge fox snakes are large, some over five feet long.

This study has been funded through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Cost Share grant with funding and in kind match provided by CMU and Potter Park Zoo. Importantly, this study has been facilitated greatly by the Friends of Shiawassee NWR who is administering the grant funds.



Kile Kucher, a Master's degree candidate from Central Michigan University, holds a fox snake captured on the refuge which had a radio transmitter surgically implanted in it by veterinarian at Potter Park Zoo in Lansing, Michigan, earlier this summer. USFWS photo.

# Annual Refuge Open House is September 6 and 7

*By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager*

Once again, it's time for the annual Refuge Open House Weekend. This is the only time during the year that visitors are able to hike, bicycle and deer scout ANYWHERE on the refuge, during daylight hours. Unfortunately, there will be NO SELF-GUIDED AUTO TOUR this year. Construction along a portion of the tour route (near the Spaulding Drain) has not been completed. The refuge is in the planning and designing process to offer a permanent, nearly year-round auto tour route within the next couple of years, though. Activities planned throughout the weekend are:

## **Guided Bird Watching Auto Tour —Saturday, 8:00 a.m.**

Join refuge volunteers Steve Gasser and Larry Abraham for a guided bird watching auto tour. All birders should meet at the Ferguson Bayou Trail parking lot to carpool and caravan their way through the refuge.

## **Photo Judging—Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Pick the winners of this year's refuge photo contest. Pictures will be displayed at the refuge headquarters.

## **FREE Native Plants—Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

The Saginaw Correctional Facility is donating hundreds of native upland and wetland plants/grasses to give away, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Limit of 4 plants per family, please.

# Shiawassee Refuge to Participate in Big Sit! On October 12

*By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager*

Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge will participate in the Big Sit! on October 12. Bird Watcher's Digest organizes this global bird count described as "birding's most sedentary event." The object is to find as many bird species as possible during the calendar day from within a 17-foot diameter circle.

Last year the Shiawassee Blue Geese, a team composed of eight volunteers and I, endeavored to break the Michigan Big Sit record of 71 species to reinforce the refuge's stature as one of the best places for birds in the state. We at least hoped to give the Metro Munchers, Washtenaw Wingnuts, Erie Rockers, Chippewa Chirpers, and all the other Michigan teams some competition for state bragging rights. We wound up

## **Guided Bicycle Tour 1—Saturday, 6:00 p.m.**

Grab your bicycle and join Park Ranger Tom Horb at the Ferguson Bayou Trail parking lot. You will ride about 10 miles through the refuge along the Flint and Shiawassee Rivers and the Spaulding Drain. Bring binoculars, camera, water, and mosquito repellent. We suggest bikes with wide tires only.

## **Guided Bird Walk — Sunday, 8:00 a.m.**

Join Refuge Manager Steve Kahl and refuge volunteer Steve Gasser at the parking lot at the west end of Evon Road, south of Saginaw off of highway M-13. Bring binoculars, water, and mosquito repellent.

## **Sunday Family Stroll—Sunday, 9:00 a.m.**

Get your family outside and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells at Green Point Environmental Learning Center. Park Ranger Tom Horb will guide you as you explore the habitats and wildlife found there.

## **Guided Bicycle Tour 2—Sunday, 6:00 p.m.**

This time, Park Ranger Tom Horb will lead a bicycle tour in an area rarely seen by refuge visitors. Meet him at the parking lot at the west end of Evon Road, south of Saginaw off of highway M-13. You will ride 8 to 10 miles through mostly wetland habitat. Bring binoculars, camera, water, and mosquito repellent. We suggest bikes with wide tires only.

with 68 species for the day, which did not break the record. However, we did identify more species than any other team in Michigan and it was the third highest Big Sit total ever in the state. Reflecting well upon the Refuge System, The Sentinels at Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge finished second with 62 species.

Grefe Tower on Ferguson Bayou Trail is the center of the refuge's Big Sit circle. Thousands of acres of marsh, open water, grasslands, croplands and forest are visible from the tower as well as miles of open sky. I plan to sit atop the tower for the entire 24 hour period again this year. Hopefully the weather will not make me regret it! Please contact me if you are interested in joining our Big Sit team. Or, feel free to stop by during open trail hours.

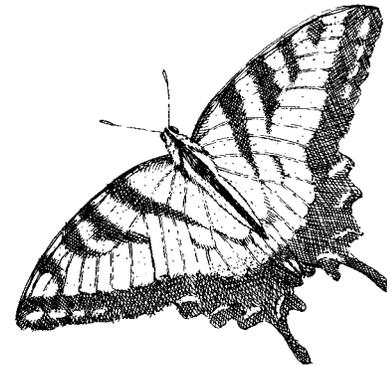
## Second Annual Shiawassee Refuge Butterfly Count a Success

*By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager*

The second annual Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge NABA Butterfly Count was conducted on July 2. The refuge count is one of hundreds coordinated by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Counts are conducted for one calendar day within a 15-mile diameter circle. Last year we were very pleased because we found 30 species, which was the fifth highest total in the state. Further, we counted 1,311 total individual butterflies, which was the second highest total in the state. Pretty respectable for the first year! We were even more pleased this year to find 36 butterfly species, and count 1,532 total individuals!

The total count included: Black Swallowtail 2, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 2, Cabbage White 469, Clouded Sulphur 43, Orange Sulphur 2, Bronze Copper 2, Acadian Hairstreak 1, Banded Hairstreak 90, Hickory Hairstreak 52, Striped Hairstreak 1, Eastern Tailed-Blue 1, 'Summer' Spring Azure 4, Great Spangled Fritillary 5,

Meadow Fritillary 1, Pearl Crescent 1, Question Mark 3, Eastern Comma 20, Mourning Cloak 26, Red Admiral 5, Red-spotted Purple 1, Viceroy 2, Hackberry Emperor 14, Tawny Emperor 2, N. Pearly-eye 47, Eyed Brown 3, Appalachian Brown 5, Little Wood-Satyr 29, Common Wood-Nymph 110, Monarch 36, Silver-spotted Skipper 13, Least Skipper 14, European Skipper 404, Northern Broken-Dash 5, Little Glasswing 6, Delaware Skipper 80, Dun Skipper 4.



## Boys & Girls Club Summer 2008 Outdoor Exploration Program

*By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager*

For years, we have wanted to connect with the neighborhood children to not only teach them about nature, but to also instill a sense of pride and ownership into the resources that are available to them at Green Point. Working with neighboring schools touched upon this, but we wanted to reach a broader audience. The Boys & Girls Club just up the street from Green Point (the large blue and white building you pass by on your way here) offered us an avenue to do this.

Boys & Girls Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence. They are a safe place to learn and grow – all while having fun. Many children from the neighborhood participate in activities each day after school. In the summer months, many more children attend to

have fun and to eat a free, healthy lunch. The center director said he has 600 kids that pay \$5 a year to be members!

When we hired Tom Horb to work at Green Point, one of his duties was to develop an on-going program to get these kids out into nature. Over 8 weeks the kids and their Club leader walked to Green Point where we taught them about habitat, aquatic insects, wildlife observation skills, and fishing. These kids also pushed wheelbarrows and raked woodchips to help us resurface one of Green Point's trails. The highlight of the program was a guided van tour of the refuge's interior where we saw bald eagles, deer, great blue herons, egrets and geese. For some kids, this was their first experience in a wild place! Altogether, we had 23 children from the Boys & Girls Club that visited us anywhere from one to four times through this program. The best part, these same kids now visit us on their own with their families to show them all the neat stuff here...exactly what we were hoping for!

# 2008 Refuge Trail Closures Due to Hunting

By *Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager*

The refuge is offering deer hunting beginning October 25, 2008, to help manage the deer herd. Sixteen different hunts accounting for 900 hunters, will be offered through the end of December. To help keep visitors safe, refuge trails in the vicinity of the units open to hunting will be closed. Following are the dates of closure at each of our trails.

## **Cass River Unit in Bridgeport Township**

October 25 – 29, 2008

November 1 – 5, 2008

December 1 – 5, 2008

December 27 – 31, 2008

## **Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road**

October 25 – 29, 2008

November 1 – 5, 2008

November 15 – 20, 2008

November 23 – 24, 2008

December 1 – 5, 2008

December 12 – 15, 2008

December 20 – 21, 2008

December 27 – 31, 2008

## **Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road**

October 25 – 29, 2008

November 1 – 5, 2008

November 19 – 20, 2008

November 23 – 24, 2008

December 12 – 15, 2008

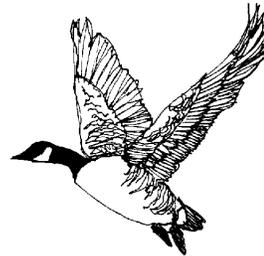
December 20 – 21, 2008

## **Goose Hunting Trail Closures**

At the time of producing this newsletter, the State of Michigan had not issued dates for goose hunting on the refuge. We anticipate that goose hunting MAY start October 11 through the end of the month. Goose hunting only takes place on Saturdays, Sundays, Tues-

days and Thursdays. On these days, the Ferguson Bayou Trail is closed to visitors until 1:00 p.m.

The trails at Green Point Environmental Learning Center remain open during hunting season (daylight hours only) since hunting is not allowed within Saginaw's city limits. Keep in mind that pets and bicycles are not allowed on the trails at Green Point.



### **REFUGE REPORTER**

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

Volume 11, Issue 4

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

Visitor Services Manager—Becky Goche

Administrative Officer—Mary Ann Gillette

Maintenance Staff—David Peters

#### **Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge**

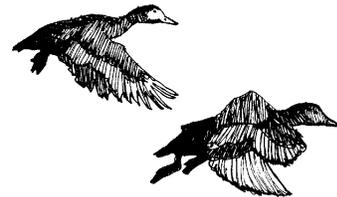
A nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization established in 1999 to promote the preservation of the natural and historical resources of the Refuge, foster its use and enjoyment by the public consistent with the protection and preservation of its environment, and engage in such educational, scientific and civic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



**First Ever "Wild Goose Chase 5 K Run/Walk" is October 4**

## Time to Reserve Your Fall Field Trips at Green Point

*By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager*

It's time for school and that means it's time to plan your fall field trips to Green Point! Green Point offers many different programs for you and your students to come and explore the outdoors. You can view a listing of these programs on our website (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/shiawassee>) or you can call Green Point at (989) 759-1669 to request a copy be sent to you in the mail. We have programs for all ages—you can pick a program appropriate for your class or we can suggest one based upon the grade level you teach. Best of all, the programs are free!

We also can bring programs to your classroom! Typically, we prefer doing these in the winter months when we have fewer visitors and school groups here, but we are flexible. There are also many educational trunks

covering a variety of natural resources-related topics that you can borrow for a two-week period. Each trunk contains a variety of items to enhance your curriculum including books, videos, posters, puppets, skulls, and more. All you need to do is call to schedule a time to pick one up from Green Point.

### **Junior Duck Stamp Program**

It's not too early to start thinking about the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program. Information for the 2008-2009 contest should be available later this fall. If you would like more information, please contact me at Green Point.

# Calendar of Events

## 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
- Admission: \$2 for individuals and FREE for members of the Friends of the Shiawassee NWR

### **GPS and You September 10**

Michelle Vander Haar, the Shiawassee Refuge's private land biologist, talks about the latest technology-based scavenger hunt game called geocaching. She will discuss the terminology, tools and why the refuge uses "virtual geocaching" rather than traditional geocaches. Bring your own GPS (global positioning system) unit to try finding a couple of caches set up for this program.

### **Exploring Isle Royale National Park October 8**

A former biologist of the Isle Royale Wolf Ecology Study, Chippewa Nature Center senior biologist Phil Stephens shares his experiences and insights through a multi-media program depicting the Lake Superior island's varied ecosystems and trails, his encounters with wolves and moose on those trails, and an update on the status of the wolves.

### **Michigan's Junior Duck Stamp Program November 5**

Each year in Michigan, the Junior Duck Stamp competition attracts hundreds of artists in kindergarten through 12th grade. Shiawassee's Visitor Services Manager Becky Goche, the state Junior Duck Stamp coordinator, offers an overview of the program and this year's winners.

## Guided Horseback Tour

**September 27, 2008, 9:00 a.m.**

### **Evon Road parking lot**

Reservations are required. Contact Ed DeVries at (989) 777-5930, ext. 13 for more information.

## Guided Bird Watching Auto Tour

**September 13, 2008, 8:00 a.m.**

### **Meet at refuge headquarters, 6975 Mower Rd.**

Refuge volunteer Steve Gasser will lead the tour. Bring binoculars and mosquito repellent.

## The Magnificent White-tailed Deer

**September 13, 2008, 9:00 a.m.**

### **Green Point ELC**

Tom Horb began accompanying his father on hunting trips in the 1950's. He has since spent hundreds of hours in field hunting and studying white-tailed deer. In 1988, he began using a video camera to capture the magnificent deer as they live throughout the year in Michigan. He will share some of his knowledge and video as he discusses the habits of deer.

## Summer Sunday Stroll for Families

**September 21, 2008, 2:00 p.m.**

### **Green Point ECL**

Park Ranger Tom Horb will take you on a guided tour of Green Point's trails. Bring mosquito repellent.

## Family Owl Hike

**October 24, 2008, 7:00 p.m.**

### **Green Point ELC**

Call owls and do other fun stuff on a guided night hike along Green Point's trails.

For more information, contact Green Point Environmental Learning Center at (989) 759-1669.

# FRIENDS OF SHIAWASSEE NWR MEMBERSHIP PAGE

## Friends of Shiawassee NWR Membership

Renewal             New membership

General Membership

\$12 – 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.

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 quarterly, on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. The annual meeting is held in January of each year. Friends Board of Directors Officers are:

President – Charles Hoover

Vice President – Susan Scott

Secretary – Janet Martineau

Treasurer – Wil Hufton II