

Refuge Reporter

Volume 14, Issue 1

Winter 2010/2011

Take Trip to "Spectacular Alaska and the Yukon"

by Janet I. Martineau, Friends Board



There were a few times, says Phil Stephens, he slept with a hatchet by his side up there in the wilderness of Alaska and the Yukon.

"It was just in case a bear snuck up on us. It allowed me to sleep more easily, though I suspect it wouldn't have helped much with a grizzly."

At least he could have, perhaps, seen it coming "because the lack darkness in the northern Yukon is a wonderment in the summer."

Stephens, a senior naturalist at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center as well as an accomplished photographer, closes out the 2010 *Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series* on Wednesday, Dec. 1, with a picturesque program titled "Spectacular Alaska and the Yukon."

The evening begins at 7 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple in Saginaw. Admission is free to members of the Friends of the Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge; \$2 at the door for others.

Stephens is no stranger to the area. He scouted it for a possible two-week Chippewa Nature Center trip, which did not occur, and then he and his family spent seven weeks driving the 10,500 miles there and back from Midland.

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Special Points:

- 379 goose hunters were out on the refuge over 12 days during October. They harvested 222 Canada geese.
- Are you' interested in helping with the Wildlife Drive auto tour route Grand Opening in the spring, please contact Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669 or email Becky_Goche@fws.gov.

2011 Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series—"From Present to Past"

by Janet I. Martineau, Friends Board

(We are still firming up our series of programs. Here is what is in the works thus far)

Jan. 5, "**Shiawassee's Wildlife Drive**"—Refuge Manager Steven Kahl will discuss and show images of the building of

the 7.5-mile, open-daily auto tour route due to debut in the spring. See story on Page 3.

Feb. 2, "**Animal Skulls**"—Janea Little, a senior naturalist at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center, offers tips on how to identify found animals skulls. See story on Page 4.

(Continued on page 5)

Finding the Present While Researching the Past

By David Peters, *Engineering Equipment Operator*

Either despite of, or as a result of the fact that it is surrounded on all but its west side by a landscape that is biologically poor, Shiawassee NWR harbors a diversity of plant and animal life. Although the mammal and bird portion of the refuge community are fairly well known, insight into the remaining, larger portion of inhabitants and visitors, is still being gained.



Fiery Skipper butterfly. Photo by Jeff Sommer

Jeff Sommer, Curator of Archaeology for the Historical Society of Saginaw County, and former Shiawassee NWR Volunteer of the Year, has recently been active in cataloging previously unrecorded invertebrates on the refuge. His encounters while working at, or traveling to and from archaeological sites on the refuge, have been slowly illuminating the insects along the extreme lower sections of the Tittabawassee and Shiawassee Rivers.

In 2010, for the first time at Shiawassee NWR that we are aware of, Jeff recorded the Fiery Skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*) butterfly, the double-striped bluet (*Enallagma basidens*) damselfly, and the Shadow Darner (*Aeshna umbrosa*), Royal River Cruiser (*Macromia taeniolata*), and Riverine Clubtail (*Stylurus amnicola*) dragonflies.

Cataloging work on refuge ants, as well as freshwater snails and mussels, was also carried out in 2010, with results pending. These were university based efforts, and together with the contribution of Jeff Sommer, as well as few records from refuge staff, further our understanding of Shiawassee NWR's contribution towards the conservation of biodiversity in Saginaw County.



Double-striped bluet. Photo by Jeff Sommer.

Take Trip to "Spectacular Alaska and the Yukon" continued

He ranks Alaska and Yukon as one of the most spectacular of the many places he has roamed "because of the vastness, remoteness and diversity of their natural areas which include not only mountains but arctic tundra, glaciers, seascapes and lots of wildlife."

The Rocky Mountains in the U.S. and Canada are also very spectacular, he says, though not as diverse and are more crowded. "However, the Rockies and Sierras have easy-to-navigate trail systems, which are easier for a family to explore than the routes that are poor cousins to trails in the far north."

So which is more spectacular -- Alaska, our largest state, or the Yukon, which is part of Canada?

"Both have some areas of spectacularly big mountains which are wonderful. However, on the Dempster High-

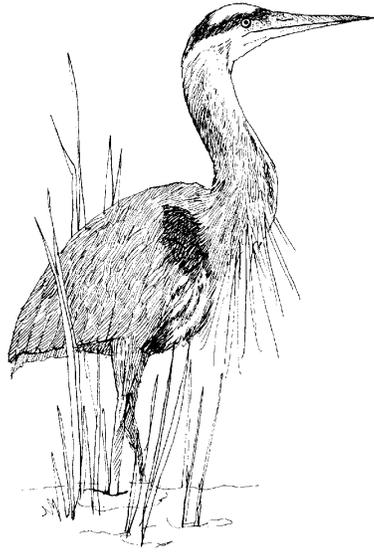
way in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, we had a wonderful sense that we were on a sparsely-populated corridor the width of our gravel road that was bordered by true wilderness stretching for hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away from us. The sense of isolation there was awesome."

And what might be the biggest misconception people have about Alaska and the Yukon?

"It's not all mountains. There are many large areas that are gently-rolling or even very flat. There's even a farming area north of Anchorage."

Eagles Keeping Wildlife Drive Opening “Fuzzy”

by Janet I. Martineau, Friends Board



The opening program of the 2011 *Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series* will deal with a much-anticipated event in Saginaw County – the debut of the 7.5-mile open-daily wildlife drive through the 9,501-acre refuge.

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 5, at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, Refuge Manager Steven Kahl will talk about the building of “Shiawassee’s Wildlife

Drive.” Admission is free to members of the Friends of the Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge; \$2 at the door for others.

So when is the grand opening?

“I wish I could give a simple answer, but a pair of eagles had to make things complicated,” says Kahl. “The tentative scheduled opening is April 15. But, a pair of bald eagles built a nest within 50 feet of the road. It blew down in recent windstorms. However, they may come back and nest right nearby. If so, we may have to delay opening until approximately May 15.”

“This date is fuzzy because it depends if the eagles start nesting early or late.”

The auto tour route also will close annually at the beginning of waterfowl season, which is usually in mid-October, through mid-April.

During his talk, Kahl will show pictures of the layout of the route as well as its \$3.3 million construction process, and will answer questions people have about it. The route was built almost entirely by local contractors as Kahl and his refuge staff made sure nothing was overlooked, such as permits, engineering, overseeing contractors, coordinating around everything else going on at the refuge – and those eagles.

The drive will meander past forests, grasslands, marshes, open water pools and the Shiawassee River and will enhance the ability of visitors to see waterfowl, herons, eagles and a great diversity of other wildlife. Slides during the January 5 presentation will show that terrain and the critters.

And further, Kahl says, drivers will be able to see the management practices the refuge uses to attract this abundance of wildlife.

There will be places for people to pull over, stop and get out to take pictures or just enjoy the view.

Kahl says approximately only 25 percent of the more than 540 national wildlife refuges have auto tour routes. Seney NWR in the Upper Peninsula has one.

Impact to wildlife is the utmost concern in offering them, he said. “That is why we will close the route from mid-October to mid-April, when most of the wildlife most sensitive to disturbance uses the refuge.”

Green Point is located at 3010 Maple St. in Saginaw.

Borrow Snowshoes at Green Point

Interested in testing a pair snowshoes or practicing your skills? You can borrow a pair for free from Green Point ELC and use them on our trails when there is sufficient snow cover—typically 4 or more inches. You can use them Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please note that Green Point is closed on all Federal holidays and when staff is doing programs elsewhere. For more information or to set up a reservation, call (989) 759-1669.



Presentation to Offer a Little “Skull”duggery

By Janet I. Martineau, Friends Board



A parade of skulls will populate the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple in Saginaw, on Wednesday, Feb. 2 – nearly 30 of them, in fact.

That is when Janea Little, a senior naturalist at the Chippewa Nature Center in Mid-

land, presents a 7 p.m. Nurturing Nature program entitled “Animal Skulls.”

Admission is free to members of the Friends of the Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge; \$2 at the door for others.

Little says her collection that night will range from a black bear skull measuring 10 inches long to a brown bat skull a mere half-inch long.

Which creature skull fascinates her the most?

“It depends on my mood. I think the lacy network of bone along the muzzle of the rabbit (designed as an air conditioner for cooling down during a burst of speed) is very cool and unique.”

Ask her that if it is true the bigger the skull the smarter the critter, and she says it’s complicated.

“It’s the size of the head RELATIVE to the body (T. Rex had a really big head, after all), and also how much of the head is the BRAIN cavity. For instance, possums and raccoons have the same size heads; in fact, the opossums is larger compared to body size. But the BRAIN cavity of the possum is the size of a peanut (still in the shell); while the raccoon brain cavity is triple that size.”

In her career, Little says she has never found or been asked to identify anything really old. “Probably the oldest was a cow from (Midland’s) Jefferson Avenue. The people who brought it in said it was in their yard, which had not been a cow pasture for several decades. As a child, I did have a very fine collection of dinosaur bones. Looking back, they bore a strange resemblance to cow bones of all sorts.”

There are all sorts of clues she uses in trying to identify skulls found or brought in to the nature center – ones she will share during her “Nurturing Nature” program.

“Teeth are a biggie in ID – carnivores have fangs, herbivores do not. Rodents have really large, yellowed incisors, other herbivores do not. Deer don’t even have upper incisors, only lowers. Each species has a unique set of teeth (even fox and gray squirrels have slightly different tooth count), so if the skull is complete, you can ID it.”

All LAND mammals have teeth ... but birds do not.

And yes, sometimes she is stumped.

“I often fail to ID a skull if it is incomplete or heavily damaged (sorry, I’m not CSI). I have also struggled with pigs and cows, as my brain is always trying to figure out what WILD animal it is.”

2010 Trail Closures

Hunting seasons are upon us and to help protect visitors and to provide a quality hunting experience for our hunters, the refuge trails will be closed at various times. There is no hunting within Saginaw City limits, so Green Point’s trails will be available during daylight hours. Bicycles and pets are not allowed on these trails.

Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road

December 6 – 7, 2010

December 10 – 13, 2010

December 18 – 19, 2010

Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

December 1 – 7, 2010

December 10 – 13, 2010

December 18 – 19, 2010

December 26 – 30, 2010

Cass River Unit in Bridgeport Township

December 1 – 5, 2010

December 26 – 30, 2010

2011 Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series—"From Present to Past" continued

March 2, "**Introduction to Nature Photography**"— Phil Stephens, a senior naturalist at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center and an accomplished nature photographer, offers tips on basic techniques for getting great shots of flowers, landscapes and wildlife.

April 6, "**In the Steps of John Muir**" (tentative) – Sara and Wil Reding of Kalamazoo, known as Rent A Rambling Naturalists, present a program on their 2006 trip retracing Muir's steps during his 1,000-mile walk, in 1867, from Indiana to the Florida keys.

May 4, "**C.C.C. Enrollee**" – Michael Deren of Ann Arbor portrays, in costume, words and music, a 1933-1941 Civilian Conservation Corps camp enrollee who goes to work for President Roosevelt and the nation to help rebuild America's natural and human resources.

June 1, not yet booked

July-August, summer vacation – no programs

Sept. 7, "**Michigan's One-room Schoolhouses**" – Kyle Bagnall, the historian at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center, explores a typical day in the thousands of one-room schoolhouses that once dotted the state's country landscape -- and the current fate of many of these historic structures.

Oct 5, "**Antique Apples**" – Jackynn Earley of Midland takes a look the world of "antique" or heritage apples which have stood the test of time -- among them the northern spy, Cortland and McIntosh but others whose names are not familiar. A sampling of apple goodies is included.

Nov. 2, "**Junior Duck Stamp Winners**" – Becky Goche, the refuge's visitor services manager, is the coordinator for Michigan portion of the national Junior Duck Stamp competition open to students ages 5 to 18. She will showcase the 2011 winners.

Dec. 7, "**A Pioneer Christmas**" – Craft tables, hot chocolate, popcorn and cookies all will play a role in this hands-on evening celebrating Christmas customs of the past and present.

All the programs, sponsored by the Friends of the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, begin at 7 p.m. at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. Admission is free to Friends members; \$2 at the door for others.

REFUGE REPORTER is published quarterly by the Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge for the refuge.

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

Refuge Manager—Steve Kahl

Assistant Refuge Manager—Ed DeVries

Visitor Services Manager—Becky Goche

Private Lands Biologist—Michelle Vander Haar

Park Ranger (Law Enforcement)—Joe Hughes

Administrative Officer—Mary Ann Gillette

Maintenance Worker —Ken Schimp

Engineering Equipment Operator—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.

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)



2011 Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series Announced

Free Ice Fishing Clinic Planned for February 12 at Green Point Environmental Learning Center

By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager

A free ice fishing clinic for children will be offered at Green Point Environmental Learning Center on Saturday, February 12, 2011. During this free fishing winter weekend, anglers can fish without a license anywhere in the state of Michigan. The clinic will run from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The clinic will include ice safety, ice fishing basics, hole drilling/augering demonstration, bait selection, as well as trying to catch fish in Green Point's pond. Please note that we practice catch and release fishing at Green Point. Volunteers will have a fishing set up for children to fish in or watch fish under the ice. Children can warm up inside with a cup of hot chocolate.

Children must be accompanied by an adult. Be sure to dress in layers with a hat and gloves. Wear warm, winter boots that can get wet. For more information, please call Green Point at (989) 759-1669.

Volunteers Needed

Fishing clinics are great, educational fun, but require several volunteers to make them run smoothly. If you are an experienced ice fisherman or woman, please consider helping. In addition to several people helping rig, bait and fish, I need someone who can bring an ice shanty and set it up for children to experience. I need a few people willing to clear the snow off the ice and drill many holes, preferably with a motorized auger. I need a couple of volunteers to help serve hot chocolate and oversee some indoor crafts to help warm kids up. If you're interested, please contact me at (989) 759-1669 or send me an email at Becky_Goche@fws.gov.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

2010/2011 Winter Calendar of Events

Spectacular Alaska and the Yukon

December 1, 7:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Roam Alaska and the Yukon Territories with nature photographer and Chippewa Nature Center naturalist Phil Stephens through his images of their tundra, mountains and coastline. Admission for the program: \$2, FREE for Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

Christmas Holiday

December 24

All offices are closed.

New Year's Day Holiday

December 31

All offices are closed.

All Refuge Trails Open

December 31

Refuge deer hunting ends on December 30. All trails are open during daylight hours.

Shiawassee's Wildlife Drive

January 5, 7:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Refuge Manager Steve Kahl will discuss and show images of the building of the 7.5 mile auto tour route. The route will be open daily several months out of the year and will debut in the spring. Admission for the program: \$2, FREE for Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

Sunset Snowshoe Hike

January 7, 3:30 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Go on a guided, sunset snowshoe hike with Park Ranger Becky Goche. You can bring your own snowshoes or borrow a pair from us. Registration is required as we have limited pairs. Call (989) 759-1669 to reserve your spot. In the event that there is not enough snow cover, there will still be a hike.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Holiday

January 17

All offices are closed.

Animal Skulls

February 2, 7:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Janea Little, a senior naturalist at Midland's Chippewa Nature Center offers tips on how to identify found animal skulls. Admission for the program: \$2, FREE for Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

Free Ice Fishing Clinic for Kids

February 12, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Learn about ice safety and how to fish through the ice during Michigan's Free Fishing Weekend. Practice your skills and try to catch fish in Green Point's pond. Adults must accompany children.

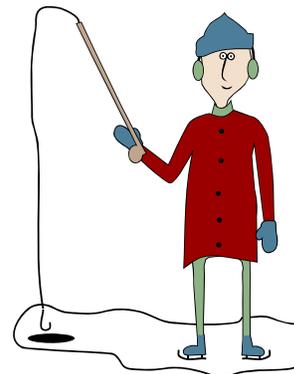
Presidents' Day Holiday

February 21

All offices are closed.

***Plan ahead for bad weather! Please note that events will be cancelled in the event of local travel advisories and/or severe weather conditions. If in doubt, call ahead and listen to the message.**

All programs are FREE unless otherwise noted. For more information call Green Point Environmental Learning Center, (989) 759-1669 or visit the refuge's website at www.fws.gov/midwest/shiawassee



Join the Friends of Shiawassee NWR Today!

FREE Membership includes the following benefits...

- Joining a local constituency in support of the development and operation of the refuge
- Subscription to the *Refuge Reporter*, the quarterly newsletter from the refuge
- FREE admission to monthly *Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series* programs
- 10% discount on Friends merchandise
- Opportunities to participate in programs and volunteer for projects that help the refuge

To become a member of the “Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge” you must agree to support the mission and goals of the group, abide by the current and future bylaws if amended, and sign the following disclaimer. *“I acknowledge that I am participating in “Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge” (Friends) activities at my own risk, and that Friends has made no warranty or representation, expressed or implied, regarding safety of conducting any activity. I expressly release and hold harmless Friends and their officers, directors, employees, and agents from and for any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action whatsoever on account of any loss, damage or injury to person or to property suffered or incurred by me in connection with the activity or any aspect of it, including, but not limited to, any transportation arranged by, paid for, or provided by Friends. By signing below, I (we) acknowledge that I (we) have read and understand this form and that the statements I (we) have made are true.”*

Signature(s) and Date: _____ Date: _____

Parent’s signature if member is under age 18: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Friends’ Volunteer Opportunities

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with refuge events | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping with workshops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing outreach activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading walking tours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with Nurturing Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing trails |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing newsletter articles | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping with simple maintenance projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/developing grants | <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing Store |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving as Committee member | <input type="checkbox"/> Researching/Ordering merchandise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leading children’s activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please list: |

Send membership form to:
Friends of Shiawassee NWR
P.O. Box 20129
Saginaw, MI 48602

If you wish to make a financial donation, please make check payable to “Friends of Shiawassee NWR.”