

# Refuge Reporter

Volume 11, Issue 1

Winter 2007/2008

## Shiawassee Refuge Acquires Kaufmann Tract

By Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge acquired a 74-acre parcel of land from Dave and Eileen Kaufmann on September 18, 2007. This tract is the first added to the refuge since 2000 and it is directly contiguous with current refuge. Emergency in-holding dollars from the Land and Water Conservation Fund paid for the property located in James Township. The Kaufmann Tract lies within the area of the refuge's acquisition boundary that is most threatened by advancing urban sprawl. In fact, many nearby tracts have given way to development over the past ten years.

Approximately 40 acres of the site were planted to upland prairie vegetation while it was enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Consequently, the new property provides excellent nesting habitat

for waterfowl such as mallards and blue-winged teal. Further, it provides habitat for many grassland bird species, including nesting sedge wrens and eastern meadowlarks, migrant northern harriers, and wintering short-eared owls. Grassland birds have suffered the steepest, most long term, and most widespread declines of any group of North American birds. Short-eared owl is on the list of endangered species in Michigan. Approximately 30 acres of the Kaufmann tract remain in corn, but will be restored to prairie vegetation within three years.

"The refuge takes good care of its property," said Dave Kaufmann. "Eileen and I felt strongly that we wanted to see our land preserved and that the next best owner would be the refuge."

## Now Is the Time to Renew Your Friends Membership

By Susan Scott, Vice President, Friends Board of Directors

Hello, Friends of Shiawassee Members! Well, it's that time of year when we are getting ready for winter and starting to think about the Holidays and the new year. This is a heads up for you that the membership dues have increased for 2008.

Instead of the usual \$10.00 the Board has voted to increase the dues to \$12.00 per year. They are due in January of 2008 and a letter will be sent to remind you. After January, they will be prorated on a monthly basis. I look forward to receiving your membership renewal and perhaps this will be the year you wish to participate in projects on the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

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### Special Points:

- *Deer hunting will cause some trail closures through the end of the year, see inside for the dates.*
- *Get your cross-country skis ready! Skiing is a great way to see refuge wildlife in the winter plus it's great exercise. The Woodland Trail off of Stroebel Road and trails at Green Point are both popular places to test your wax.*

# 2008 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest Information Now Available

by *Becky Goche, State Junior Duck Stamp Coordinator*

It's time to start working on your entries for this year's Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program. Thousands of students nationwide participate in this program and art contest each year. Last year 488 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 wetlands, 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.

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. 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!

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

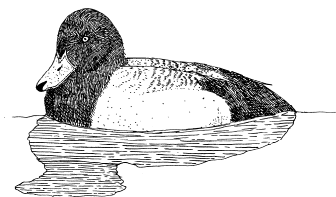
groups according to grade level: Group I: K-3, Group II: 4-6, Group III: 7-9, and Group IV: 10-12. Three first, second, and third place winners are selected for each group. In addition, 16 honorable mention winners are picked in each group. Judges select the "Best of Show" from the 12 first place winners, 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. 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.

There is a new requirement this year. Plagiarism has become a problem in the Junior Duck Stamp contest. To help students from copying other's artwork, a "Reference Form" has been added to the entry form. All students in grades 7-12 MUST fill out the "Reference Form" (see pages 16 & 17 in the brochure) and return it with their artwork.

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 2008 informational brochure to you – either call me at (989) 759-1669 or email me at [Becky\\_Goche@fws.gov](mailto:Becky_Goche@fws.gov). Please note that this will be the last year that informational brochures will be mailed. Starting in 2009, the program will be going green and all the information will be available to download from the website. A limited number of printed copies will be available upon request from the Federal Duck Stamp office in Arlington, Virginia.

**Remember that the deadline for submitting your artwork is March 15, 2008.**



# Shiawassee Refuge Participates in Its First Big Sit!

by Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

Shiawassee Refuge participated in its first year of The Big Sit! on October 14, 2007. 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. I was joined throughout the day by refuge volunteers Steve Gasser, Jeff and Quinn Sommer, Bob Grefe, Larry Abraham, Carolyn Szaroleta, and Tom Horb participated. I planned to spend the entire 24 hour period at the top of the refuge's Grefe Tower participating in the count. We were shooting for 72 species because the highest Big Sit total in Michigan was 71. Breaking the record would further 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. My diary of the memorable day is below.

12AM – The sky was full of stars as the day began. The temperature was a crisp 45° and there was no wind. I sat in the darkness at the top of the tower overlooking thousands of acres of marsh, open water, grassland, forest and cropland. Thousands of Canada geese were honking on our impoundments for the first bird of the day. Only 24 hours to go!

1AM – Six species thus far. I could make out the shapes of several great blue herons as I scanned across our pools. I interpreted the cackling of two ring-necked pheasants as an indication of some sort of roost site squabble. The din of the geese made it difficult to pick out the calls of other waterfowl, but I managed to hear mallards and gadwall.

4AM – Only two species added to the list in the last three hours! I could hear a small flock of northern shovelers close by discussing things. Fortunately, a cooperative pair of eastern screech-owls quickly responded to my whistles.

Unfortunately, the weather was poor for songbird migration. I hoped that I would hear the nocturnal flight calls of species like Swainson's and gray-cheeked thrush. However, the lack of cloud cover and light

southwest winds yielded no migration overhead.

Still, I soaked in the experience. A single coyote called nearby, which elicited a wild chorus from a pack in the distance. Throughout the night, I could hear three different pairs of great horned owls calling back and forth. A flock of about a dozen Canada geese flew in and landed in the pool in front of me. Where did they come from at this time of night?

7AM – No new species and the temperature had dropped to 34°. Frost began to appear on the tower, but as light started to appear in the sky, bird activity starting picking up. Sandhill cranes started calling – one of my favorite sounds. I heard a vocal group of American wigeon zip past but never saw them. As the sun rose I could see that three bald eagles were perched in trees nearby. Unbeknownst to me they were roosting less than 100 yards away while I stood on the tower. I would have five to ten bald eagles in sight the rest of the day.

A flock of shorebirds flew in to a patch of mud near the tower, but veered away at the last second. They never called and I couldn't see any field marks in the fog and dim light. I think they were pectoral sandpipers, but never got another chance at identifying them. Rats!

9AM – Forty-seven species on the list! I never tire of dawn near the marsh. Flock after flock of Canadas streamed past to feed in nearby fields. Ruby-crowned kinglets and yellow-rumped warblers foraged along the nearby forest edge. A very late sedge wren gave a ragged version of its song from out in the grassland. A few song sparrows picked at seeds and grit on the dike top, but no fancy sparrows in with them.

1PM – Sixty-five species on the list and 72 looks attainable. The sky is clear and the temperature reached 64°. A cooperative indigo bunting flew in and landed next to the tower; another species found beyond its typical departure date. Turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks began rising on thermals along the horizon.

5PM – Only three species added, including a distant Wilson's snipe that zipped into my field of view as I

*(continued on page 4)*

# The Big Sit! Continued

scanned the marsh. A northern rough-winged swallow revealed itself among a large flock of tree swallows. The sky became overcast and a slow steady drizzle has started. A small flock of American pipits foraged on the mudflat near the tower.

8PM – No new species added. The rain has not yet stopped. Still dusk was beautiful. Six northern harriers came in to roost in the grasslands nearby. I was amazed at seeing thousands upon thousands of ducks leaving the refuge after sunset. It was barely light enough to see them at all.

12AM – The first Shiawassee Refuge Big Sit! is in the books! No new species added since 5PM and the grand total stands at 68. Not enough for a new record, but it is the third highest total found on a Michigan Big Sit! ever. Pretty respectable for the first year!

The list of surprise misses for the count was long, including pied-billed grebe, American coot, Cooper's hawk, no falcons, belted kingfisher, northern flicker, and brown-headed cowbird.

I heard dark-eyed juncos when I walked down to the restroom, but they never showed around the tower. Larry found a solitary sandpiper around the bend and Bob had turkeys along the road - both out of sight from the tower. There were six brown-headed cowbirds at the headquarters feeder the next morning and I saw a Cooper's hawk when I drove in to work.

It was a great day and I am already planning for next year. However, I don't think I'll do 24 hours next year. Maybe 18?

The entire list included:

Double-crested Cormorant	Great Horned Owl
Great Egret	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Great Blue Heron	Downy Woodpecker
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Hairy Woodpecker
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Phoebe
Canada Goose	Blue Jay
Mute Swan	American Crow

Trumpeter Swan	Horned Lark
Wood Duck	Tree Swallow
Green-winged Teal	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
Northern Pintail	Tufted Titmouse
American Wigeon	White-breasted Nuthatch
Northern Shoveler	Brown Creeper
Gadwall	Sedge Wren
American Black Duck	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Blue-winged Teal	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Ring-necked Duck	American Robin
Hooded Merganser	European Starling
Common Merganser	American Pipit
Ruddy Duck	Cedar Waxwing
Bald Eagle	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Harrier	American Tree Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Savannah Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Song Sparrow
Sandhill Crane	Swamp Sparrow
Killdeer	White-throated Sparrow
Greater Yellowlegs	Northern Cardinal
Spotted Sandpiper	Indigo Bunting
Wilson's Snipe	Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull	Rusty Blackbird
Herring Gull	Common Grackle
Mourning Dove	House Finch
Eastern Screech-Owl	American Goldfinch

## 2007 Trail Closures Due to Hunting

### Ferguson Bayou Trail at Curtis Road

November 15-20, and 24-25

December 1-5, 7-10, 14-15, and 27-31

### Woodland Trail at Stroebel Road

November 19-20

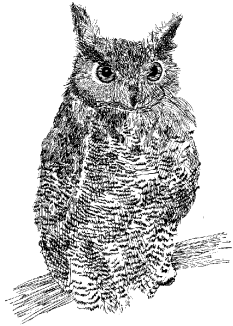
December 7-10, and 14-15

### Cass River Unit in Bridgeport

December 1-5 and 27-31

# 2008 Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series Programs Announced

By Janet Martineau, Secretary, Friends Board of Directors



Our *Nurturing Nature Wednesday Series* programs returns in 2008 with more live animals (from the wetlands and birds of prey), a hike at Green Point, and the third visit by 19th century explorer Bela Hubbard, this time talking about the animals he saw in the 1800s wilds of mid-Michigan and Lake Superior.

We're offering only nine *Nurturing Nature* programs

## Refuge Goose Hunt Results

by Steve Kahl, Refuge Manager

For the second year Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge decreased its October goose hunting period from seven days per week to four. This decrease was warranted by the loss of the refuge's biological technician and refuge officer positions. The goose hunt requires a great deal of staff time in relation to the number of people that take advantage of the opportunity. In fact, after opening week approximately half of the goose blinds went unoccupied on many hunt days previously.

However, the decrease in hunter opportunity has not yielded a proportionate decrease in the number of hunt visits. Although the number of hunt days was reduced by 43%, the number of hunt visits declined only 20%. Further, the quality of the hunt has improved because the success rate of hunters has increased. Formerly, geese avoided fields with hunting blinds soon after opening day. Hunter success in these fields would not recover until a cold front brought in new flocks of migrant geese. Under the new system, geese are much more likely to fly into decoyed fields because they are not hunted continuously. Consequently, the total number of harvested geese actually increased 5% percent over prior years. Further, the percentage of hunters that bag a goose has increased from 39% to 50%.

in 2008 rather than the usual 12 since, we've found that attendance plummets in June and July as well as in December. A full schedule is inserted in this newsletter, and stay tuned because we may add a couple of extra programs as well.

Now is the time to renew your Friends of Shiawassee membership that helps make the "Nurturing Nature" programs possible. We've raised the dues from \$10 to \$12 for a calendar year (due by January 1), which offers you free admission to all the *Nurturing Nature* programs as well as a members-only, on-the-refuge pork roast and tour planned for April.

### REFUGE REPORTER

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

Volume 11, 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

Visitor Services Manager—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)



**Federal Junior Duck Stamp Brochures for 2008 Contest Are Now Available**

## Refuge and Local Girl Scout Council Form Partnership—Volunteers Needed

*By Becky Goche, Visitor Services Manager*

The Girl Scouts of Mitten Bay have partnered with the refuge to restore and enhance the “Landscaping for Wildlife” area at the headquarters while delivering an outdoor classroom experience for Girl Scouts ages 6-12. The Girl Scouts received a grant of over \$5,700 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support this project.

There is a three part educational component to this project. First, teenage Girl Scouts interested in teaching and mentoring younger Girl Scouts will be trained by refuge and Mitten Bay staff to lead younger Girl Scouts in an outdoor classroom experience. Second, the teen mentors will prepare a project plan for completing the “Landscaping for Wildlife” area and then lead younger scouts in completing the plan while teaching them

about the environment around them. Third, all participating Girl Scouts will help raise awareness in the community about the refuge and encourage community volunteerism for the refuge.

Key dates for this project are: Training for teenaged Girl Scouts—April 5, 2008, “Landscaping for Wildlife” area clean-up day—May 17, 2008, and Linking Girls to the Land Day—June 14, 2008.

Many volunteers, especially those with gardening experience/knowledge, will be needed on May 17. For more information about this program contact me at (989) 759-1669. If you're a Girl Scout and want to get more involved and earn your “Linking Girls to the Land” badge, contact the Mitten Bay Council at (989) 799-9565 and talk to either Jason or Roxanne.

## **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.

### **December – No Program**

#### **Bela Hubbard's Wild Michigan**

**January 9, 2008**

Join Bela Hubbard, a 19th century naturalist, geologist and explorer, as he observes wildlife in Michigan from the 1830s through the 1870s. Using journals and writings, as well as a costume and set, Chippewa Nature Center historian Kyle Bagnall portrays the pioneer who saw lynx, otters, passenger pigeons, wolves, elk, moose and more.

#### **Family Life of Feeder Birds**

**February 13, 2008**

You see them come and go all day from your feeders, but birds actually spend very little time there. What is their family life like? Do both parents build the nest, feed the young and help the mate, or is it left to just one parent? Do they mate for life, or just for a season? Chippewa Nature Center senior naturalist Janea Little tells all.

#### **Birds of Prey**

**March 5, 2008**

Joe Rogers of the Wildlife Recovery Association in Shepherd uses live owls, hawks, turkey vultures and bald eagles which have been injured or orphaned as he talks about birds of prey. Rogers also is involved in the reintroducing the peregrine falcon to Michigan.

# Calendar of Events

## **Cold Weather Lovers Night Hike**

**January 18, 2008, 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.

## **Family Night Hike**

**February 29, 2008, 6:30 p.m.**

### **Green Point ELC**

Go on a guided hike along Green Point's trails and learn how wildlife adapts to the cold weather. Maybe we'll even hear an owl or two. Bring a flashlight and dress in layers. This hike will be geared for families. Warm up afterwards with a cup of hot chocolate.

## **Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest**

**Deadline is March 15, 2008**

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

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