

# News Release

## *Great Lakes Region*



**Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge**  
**6975 Mower Road, Saginaw MI 48601**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 13, 2020

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Redhead ducks in flight by Ryan Dzedzic /USFWS

### **Unoccupied Eagle's Nest Allows Wildlife Drive to Open On May 1<sup>st</sup>**

The Wildlife Drive will open on May 1<sup>st</sup> this year instead of June 1<sup>st</sup> because the bald eagle's nest adjacent to the Wildlife Drive was not used this year. This is not uncommon as bald eagles often have multiple nests within a breeding territory. The bald eagle pair is currently using a new nest on the southern edge of Maankiki Marsh. The nest remains adjacent to the Wildlife Drive; the pair of bald eagles may choose to nest again at this site in future years. Refuge staff will monitor these nest sites and make appropriate changes to the Wildlife Drive opening as necessary to protect the bald eagle as per the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and our mission to protect wildlife. For more information please visit: <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/history/protections.html>.

The Wildlife Drive opens daily from Sunrise to 1 hour before Sunset. See our web page for more info: [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Shiawassee/visit/visitor\\_activities/trails.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Shiawassee/visit/visitor_activities/trails.html)

Please keep in mind this will be a yearly assessment and, if necessary to protect bald eagles, the opening of the Wildlife Drive could be as late as June 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Social (Physical) Distancing Measures Apply While Visiting the Refuge**

Governor Whitmer's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order 2020-42 allows for visiting the refuge as part of her permission to allow people to "engage in outdoor activities like walking, hiking ... or any other recreational activity, consistent with remaining at least six feet from people." Please visit responsibly. Remember *closed* areas remain *closed* and *all federal regulations* still apply.

For more information on the coronavirus visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/>.

## **Different But Enjoyable**

To adhere to the Governor's Executive Order, we ask **all visitors on the Wildlife Drive and trails to stay at least 6 feet away from other visitors and staff.**

Note: If these provisions are not met, we may have to close the Wildlife Drive or trails to protect public and staff safety.

## **Help Keep The Wildlife Drive Open By Adhering To The Following Guidelines:**

- **Use pull-over areas when stopping to observe wildlife. Otherwise keep driving.**
- **Watch for potential construction traffic.**
- **Maintain at least 6 foot social distancing on trails and at observation decks.**
- **Do not exceed posted speed limit of 15 miles per hour.**

Report these and all other suspected violations to: 1-800-292-7800

Note: All public bathrooms are closed for public and employee safety. Please check our Facebook or website for updates before you visit!

## **The Largest Of Its Kind**

Maankiki Marsh is the largest (1,000 acre) wetland restoration project to take place in the Great Lakes Region in the last 75 years. Benefits of this restoration include improved fish and wildlife habitats, and improved water quality in the Saginaw River and Bay. The project was conducted in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, and funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Views of Maankiki Marsh from the Wildlife Drive showcase an abundance of wildlife including bald eagles, cormorants, terns, ducks, geese, egrets, swans, sandhill cranes, song birds and, as of last year, a large number of American white pelicans. You may also see muskrats, deer, and turtles as some of the more common wildlife. Maankiki Marsh was the first of several planned projects to restore all former agricultural fields and to reconnect the Ferguson Bayou (historical Flint River) to the Saginaw River.

## **What to Expect This Year and Years to Come**

Our goal is to protect and enhance refuge lands as we additionally provide opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife experiences. These goals sometimes overlap. We try to balance the public's opportunities to enjoy the refuge while also allowing safe and efficient construction to implement our restoration goals. We plan to reconnect the Ferguson Bayou to its historic channel this year. As a result, construction may affect access to the Wildlife Drive. Please be aware there may be temporary closures of the Wildlife Drive from May 1 through May 31<sup>st</sup> for construction. On or after June 1<sup>st</sup>, there may be traffic control or rerouting of traffic using the Wildlife Drive. If traffic is rerouted using the Ferguson Bayou hiking trail, please use extreme caution.

During the summer of 2020, we expect the route of the Wildlife Drive to be altered using a portion of the Ferguson Bayou Hiking Trail as an exit. During this time, we ask you to **be cautious** due to the possibility of pedestrians using the trails by foot or bicycle. Please be courteous to other users, stopping for non-vehicle users. We thank you in advance for your understanding.

Our last planned restoration project that may impact the Wildlife Drive is scheduled for 2021 or 2022 to restore the last remaining agricultural field in the refuge. Again, we will do our best to allow safe and efficient construction to occur while minimizing public access impacts.

If you have any questions about these restoration projects, please feel free to contact refuge staff at 989-777-5930 or [Shiawassee@fws.gov](mailto:Shiawassee@fws.gov).

[Learn more about the Wildlife Drive and other recreational opportunities at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.](#)

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.*

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