



THE RIVER VIEW

News From The Friends of the Shiawassee River

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Sampling Finds Four New Fish Species Upstream of Rapids

by Joeseeph Leonardi, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Fisheries Division

The Shiawassee River is one of four principle tributaries of the Saginaw River. Originating in Oakland County, the Shiawassee River flows west, then north, for a total of 110 miles before it joins the Flint, Cass, and Tittabawassee rivers to form the Saginaw River. The Saginaw River flows to Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron.

The Village of Chesaning is located on the Shiawassee River in southern Saginaw County. The Chesaning Dam is (was) a centerpiece for the village and enabled navigation of the Chesaning Showboat in the upstream impoundment. Although the dam had been in need of repair for a number of years, conditions worsened in March 2005 when a center portion collapsed requiring emergency repair. After considering options, the Village decided to replace the existing dam with a rock ramp that would preserve the water level of the upstream impoundment and provide passage for fish. In the summer of 2009, the Chesaning Dam was removed and replaced with a low-slope rock ramp.

A primary objective of the Chesaning Rock Ramp was to provide fish passage. In spring and summer of 2010, DNRE, Fisheries Division conducted

electrofishing assessments to evaluate if fish passage was occurring and to what extent.

Shiawassee River flow was abnormally low during the spring resulting in less than ideal conditions for fish passage. Downstream of the rock ramp, significant spawning populations of walleye, white sucker, redhorse sucker, and quillback were observed. Since white and redhorse suckers preexisted upstream and downstream of the ramp it was difficult to determine the extent they were passing. Walleye and quillback have not been documented upstream of the ramp so any occurrence of these species upstream would be a reasonable indication of passage. During the spring assessment, our crews found one walleye and four quillback upstream of the rock ramp. However, the numbers of walleye and quillback downstream of the ramp was in the thousands suggesting that although passage was occurring, it was at a low rate. We believe the passage of suckers was occurring at a higher rate but cannot say with certainty.



Biologists shocking downstream of the rock ramp in Chesaning. Photo: MDNRE.

During the summer assessment we found two walleye and one quillback upstream of the rock ramp indicating they had passed the ramp and remained into the summer months. Two additional species (gizzard shad, freshwater drum) were found upstream of the ramp for the first time suggesting they also had passed the ramp.

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Fish Obstacles on the Shiawassee River

Obstruction name	Comment
1 Shiawassee State Game Area Structure	Not a barrier to spring migrations.
2 Peet Dam	Collapsed. Fish passage possible.
3 Chesaning Rock Ramp	3% sloped rock ramp. Fish passage possible.
4 Parshallburg Dam	Collapsed. Fish passage possible.
5 Hospital Dam	Low head dam with sluiceway. Fish passage possible.
6 Oliver Street Dam	Low head dam with sluiceway. Fish passage possible.
7 Owosso Dam	Low head dam with sluiceway. Fish passage possible.
8 Corunna Dam	Barrier to upstream fish migration.
9 Shiatown Dam	Barrier to upstream fish migration.
10 Byron Dam	Barrier to upstream fish migration.
11 Linden Mill Pond Dam	Barrier to upstream fish migration.
12 Lake Ponemah Control Structure	Barrier to upstream fish migration.
13 Fenton Water Dam	Barrier to upstream fish migration.

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Dates with Friends

Beginning Saturday, April 9

Garlic Mustard Removal

9:00 a.m.-noon, DeVries Nature Conservancy, Owosso

Help improve habitat by eliminating invasive species! Coffee and snacks provided. 2010 dates include: 4/9, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14.

Shiawassee Stream Team

Saturday, May 7

10:00 a.m. - noon

Join our corps of volunteers that assist in monitoring the habitats of the River. Several sites are available throughout the watershed in Shiawassee and Livingston County.

Riverbank Cleanup

Saturday, May 14

9:00 a.m.-noon, various locations

Volunteers will help remove debris along the shore of the Shiawassee River. Students and others can earn volunteer credit. Preregister at ShiawasseeRiver.org or call 989-723-9062.

Garlic Mustard Festival

Fundraiser

TBA, May 2010

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Celebrate another season of invasive removal at this fun and memorable fundraiser. Garlic Mustard will be incorporated into dishes and paired with beverages.

Fish Sampling (continued from page 1)

During both assessments, we found a high diversity of fish species in this area of the Shiawassee River. A total of thirty-four species of fish were collected. White sucker and redbreast suckers were abundant throughout the year. Angling opportunities for walleye may occur in spring prior to season closure downstream of the rock ramp. Channel catfish and smallmouth bass were also observed in reasonable numbers. We also found an added benefit of the rock ramp is with the new type of fish habitat it provides. In spring, we found twelve walleye within the weirs of the rock ramp and in summer we found fifty-one smallmouth bass within the weirs. These species, along with others appear to find the rock substrate and swift flow of the ramp as preferred habitat.

Despite the low level of fish passage documented in 2010, we are encouraged to see at least 4 new species upstream of the rock ramp. In all probability, it is going to take time for changes resulting from fish passage to occur and become evident. Fisheries Division will be back in spring of 2011 to collect more information.

Thank you to our 2010 Members!

Membership funds support the general operating fund of the Friends and support your local watershed conservation organization! Memberships and donations are tax-deductible.

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Timothy Atkinson, O.D.
Randel & Virginia Burns
June Caponi
Cheff's Canoe Rental
Ivan & Dorothy Conger
Florence Dignan
Robert & Janice Flynn
Betsy Hull
Ken & Judy Kirkman
Robert & Evelyn Kraatz
Mary Ann Louks
Hope Meyer
Chester & Isabella Miles
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Walleye

Craig Brehmer
Gary Burk
Paul & Katherine Kuhlman
Kenneth Algozin & Linden Martin
Kevin & Mary Katherine Smith
Jerry & Connie Voight
Young Chevy Buick

Bald Eagle

Chemical Bank
Kirk Messmer
Tom Cook & Anna Owens
Schluckebier Team at
Wells Fargo Advisors

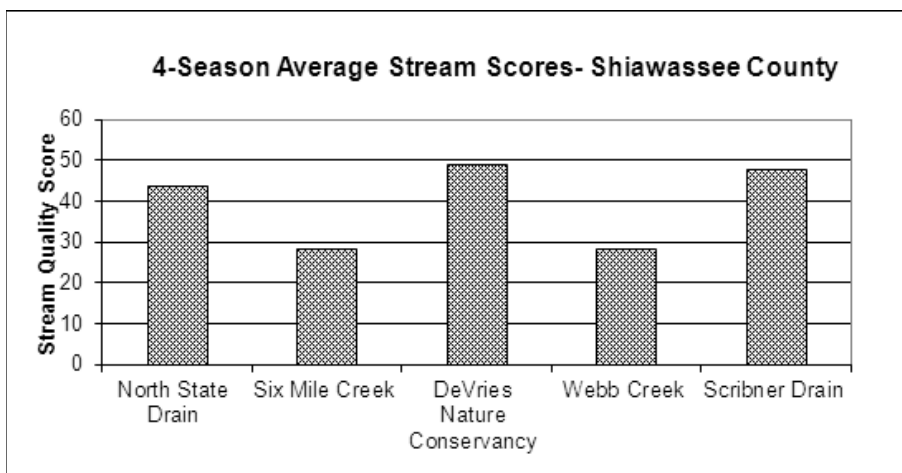
The Friends regret any errors reported or missing from our lists. Please promptly notify us of any omissions or corrections! This list represents members of 1/1/10 -11/15/10.

Five Seasons of Stream Team Science Shows Trends in Sedimentation

By Heidi Frei, Friends of the Shiawassee River

Shiawassee Stream Team volunteers have helped the Friends of the Shiawassee River gain valuable data on the rivers habitat for five seasons. Twice annually, the Stream Team returns to several sites throughout the Shiawassee River watershed to collect benthic macroinvertebrates (or aquatic insects) living within the waters. Because these macroinvertebrates are impacted by sediment and other conditions in the water, habitat quality can be assessed based on the abundance and diversity of life uncovered by volunteers.

The real value of this data is in the long-term to help identify trends over time and establish knowledge of conditions so that we can identify when changes are occurring. To date, the Stream Team has gathered data at ten locations, involved 478 volunteers and approximately 1300 volunteer hours since 2008!



Emerging trends among sites in Shiawassee County are shown in the table above, which shows average scores of the five locations for four sample seasons. Locations include: Six Mile Creek and North State Drain, both near Henderson; DeVries Nature Conservancy, Owosso; Webb Creek, near Vernon; and Scribner Drain, near Bancroft.

Based on the data, two locations, N. State Drain (43.75) and Scribner Drain (47.55), are rated as having 'good' quality habitat with scores in the range of 34-48 and nearly within the range of 'excellent' sites. 'Excellent' rated (over 48) habitat is found at DeVries Nature Conservancy, near Owosso, with an average score of 48.9. Webb and Six Mile Creeks ranked 'fair' and were statistically lower than DeVries and the Scribner Drain. Using this information, the Friends and others can target conservation activities in these subwatersheds to help improve scores.



Volunteers at North State Drain sift through samples, October 2010. Photo: H. Frei.

Proactive Efforts Collect and Recycle

By Heidi Frei, Friends of the Shiawassee River

The first Fall E-Waste and Large Item Harvest, sponsored by Waste Management, was a successful collaboration among the Friends of the Shiawassee River, the Cities of Owosso and Corunna and Shiawassee County. Jointly, nearly 70 yards of large items for proper disposal and a full semi-load of electronic waste were collected in October of 2010! Electronics recycling was provided by Valley Environmental Services in Grand Rapids, which accepted everything from computer monitors, ancient televisions and even an airport x-ray machine! Over 100 residents used the service, which kept items from potentially being disposed of improperly. These efforts, coupled with others to collect tires and hazardous waste will help prevent items from finding their way into rural ditches, urban drains, streams and our waterways!

Mission of the Friends of the Shiawassee River

Care for the River

Maintain and improve the River's water quality, habitats, and natural banks.

Enjoy the River

Increase recreational access and responsible use of the river for anglers, canoeists, walkway users, park visitors, and others who enjoy the River.

Share the River

Enhance the community's appreciation and knowledge of the River, especially among our youth.

Become a 'Friend' of the River on page 6. For more information about the Friends of the Shiawassee River and membership, contact 989.723.9062 or visit us on-line at ShiawasseeRiver.org or on find us on Facebook.



Volunteers relax next to a full semi of electronics for recycling. Photo: H. Frei.

Shiawassee River Exploration

Day 1, April 20, 2007 – Davisburg. By Riley McClincha, kayak enthusiast

"I'm Tom Hamel," said the bearded fellow wearing a ball cap.

He told me he belonged to "The Conservancy." I immediately saw him in a different light, he now looked like woodsy kind of guy, a nature boy like myself. He pulled away and I got back in the van and drove up his 1/3-mile driveway and checked his place out.

Nope, I didn't want to start paddling there, it looked unnavigable even to my standards. I took a few photos then headed for the next crossing - Dilley Road.

At Dilley the river was a paddle's width wide - my new standard for kayakability. On one side of the road, going back upstream, the river looked promising; clear enough to paddle a couple hundred yards. After that it was anyone's guess, but the map showed a place called "Trout Pond," that Tom...uh, I forgot his name, oh yeah Sickpig, spoke about.

The other side of the crossing, going west, the stream looked quite ominous. It disappeared into a thicket. But I decided this is where Swifty and I would begin this years paddling adventure, but I would go upstream in search of the trout pond, not downstream into the thicket

After paddling the straight 200 yards the path became winding. Hindering the way was thickets of brush, one beaver dam, and many blind spots where the stream disappeared. I gave up, turned around figuring this was once a trout pond but is now just a marsh.

When I returned to the culvert where I had entered, I had a decision to make. The Davisburg Mill Pond was only a half-mile downstream. Should I plow my way to it, or pack up, go into Davisburg and see how far back I could paddle to where I was now?

Go for it, was my decision.

Getting through the 6-ft culvert was easy even though the paddles kept banging against the corrugated metal. On the other side I crashed into the thicket. The paddles were of no use, I kept my head low, not to lose an eye and pulled branches away with my hands then at the same time used the branches as leverage to move forward. After the thicket I saw more light but I entered another world, Cattail World. Again the paddles were useless, the channel through the *Typha* was a kayak's width at best. I pulled my way through grabbing the stalks. Soon after, the channel broadened but the marsh became too shallow to paddle. I then used the two paddle pieces as legs and walked Swifty through.

Swifty and I surprised much wildlife as we trekked onward, turtles and muskrats mostly. I was startled by a loud "ga ruch aha ha ha," only yards away on my right. When the creepy screech repeated I found the caller's location. It was a Sandhill Crane. I quickly

tried to fetch the camera out of its dry pack for I had a great shot. I fumbled the ball though, wasted too much time, it took off flying. When I raised the camera to at least catch its flight, the switch was in the wrong mode for taking photographs.

It happened again only five minutes later. Right in front of me unseen because of cattails was a Canada goose on a nest. The closeness of her call also scared me. She flew off and continued honking for ten minutes, alerting every animal species of Cattail World and beyond. I took pictures of the nest with eggs, but later when reviewing the photos realized the camera mode was on "movie." Again, no photos.

Ahead I saw a road on a high embankment. It was Davisburg Road, and I was only a half-mile from the village with the same name. I rounded one marshy bend to see a real riverbank and not some marshy clumps. On the bank was an old lady wearing a straw hat, and sunglasses - the kind worn after having cataract surgery. She could barely bend over and was trying to put a pile of leaves in a plastic garbage bag. She was having a hard time. I wanted to get out and help her.

"You look like you could use some help?" I said it softly, as I approached. I didn't want to go all Sandhill Crane on her or give her a Canada "goose. Is the railroad crossing up ahead?" I asked.

"Yes, it's not that far. Where did you come from?" She asked.

"The trout pond, or at least that's what the map says. It was just a marsh though. Was there a pond at one time?"

"Yes, the water used to be a lot higher, now the cattails have taken over. I try to keep them off the shoreline but I'm getting too old for that kind of work. My husband before he died kept the area clear. We and the neighbors would paddleboat all though here"

"They must want more wetland and regulate the water level at the dam," I said with a guess.

She told me, "It's a good thing you came in the spring. In the summer there is no surface water."

I asked her, "Have you lived here most of your life?"



Marshy channel near launch. Photo by R. McClincha.



Navigating 'cattail alley'. Photo by R. McClincha.

Read more of Riley's adventures in upcoming editions!



Friends plant trees along the river's edge, May, 2010. Photo by H. Frei.

Another Great Year on the River!

The Friends of the Shiawassee River enjoyed another successful year helping to protect our aquatic resources for future generations. Our rivers and streams are not only home to a variety of life, they are also the foundation of our communities with potential to enhance our quality of life. The Shiawassee River served as the major means of transportation into the region, helping to build and sustain our towns.

Today, through the efforts of our volunteer sampling corps, the Shiawassee Stream Team, we are happy to find high quality habitat at many locations throughout the watershed. Additional volunteer efforts

to remove debris from habitat are turning up fewer items and tires. And, through a partnership with the DeVries Nature Conservancy, we've helped to make a noticeable impact on native habitat by removing invasive garlic mustard. Thanks to all of our volunteers and our members, whose funds support the organization and this important work.

	Volunteers	Hours
Garlic Mustard Removal	8	24
GreenUp	60	180
Spring Tree Planting	19	35
Stream Team	85	243
River Cleanup	108	336
Tire Collection	5	25
Other activities	11	64



Owosso runners unload a canoe full of finds at the River Cleanup. August, 2010. Courtesy Photo.

Total 296*

*as of 11/1/10

907*

These efforts combined have removed 625 pounds of garlic mustard and over three tons of invasive species in the last three years, removed 30 yards of debris from habitat, collected and recycled 53 tires from the river for a collective program total of 401, collected and prevented 70 yards of large items from improper disposal, collected a semi trailer full of electronics for recycling, planted over 60 large trees for immediate visual and ecologic impact, and monitored habitat at ten locations.

Thank you!



Students from New Lothrop monitor Six Mile Creek near Henderson. Photo by H. Frei.



Friends celebrate at The Wine Tasting Fundraiser at the Clatterbaugh residence, September 2010. Courtesy Photo.

Like receiving the River View? Only members will receive upcoming issues of the River View, join today! Your membership dollar supports our organization and the important work of protecting our environment.

See Page 6 for membership details or join online at ShiawasseeRiver.org!

membership

Do *your* part to help protect our freshwater!

Just 3 percent of the world's water exists as fresh water-
2 percent is locked in the polar ice caps,
less than 1 percent resides in freshwater lakes and streams.

You can help protect the Shiawassee River by becoming a member today!

Your membership supports the Friends' programs, including River Cleanups and educational events.

Name _____

Address _____

City/ST/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____



Membership Levels

- _____ \$25 Friend
- _____ \$35 Supporter
- _____ \$50 Benefactor
- _____ \$100 Blue Heron
- _____ \$250 Walleye
- _____ \$500 Bald Eagle

Please make check payable & mail to:
Friends of the Shiawassee River ·
P.O. Box 402 · Owosso, MI 48867

Celebrate our **environment** and natural resources by becoming a **Walleye** or **Bald Eagle**! These two important species call the Shiawassee River watershed home.

Your contribution supports the efforts of the Friends of the Shiawassee River as we work towards protecting and promoting good habitat!



Friends of the Shiawassee River

The Friends is a nonprofit 501c3 volunteer organization in the Shiawassee River watershed.

Note NEW address!
Friends of the Shiawassee River
308 West Main St., Suite 7
Owosso, MI 48867

Non-profit Org.
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1