

Fall World Migratory Bird Day at Drayton Plains Nature Center

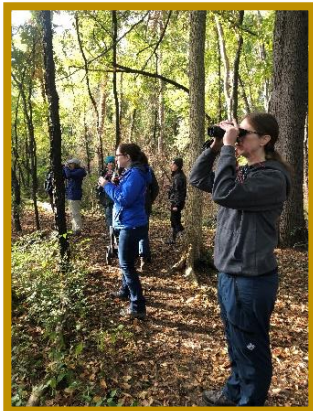
In celebration of World Migratory Bird Day on October 12, the Oakland Owlets' families and friends visited the Drayton Plains Nature Center (DPNC). It was a beautiful fall morning, and everyone was anxious to see some great birds. We started our hike just after 8:30 am, but we were too late to see the Sandhill Cranes that typically rest overnight on the property. Terri Chapdelaine, Oakland Bird Alliance member and on an advisory board overseeing this property was our guide. Terri has a long history with the property and has maintained a bird checklist at DPNC for decades. DPNC is situated along the Clinton River in Waterford Township. It was once a state fish hatchery. The property has several fish rearing ponds and pathways along the river to access the ponds. This 138-acre natural area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife and is a birding hot spot in Oakland County boasting a bird checklist of 186 species. Six Rivers Land Conservancy maintains a conservation easement in the natural area and ponds through Waterford Township Parks and Recreation.



The group walked a short distance from the parking lot to a covered bridge over the river. Two open ponds were immediately in view after crossing the bridge. Both ponds were active with several species of waterfowl. One lone Mute Swan paddled at the shoreline of one pond. The other pond was full of Canada Geese and Mallard along with both Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals. The teals were obviously much smaller than the Mallards and everyone had a good look at the Blue-winged Teal and noted the white crescent near the bill of the males. We all clearly heard the repeated calls of Killdeer foraging along the exposed banks of the ponds.



The group continued to the west boundary of the property crossing another branch of the river into a wooded area. Terri shared some of the work being done by the Six Rivers Land Conservancy in this woodland to control invasive species including Common Buckthorn and Oriental Bittersweet. This property borders a neighborhood to the west. The woodlands appeared open and long vines dangled from canopy trees where bittersweet vines had been removed. Terri explained this management would clear the forest floor that was being covered by uncontrolled invasive species. This action would benefit several species of birds including Wood Thrush and Ovenbird. Several tall trees in this area offer a great habitat for woodland and migratory birds. Guests discovered some unique fungi along the pathway.





Leaving the woodland trail, the group returned to the ponds to walk along the west branch of the Clinton River. The path led to several habitats along the river and the overgrown ponds. Along the brushy edge of the riverbank, several species of sparrows were moving through. We stopped for a time and watched both White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows. Both adult and juvenile birds were seen. Also, along the pond

edges Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Robin, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch were singing plus flitting in and out of view. Every present along the hike were Blue Jay and American Crow. As the morning progressed Turkey Vulture soared overhead.



We reached a point along the river where the two branches rejoined into one main channel. At this point, the group walked along the east branch of the river to return to the Nature Center



building. Terri stopped and showed the group some of the beaver activity along this stretch of the river. These beavers were making burrows into the riverbank instead of creating lodges. Along this stretch of the river, Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks were patrolling along with Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers. The Oakland Bird Alliance mascot also appeared. Seeing the White-breasted Nuthatch before the hike ends is an OBC requirement.

The hike concluded without any real surprises other than no herons were observed. Herons are usually seen at this site. The group noted 31 species of birds and 187 individuals. Snacks were provided for everyone along with the World Migratory Bird Day posters. Terri invited everyone to visit the Nature Center building which was open. An eBird checklist for this field trip is available upon request.



Everyone thanked Terri Chapdelaine for leading the hike and making special arrangements for the Owlets to visit DPNC.

Photo credits - Kathleen Dougherty, OAS Photo Gallery and eBird.