

# Oakland Owlets Celebrating World Migratory Bird Day @ Lake St. Clair Metropark

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A small group of Oakland Owlet Families and Friends gathered at Lake St. Clair Metropark on Saturday October 14<sup>th</sup> to Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day. World Migratory Bird Day marks the spring and fall migration of birds between the Americas. The nonprofit organization Environments for the Americas, along with multiple partners



showcase this biannual event. The Oakland Owlets planned to participate in WMBD at Lake St. Clair Metropark by observing the ongoing bird banding project at this park conducted by Allen Chartier. Sadly, the weather on October 14<sup>th</sup> was not ideal and the banding was cancelled. While many of the participants stayed home, a few people arrived in the morning ready to see birds. Initially, the rain held off, and we were able to experience how inclement weather impacts migration along the trails.

The birds were very active despite the clouds and overnight rain. Along the trail several migrating birds were refueling on berries and invertebrates. At times, there was so much activity in the vegetation that it was hard to track all the birds. Small passerines bounced between shrubs and hid behind the remaining leaves of the plants. At one point, the group was engaged by a small group of kinglets. Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets moved together making comparison of both species obvious. Luckily one member of our party was able to photograph some of the birds we saw along the trail. Nathan Stouffer captured some wonderful images of birds that he graciously shared for this report. It was awesome to see an **Eastern Towhee** with a **White-throated Sparrow** in the background. White-throated Sparrows were present in greater numbers.



Surprisingly a lone Eastern Phoebe was near a canal capturing insects. Temperatures were still mild, but many migrating insectivores have already left for warmer locations. We also encountered a few warblers moving through on their way to their wintering grounds including the Nashville, Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Everyone attempted to focus on the tiny birds along the trail, but our attention was drawn in many directions.



The presence of so many migrating birds surely attracts predators. Two avian predators seen were the Merlin and the Cooper's Hawk. The Merlin posed on a tree top branch for a long time allowing everyone in the group to see it. The abundance of birds at the park certainly benefited predators like these two raptors. As the group walked along the canals and wetlands there were numerous sparrows flitting on the path and back into the vegetation. The birds seemed to sense the changing weather patterns. While the group planned to hike to the Lake St. Clair along the boardwalk, the rain began, and our plans changed. We quickly walked back to the Nature Center



The Nature Center had opened by now. Our group gathered inside. Somewhat wet from the rain, everyone took time to shake off the water and then visit the feeding station window. Many of the birds we already listed were at the feeding station. The time provided everyone with some good looks at both the White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows along with regular feeder birds like White-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpeckers. Many Red-winged Blackbirds were taking advantage of the feeders before leaving the area.



Although the rain had shortened our time on the trail, the group was able to tally an impressive bird checklist of thirty-two species. Most of the group opted to end early, but a few ventured to the boat launch area to see the cormorants which were abundant. They numbered in the hundreds. Most of the other birds present were already seen on the trail hike. If interested in a copy of the eBird checklist, contact Kathleen.

**A special thank you to Nathan Stouffer** for providing photos of the birds as well as to the participants for braving the unpredictable weather. Pictured below are the **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and **Eastern Phoebe**.



**Photo Credits;** Kathleen Dougherty & Nathan Stouffer