

Visting Seven Ponds Nature Center in July 2025

The Oakland Owlet's families and friends explored the Seven Ponds Nature Center in Dryden on July 19th. This field trip was the second field trip this month. However, our traditional

annual Butterfly Count at Independence Oaks on July 12 this summer was cancelled by a thunderstorm. While we missed seeing butterflies at the official Butterfly Count, butterflies were abundant at Seven Ponds. Our group gathered at the Seven Ponds Parking Lot and were greeted by Nancy Kautz and Greg Gossick. Nancy and Greg both serve on the Seven Ponds board of directors.



Nancy shared information about Seven Ponds before our walk while Chimney Swifts darted overhead and an Eastern Bluebird sang from the top of Purple Martin Condo nearby. Nancy explained how Seven Ponds established a colony of Chimney Swifts by erecting a Chimney structure for the swifts near the building. She shared how Chimney Swifts cannot perch but need structures like old chimney towers to rest and nest. It was fascinating to see and learn about this unique feature. Nancy also shared some of the history about the site along with its unique natural areas and groups that visit the property, including several graduate students from Oakland University conducting research.



Our first stop was to see the Butterfly and Herb Gardens near the Nature Center. Volunteers maintain these gardens. Seven Ponds depends on volunteer groups to support their mission. Everyone spent time looking at the plants. Nancy shared that the herb plants are harvested and sold in the Nature Center. From the area near the building the group walked a short distance to a tall grass prairie established on the site by one of the first naturalists, Earl Neeb. Nancy explained by Earl traveled to intact prairies nearby to collect seeds.



The prairie was blooming with masses of flowers, pollinators and birds singing. Nancy shared some of the adaptations of the prairie plants that allow them to survive in the open sun with little rain. We walked to a Prairie Platform where we could get a bird's eye view of the prairie. Everyone was able to climb up the platform and view the extent of the prairie. We watched and listened. In an island of trees amid the prairie,

an Indigo Bunting was singing. Jeff pinpointed his perch. We were all able to see this brilliant blue male. While scanning the sky, a Green Heron flew overhead towards one of the lakes on the property.



From the perch in the hot sun, we entered the cool shade of the forest and walked a short woodland path towards one of the lakes on the property. Along the hike, Nancy stopped to share information about the trees in the forest. The forest was diverse and mature. One unusual feature along the trail was a decomposition bin where animals decomposed. Owllet friends stopped to identify some of the skeletal remains. Both Gray and Red Squirrels were encountered along the hike along with a quick sighting of a coyote. Several birds were singing along the path, including the Eastern Wood Pewee, Northern Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Gray Catbird.



Within a brief time, the group reached the lake, and everyone wandered onto the dock to look for some water birds. It was a beautiful day and the weather was cooperative. Everyone had a chance to enjoy the blue sky and search for new birds.

Red-winged blackbirds were abundant, and everyone had a



chance to see Cedar Waxwings along with an Eastern Kingbird. Nancy shared some of the graduate projects that involved water quality along the lakes with extensive nature shorelines.



Nancy said Seven Ponds was named for the lake/ponds on the property. These glacial

remnants were formed by the retreat of the glacier thousands of years ago. They are still changing. We ventured on to another lake over an A-Frame bridge and through wetlands. We eventually reached one of the largest lakes along the edge of the property. Another platform allowed the group to view the entire lake. We stopped for a group photo and a quiet moment where we heard the song of a Willow Flycatcher.



There were other places to explore but our time was ending. We returned to the Nature



Center for a brief tour of the building and some snacks. Seven Ponds is a beautiful place to see birds and enjoy the outdoors. An eBird checklist of 34 species was submitted for the hike. A complete checklist is available upon request. A special thank you to Nancy and Greg for helping the Oakland Owllets explore Seven Ponds.

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