

Oakland Owlets Earth Day Hike at Rose Oaks County Park

On a partly cloudy, cool Saturday evening several young birders' club families and friends gathered at Rose Oaks County Park near Holly. Rose Oaks, a 640-acre undeveloped park, offers passive recreation activities like fishing, hiking, and horseback riding. The park is situated at the headwaters of the Shiawassee Watershed and contains extensive



wetlands and small glacial lakes. Young birders hoped to see some of the shy marsh birds at the park.

Sue Julian from the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, and area resident, greeted the group in the parking lot. Sue has been instrumental in preserving properties in the area. Sue discussed how the glaciers shaped the topography of the area and the watershed. From Rose Oaks, water meanders north into the Saginaw Bay.

In a short distance from the parking lot, an extensive boardwalk over a wet meadow surrounding Mallett Lake leads to the trails. The group stopped on the boardwalk to take in the scenery. Surrounded by noisy Canada Geese, Red-winged Blackbirds darted back and forth. The ruckus calls of Sandhill Cranes were confirmed by a sighting of the crane moving through the cattails. The big bird was well camouflaged that if it had not moved, it would have gone unnoticed.



The long line of 25 birders snaked along the path as the daylight streamed to the forest



floor. Woodpeckers hopped along the leafless trees. Along the edge of Esler Lake, the group observed a beaver lodge in the distance, Canada geese and a Great Blue Heron hunting along the shoreline. Anticipating the birds would be more active at dusk, we struggled to find birds. The recent colder temperatures quieted frogs as well which would normally be calling loudly at this time of year. An occasional, chirp or peep was heard from a few hardy Chorus

Frogs and Spring Peepers.

The group reached Richardson Lake with hopes to see additional birds on the lake, but alas, birding at the park was lacking birds. **Twenty species of birds** were seen along the

trail and 60 individuals were reported to eBird. One of the target birds (Pied-billed Grebe) was heard on Mallet Lake after most of the group had left. The dramatic shifts in the weather may have impacted the birds at the park. However, the vistas along the trails were spectacular even though bird activity was lacking.



Checklist for Rose Oaks:

Canada Goose

Mallard

Pied-billed Grebe

Mourning Dove

Sandhill Crane

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

American Crow

Black-capped Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse

Tree Swallow

White-breasted Nuthatch

American Robin

American Goldfinch

Song Sparrow

Red-winged Blackbird

Common Grackle

Northern Cardi



A special thanks to **Sue Julian** for sharing her expertise. Also, **Blanche Wicke** for volunteering since the group was larger than expected.

Photo Credits; Kathleen Dougherty & Jonathan Schechter, Oakland County Government Nature Writer for sharing his Wildlife photos.

