

# Warbler Wanderings @ Red Oaks

The Oakland Owlet's Families and Friends gathered on May 21<sup>st</sup> at Friendship Woods in Madison Heights to search for the small and colorful warblers migrating north in the area. Friendship Woods is a 38-acre green space owned by the City of Madison Heights and leased to Oakland County Parks as part of Red Oaks County Park. It is an ideal stopover site for migrating birds and a local birding hot spot.

New World Warblers breed in forested habitats of North America and overwinter in the tropics. Seeing these stunning birds during spring migration is a ritual practiced by many birders. Warblers are best seen before leaves completely emerge and obscure the view of the birds on trees. These tiny active birds glean invertebrates as they flit along tree branches.



A small group of dedicated birders gathered at Red Oaks Nature Center Parking lot on a cloudy morning that threatened rain. Fortunately, the rain held off for most of the hike. Bird songs filled the air as the hike started. We were thrilled to immediately discover a Blue Jay at its nest with nestlings. Birds moved in and out of the foliage along the trail, making it hard to see them clearly. Bare branches and tree snags provided excellent views of birds in the open.

Birds observed on the hike were surprising and outside of their typical habitats. Everyone had a chance to appreciate flycatchers. Flycatchers are known for their habit of catching insects from a perch. Blanche Wicke was able to show everyone the field marks of the Olive-sided Flycatcher, an uncommon flycatcher of northern spruce-fir forests. We saw four distinct species of flycatchers.



Warblers were still moving north like the Northern Parula and **Chestnut-sided Warbler**. **American Redstarts** were seen in quantity on the hike. Summer resident warblers at Red Oaks including the Ovenbird and Yellow Warbler were cheerfully singing near the trail. Hiking less than half of the park, the field trip concluded early because of the rain. An eBird checklist was submitted for the hike as follows.

The eBird checklist for this location noted **twenty-seven species**:

Mourning Dove  
Chimney Swift  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Olive-sided Flycatcher  
Eastern Wood-Pewee  
Alder Flycatcher  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Red-eyed Vireo

Blue Jay  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tree Swallow  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
House Wren  
Gray Catbird  
American Robin  
American Goldfinch  
Baltimore Oriole

Red-winged Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Ovenbird  
**American Redstart**  
Northern Parula  
Yellow Warbler  
**Chestnut-sided Warbler**  
Northern Cardinal



Benjamin Prowse, Red Oaks Naturalist joined the hike to let us know about a fast-approaching rainstorm. He invited the group to visit the Nature Center which opened at 10 am. Some participants left the group while others visited the nature center.

**Thank you to Benjamin Prowse, Naturalist at Red Oaks Nature Center, and participants.**



Photo Credits - Kathleen Dougherty, Jonathan Schechter & OAS Gallery.