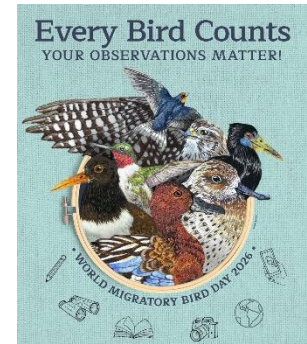


World Migratory Bird Day 2026

The Oakland Owlet's families and friends gathered at Belle Isle on May 9 to observe World Migratory Bird Day. World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is an initiative that seeks to raise awareness of migratory birds and encourage public participation in their conservation. This initiative began in 1993 with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Today WMBD is celebrated internationally by many organizations. Each year since 2018, the Environment for the Americas (EFTA) selects a theme for WMBD which focuses on bird migration and conservation messaging. This year's theme highlights the importance of public participation in community science work. This work provides data about bird populations, migratory stopover sites and informs conservation management. EFTA recruits an artist to highlight the annual theme. This year's WMBD art was created by Luisa Lacerda from Brazil.



"Every Bird Counts" was the main topic of the Belle Isle field trip. Families and friends were invited to learn about bird banding with long time Oakland Bird Alliance member and veteran bird bander, Allen Charteir. Allen has been banding birds for several decades at many locations and now is at Belle Isle working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Allen's work provides information about the birds using this island park. The study site has been impacted by the loss of mature trees. Belle Isle Park is large urban park adjacent to the city of Detroit and is Michigan's 102nd State Park.

It was a beautiful day when everyone arrived at the banding site near the Nature Center. Allen and his crew were away at the time retrieving the birds from the nets. Allen returned with several small drawstring bags each containing a bird. Allen greeted our group,



explained the process, and introduced the crew. He carefully handled each bird collected, taking specific measurements, applied bands if not already banded, showed us each bird and then released it.

Bird banding has been done for centuries and is a cornerstone for research and conservation of birds. Banding allows scientists to track individual birds and provides information about bird migration, site fidelity, lifespan, reproductive success, and population changes. This information supports bird conservation and long-term ecological planning. Bird banding is highly regulated through the Migratory Bird Act, and all bird banders are required to be licensed.

Everyone gathered around Allen and listened as he processed the birds. Many people brought chairs since this field trip involved watching and waiting. One of the first birds that

Allen showed the group was an **Ovenbird**. Allen took time to show everyone this bird. Seeing an Ovenbird this closely is not something that most birders can do. Amazingly, the Ovenbird was calm and cooperative. Ovenbirds are part of the wave of warblers that are migrating north during the spring. Ovenbirds are long distance migrants and are known to breed in our area if the proper habitat exists. These small, camouflaged birds need mature dense forests. They spend most of their time on ground, foraging in the leaf litter on the forest floor.



Allen continued to band and record data about the birds that were captured. Most of the birds were larger than the Ovenbird, but they were all interesting to see. Gray Catbirds were netted in large numbers. We watched Allen measure and release five of them. Mostly gray in appearance, catbirds have some distinct features when observed in hand. Other birds that we were able to see included Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Yellow Warblers both the male and female, American Robin, Blue Jay, Common Yellowthroat and Wood Thrush.



Allen took the group along the trail to show where the nets were placed and explain what is involved with capturing and removing the birds from the nets. Everyone was fascinated by learning about banding and all the birds we were able to see during the time we spent with Allen.

In addition to watching bird banding, we were also listening and looking for birds nearby. While the banding team was checking the nets, we walked to the nearby

lake, we watched three Ospreys fly over. There was lots of activity on the lake including a Caspian Tern patrolling the water. The nearby forested area was filled with the songs from Orchard and Baltimore Orioles along with the constant songs of Red-winged Blackbirds and American Robins. The bird checklists from the parking lot and nearby walks to Lake Muskoday produced 32 species.



By late morning, friends and families had the opportunity to



visit the nature center. Mike Reed, curator of education and naturalist from the Detroit Zoo, showed us some of the new exhibits at the facility. Mike works with youth in the city exploring the outdoors. The Nature Center's exhibits highlight Michigan species including some unique species like mudpuppies. Mike also took time to show the group some of the outdoor features on the nature center's grounds including a

children's natural play area and the gaint megaphone listening area.

Everyone thanked both Allen and Mike for sharing their time and expertise. Allen invited everyone to follow his work on this blog – [Michigan Hummingbird Guy: Belle Isle Birding](#).

Owlet's friends were privileged to host two international birders from China. eBird checklists from this field are available upon request.



Photo Credits - Kathleen Dougherty & Sasha Cahill (Caspian Tern- ML355779361 – MacCauley Library)