

# Late Season Hawk Watching @ Lake Erie Metropark

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The Oakland Owlets visited Lake Erie Metropark on November 4<sup>th</sup> to observe the seasonal Hawk Migration. The Detroit River Hawk Watch maintains a count station at Lake Erie Metropark.



November is near the end of this migration when bigger raptors are seen like Golden Eagles. The best weather conditions to witness hawk migration include sunshine, light winds from the north, increasing barometric pressure and no rain. The weather of the day, however, was warm, mostly cloudy and winds from the south.

Upon arriving our group was greeted by Sam, one of the apprentice counters. Sam distributed brochures about the Detroit River Hawk Watch {DRHW} Count. Sam then shared that the count would be delayed because of the overcast skies. U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Jessie Fletcher who oversees the DRHW count soon arrived to speak to our group. Jessie shared the natural history of hawk migration, how the count is conducted and the geographic significance of the count site. Fletcher thought the migration would be slow today until the skies cleared and recommended that the group take a hike and return later.



Bird activity on the river thus far featured gulls, ducks, and terns. No raptors had crossed the river since the group arrived. Everyone enjoyed watching Bonaparte's Gull and Forster's Terns feeding on small fish in the river, but most of the group wanted to move and see some other birds. Don and Jim led the group along the trail near the boat launch.

On the trail, several birds were singing like the White-throated Sparrow and Song Sparrow. Stopping to focus, everyone saw other birds. Wetland pools along the trail provided resting places for dabbling ducks like Mallards. The ducks were wise to stay within the park boundaries. Duck hunting was happening just beyond the park boundaries. Most of the group stopped on the boardwalk over the Huron River emptying into the Detroit River. A Belted Kingfisher announced its presence, and, in the distance, many ducks floated on the water too far away to distinguish.



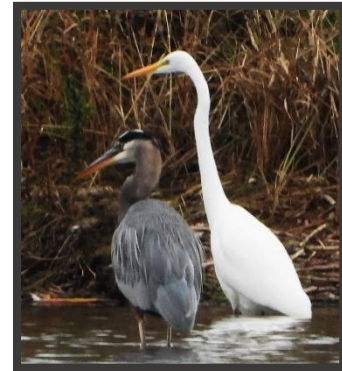
Most of the group returned to the hawk watch count site from the boardwalk, but a few continued the trail loop. After nearly two hours at the hawk watch count site, a majority of the group opted to hike instead of waiting for the hawks. Don and Jim offered to take

anyone interested to the nature center trail. A car caravan left for the nature center. The group was dispersed in several directions, but a majority of the group traveled to the nature center to hike the trail.



A platform overlooking the wetland outside of the nature center provided some great views of several birds to start including Wood Ducks, Mallards, Great Egrets, Killdeers, Great Blue Heron, and Dunlins. Everyone enjoyed these

birds from this vantage point. Along the trail, the group had multiple opportunities to see several species of resident songbirds and others in route to their wintering grounds. Boardwalks extended into the marshes along the path allowed the group windows into wetlands. Staying quiet and attentive allowed everyone in the group had enough time to see and appreciate the birds we encountered. Some migrants like Rusty Blackbird and Hermit Thrush along with many resident birds like Brown Creepers and Cedar Waxwings kept everyone busy.



At the end of the trail, we were rewarded to find multiple Great Egrets dotting the wetland edge. Several species of ducks were also seen feeding in the deeper pools of water including Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, and Mallards. As we approached the boardwalk overlooking this wetland, we flushed the Yellowlegs, both Lesser and Greater, which was a treat to see.

We concluded later than expected, everyone thanked Jim and Don for leading the hike. A few people returned to the Hawk Watch site for a chance to see the Little Gull. Overall, the bird checklists for the day included more than 40 species. Although the Hawk Watch was slow, the birds at Lake Erie Metropark were numerous. The DRHW numbers for the day listed 41 birds including 2 Golden Eagles. Visit the DRHW for updates -[Day's Summary - Detroit River Hawk Watch](#) . eBird checklists for the day are available upon request to Kathleen.



A special thank you to the volunteers from DRHW and **Jessie Fletcher** from the International Wildlife Refuge along with Don Burlett and Jim Koppin for sharing their expertise with the group. Additionally, thank you to Ray Bosshard and Jeff Stacey for sharing their photos.

**Photo Credits:** Ray Bosshard, Kathleen Dougherty & Jeff Stacey