

# May World Migratory Bird Day Hike @ Rose Oaks

The Oakland Owlet's families and friends celebrated World Migratory Bird Day on May 13<sup>th</sup> at Rose Oaks County Park near Holly Michigan. Rose Oaks is a 649-acre undeveloped park with extensive natural resources. The park features several miles of trails and supports multiple outdoor recreation opportunities from hiking, trail riding,



fishing, and archery hunting. The park is in the headwaters of the Shiawassee River Watershed with multiple wetlands and kettle lakes. It was an ideal place to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day and go birding. Mike Dougherty, former Oakland Audubon Newsletter editor and conservation steward helped lead this field trip. The group started from the Buckhorn Lake Road Parking lot. We ventured onto the trail across the long boardwalk over the wetland adjoining Mallet Lake.

On the boardwalk, a loud buzzy call grabbed everyone's attention. This distinct call is described as "fritz bew" and was a **Willow Flycatcher**. This bird belongs to Empidonax flycatchers group and is best identified by their distinctive calls. Everyone listened to and watched this flycatcher's behavior, perching on the end of a branch and darting out for an insect. Listen to this audio link - [Willow Flycatcher Sounds, All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)



Along the forest path we stopped to hear the songs of forest birds singing high in the tree canopy. This provided a chance to hear the songs of three different vireos. These small songbirds live high in the forest canopy. They are easy to hear, but hard to see. Each vireo song is unique. Knowing vireo songs helps with the identification of these small birds high in the trees. Insect eating birds, Vireos consume caterpillars and a variety of invertebrates in the forest. We heard three different vireos – Red-eyed, **Yellow-throated** and Warbling.

By now, everyone was using Merlin's sound identification. We were all hoping to see many migrating wood warblers, but we missed the big warbler wave. A few stragglers including the Northern Parula, American Redstart and Bay-breasted Warblers were found along with summer residents.



When we reached Richardson Lake, the habitat changed dramatically. Water birds were in and along the shoreline of the lake. Amazingly, two Trumpeter Swans flew into the lake while Pied-billed Grebes, Mallards, Wood Ducks, and a Great Blue Heron were feeding along the shoreline. Tree Swallows soared overhead. It was wonderful to see Trumpeter



Swans, a “species of special concern”. Everyone took a few moments to enjoy the scenery and see some amazing birds.

Before reaching the northern boundary of the park, the group crossed another long boardwalk. Swamp sparrows, Marsh Wrens and Song sparrows provided surround sounds. Loud Sandhill Cranes were heard but not seen due to the dense vegetation. Our last destination was the extensive fields beyond Richardson Lake. Mike conducted grassland bird survey work in these fields. We were greeted by **Field sparrows**. It was a beautiful day filled with over 50 species of birds along the hike. Rose Oaks was a good place to see and celebrate birds.



A special thank you to Mike Dougherty for sharing Rose Oaks with the Young Birders’ Club families and friends.



**Photo Credits** - Kathleen Dougherty, Mike Dougherty & OAS Gallery & Macaulay Library at Cornell Lab