

Oakland Owlets Search for Signs of Spring at Stony Creek

On March 20th, the Oakland Owlet families and friends met at Stony Creek Metropark to explore some early migrant birds and other signs of spring. This was the first day of the vernal equinox and one of the first warm days in months. A group of twelve started at the Nature Center butterfly garden near the feeding station. Although the building was closed, the feeders outside were stocked and regular feeder birds darted in and out. The building entrance provided a bonus bird – **the Eastern Phoebe**. One of the earliest birds to return north, Eastern Phoebes often nest on human structures like building overhangs.



Stony Creek, a tributary of the Clinton River, meanders near the Nature Center and trails. The group hiked toward the creek and moved upland on the trail. Sandhill cranes flew overhead while Northern Cardinal and Song Sparrows sang from shrub perches on the trail.



After a mile hike, we drove to the Inwood Rustic Trails north of the Nature Center. A pair of Bald Eagles have nested on the property for a couple of years. Everyone picked an ideal location to view the eagles' nest. Both parent birds were present, the female sitting on the nest and the male perched nearby like a sentinel. An impressive sight of protective and dutiful parents.

The next stop on the field trip was a short drive to Stony Creek Lake, a 500-acre lake impoundment of Stony Creek. The lake stretches across the park and offers stopover habitat for migrating waterfowl. Spotting scopes were necessary to see a distance mixture of dabbling and diving ducks. Everyone was delighted by the rich diversity of species on the lake.

Thirty-seven species of birds along with two taxa including 159 individuals were reported to eBird during this field trip. We visited several habitats throughout this 4,461-acre park. Stony Creek is spectacular natural area and is a wonderful birding spot close to home.



Checklists for Stony Creek:

Canada Goose
Mute Swan
Blue-winged Teal
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Greater/Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Mourning Dove
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe



Blue Jay
American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
American Goldfinch
Dark-eyed Junco
Song Sparrow
sparrow sp.
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Northern Cardinal



A special thank you to **Jake Harm at Stony Creek** for assisting with park access, and **Blanche Wicke** for volunteering as needed.



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