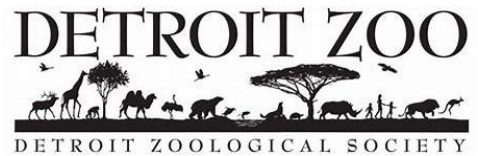


# Pondering Penguins at the Detroit Zoo



The Oakland Audubon Young Birders' Club took a trip to see Penguins on March 16<sup>th</sup> thanks to the help of the educational staff at the Detroit Zoo. A group of sixteen plus met at the entrance of the Polk Penguin Conservation Center (PPCC) to start. Mike Reed and Jessica Jozwiak greeted us. Jessica is the lead Penguin care staff member at the PPCC. Jessica has been involved with Penguins for many years. The group initially gathered at the floor to ceiling window of the penguin habitat. This view is like looking at penguins at the edge of the water in the Antarctic. Several species of penguins were moving about the habitat.

It was feeding time in the habitat. Jessica shared information with us about the species of penguins and their care needs. The PPCC is a state-of-the-art facility. The wellbeing of the penguins is of foremost importance. The penguins have a large aquatic area to swim, dive, and porpoise. This level of activity helps keep the penguins fit.

After spending time with Jessica, the group walked into the lower level of the habitat where we could view the penguins swimming. The group thanked Jessica for sharing her knowledge. The next adventure in the PPCC involved a learning station where the zoo educational staff provided activities for the group. We felt the feathers of penguins



which were dense and compacted. More penguin facts were shared. Young birders also pondered the complexity of penguin survival in an activity.

Parents and young birders then relaxed while they watched the penguins swimming. The views were remarkable.



Leaving the PPCC, the group took a short walk into the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery and into the Matila R, Wilson Free Flight Aviary. Matthew Porter, a caretaker at the Aviary welcomed us. The Aviary was a completely dissimilar experience. Although it was March, but the lush greenery and bird songs surrounded the group. As we walked,

Matthew shared information about the birds in the Aviary. Matthew brought mealworms to bring some of the birds into better view. At one stop, one of the birds were attracted to the nail polish of Stacey. Her nails looked like red berries. After walking through the Free Flight Aviary, the group gathered for a photo and thanked Matthew and Mike for everything. The Aviary was a wonderful experience for birders.



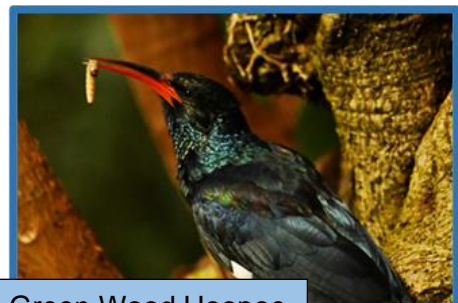
Upon exiting the Aviary, the group witnessed a life and death struggle between a Rock Pigeon and a Cooper's Hawk. The drama unfolded over time and most of the group stayed to watch. The characters included the two main players along with a pair of Canada Geese checking on the situation. The hawk preferred to dine alone and moved the pigeon. The Rock Pigeon eventually succumbed to the persistence of the Cooper's Hawk. This ending seemed planned for a birding group however this was not the case.



The young birders' club is extremely grateful to the educational staff at the Detroit Zoo, especially Mike Reed, Jessica Jozwiak, Matthew Porter, and Thomas Benson. Thomas did a lot of behind-the-scenes arrangements. After the tour of the Free Flight Aviary ended, the young birders' club program ended, however several families stayed to see other venues at the zoo. The Zoo is a wonderful asset to the area and a few people purchased family memberships for this young birders' club field trip.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty & Kayla Niner



Green Wood Hoopoe