

Oakland Owlet's Evening Proud Lake Recreation Area

Oakland Owlets' families and friends gathered at Proud Lake Recreation on August 16 for an evening hike. Proud Lake State Recreation Area is located along the Huron River in Commerce Township. The park is over 4,700 acres and has multiple recreation opportunities, including canoeing on the Huron River, hiking, fishing and more. There is a modern campground, conference center, and cabins at this park.

A group of twelve Owlets met at the trail head parking lot near the park headquarters. The tall trees filtered the sunlight as sun was setting. Earlier rain made the air feel damp and moist even though it was not raining at the time. Once everyone arrived the group gathered in the parking lot for a brief introduction. Tim Nowicki, a fellow birder, joined the hike as a co-leader. Tim is the Christmas Counter Compiler for the Detroit Bird Alliance and a wonderful naturalist.



The group set out towards the Marsh Trail. We trekked through a mature and dense forest initially. The leaves on the tall trees protected the ground



from earlier rain. The trees limited our view of marsh until we were at the pond and the tree canopy opened. At the time, splendid views of the wetlands surrounding the pond appeared. Many interesting plants were growing in the wetlands like Michigan Holly with its bright red berries, Jewelweed and Joe-pye Weed. Everyone was focused on seeing birds. There was an overall stillness that evening and bird songs were few. However, American Crows were actively cawing along with ever-present calls of the Blue Jays.

The Marsh Trail offered boardwalks across the wetlands, and everyone was hopeful of catching a glimpse of ducks. The wetland plants in the marshy areas were very tall, making it hard to see open water. Soon everyone again could hear the familiar "quack, quack" of Mallards at the ponds' edge. The group also heard the call of a Wood Duck as it was leaving the area. The Wood Duck's call and flight silhouettes are distinctive. Male Wood Ducks are so colorful. Wood Ducks, unlike most ducks, make nests in tree cavities.



Further along the trail, there was another chance to view the pond from a platform.



Everyone stepped onto the deck to look for birds along the water's edge. We discovered a family of **Mute Swans**, with six cygnets. The swan family was concealed by wetland vegetation. The cygnets were almost adult size. Additionally, the group spotted a Great Egret perched in a tree overlooking the water.

In total, the group observed eighteen species of birds along our hike. Our eBird checklist included many of the typical woodland birds such as **Hairy Woodpecker**, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied

Woodpecker, and all the little guys like the Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatch. The abundance of berry producing plants along the trail attracted birds like **Cedar Waxwing**, American Robin, and Gray Catbird which we had an opportunity to see and hear.

Although bird activity was low this evening it was a lovely evening to hike and see nature at Proud Lake. A copy of the eBird checklist is available upon request. The hike concluded near dark. A special thank you to Tim Nowicki for co-leading this hike and sharing his expertise.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty & Oakland Bird Alliance.