

Owlets November Birding Adventure ~ Hawk Woods

On November 22, Oakland Owlets' families and friends spent a pleasant Saturday morning at Hawk Woods Park and Campground in Auburn Hills. Hawk Woods is owned and operated by the City of Auburn Hills. The Owlets were lucky to have two staff members from the Recreation Department meet our group to explore the park. Hawk Woods Park and Campground is an 80-acre property with trails and woodlands along with several recreation facilities including cabins for overnight use, a lodge, and a playground. The park is located east of M-24 and south of Bald Mountain in Auburn Hills. Ally Maye-Bloom and Nick Skinner shared information about the park and programs offered through the Auburn Hills Recreation Department.



After everyone arrived, the group was ready to explore the trails. The morning air was chilly, but the rising sun provided some warmth over time. The group headed south along the Pond Trail. Ally explained that the pond was created through a mitigation agreement. Walking along the edge of the Pond Trail the group paused to view Dark-eyed Juncos, American Goldfinch and American Tree Sparrows. Hoping to find some waterfowl, we encountered a few Mallards in the water.

From the Pond Trail, the group entered a lowland forest with large Silver Maples and dead snags standing. There we found several species of Woodpeckers including Downy, Red-bellied and Northern Flicker. Further along the trail, a viewing platform provided a chance to observe an extensive marsh invaded by Phragmites. The dried plant stems provided cover for Red-winged blackbirds that were procrastinating in their migration south. The group listened to all the sounds from the marsh while looking at the Redwings.



From the south end of the park, we ventured into an upland hardwood oak-hickory forest trekking back to the parking lot. Along the trail we discovered new birds including the OBA logo bird, the White-breasted Nuthatch, and a Red-tailed Hawk. By this time, the sun was filtering into the woodland enhancing the rusty, gold colors associated with the fall. There were many picturesque views along this trail.

At the trail's end, we walked into the campground site. Ally and Nick shared information and a tour of a cabin and the lodge with the group. It was an unusually warm November day. While we gathered in the parking before leaving, an adult Bald Eagle soared overhead with a flock of gulls and a Red-tailed hawk. Turkey Vultures were also seen gliding nearby. It was a great ending to a wonderful fall hike. An eBird checklist was submitted which included twenty-three species and shared with the group.

Everyone thanked Ally and Nick for their time. Mel spotted the Bald Eagle just as everyone was putting away their binoculars. Otherwise, we would have missed the Bald Eagle. A special thank you to Kayla Niner for photographing the birds.



Photo Credits - Kathleen Dougherty, Kayla Niner, and Oakland Bird Alliance.