

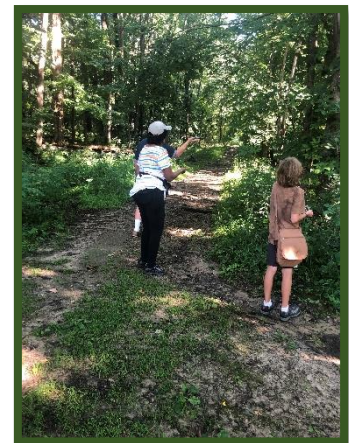
Cruising on Kent Lake & Birding at Kensington Metropark

The Oakland Owlets spent Saturday morning, August 12 at Kensington Metropark hiking, handfeeding songbirds, learning about the Ospreys, and cruising on Kent Lake. It was a morning full of activities for everyone. We saw several species of birds including Osprey and Bald Eagle on the lake. The weather was friendly and cooperative.



Young birders' families, and friends met at the Kensington Nature Center and started on the trail. Some of the first birds we encountered were Sandhill Cranes and Wild Turkeys foraging on the forest floor together. This unusual grouping of birds seemed normal at Kensington in that birds behave differently at this park.

Further along the trail and deeper into the forest, the group encountered a variety of woodpeckers from the small Downy Woodpecker and the large Piliated Woodpecker. While hiking some friends stopped occasionally to handfeed songbirds. Kensington Metropark has a reputation for being a place where songbirds are accustomed to accepting seeds from human hands. Guests with enough patience were successful. Chickadees and nuthatches reacted favorably to the seed mix provided. The close encounter with these songbirds is something that everyone enjoys.



The hike ended on the Wildwing boardwalk west of the Nature Center Parking lot. The Great Blue Heron Rookery can be seen from the boardwalk. Most of the birds had fledged, but some herons remained. Several new species were observed in the marshy edge of



Wildwing Lake including Great Egret, Least Bittern, Wood Ducks, Mallards, and Mute Swans. Everyone took time to view the birds in the marsh as the sun warmed the morning sky.

Afterwards, we drove to a nearby parking area to where the park's tour boat was docked. The Oakland Owlet families and friends were joined by Barb Jensen, one of the founding members of the Southeast Michigan Osprey Recovery Team. Barb volunteered to speak to our group about the Osprey before we toured the lake.

Ospreys are also known as "*Fish Hawks*" in that they primarily eat fish. These specialized birds of prey were impacted by use of DDT along with the destruction of wetlands. By the 1960's, the Osprey population was decimated in southern Michigan. Ospreys virtually

disappeared in the area even after DDT was banned in 1972. In 1998, the MDNR along with other groups attempted to re-introduce Ospreys to southern Michigan. Kensington Metropark was one of the first sites designated for a hacking structure to aid in the reintroduction effort. Barb Jensen played a critical role in this re-introduction program and became known as the “Osprey Lady of Michigan.” Barb spent some time with the young birders to share some of her knowledge and passion about this amazing bird.



At the conclusion of Barb’s presentation, the group boarded the Island Queen to tour Kent Lake to see Osprey along with other water birds. We were not disappointed. The boat staff provided detailed information about Kent Lake and the park. Kent Lake is an impoundment formed by stopping the flow of the



Huron River and creating a 1200-acre lake with several islands. These islands offer nesting refugees for birds. One of our first stops was an eagle’s nest on one of the islands. The boat was positioned so everyone could see the nest. There was no activity in the nest, but suddenly, we all saw an adult Bald Eagle perched on a branch near the nest. Everyone was excited to see the Bald Eagle so clearly. The size of the nest and the bird were very impressive.

As the boat coursed across the lake, the group was able to see some other birds including Double-crested Cormorant, Canada Geese, the Common Loon, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. Additionally, we were able to view an Osprey nest located outside of the park on top of a light pole in a parking lot. Ospreys were perched on the nest. Ospreys accept human made structures for nesting.



Everyone thanked Barb Jensen for sharing her expertise and work on behalf of the re-introduction of the Osprey to southern Michigan. Two complete eBird checklists were kept of the birds observed during this outing. These checklists were submitted to eBird and are available on request.



Photo Credits – Kathleen Dougherty & OAS Gallery.