

October World Migratory Bird Day Hike @ Rose Oaks

Rose Oaks County Park is a quiet rustic park near Holly, Michigan. The park is in the headwaters of the Shiawassee River Watershed with multiple wetlands and kettle lakes. One third of the park property is considered wetlands, making this park a good place to see birds.

Oakland Owlets' families and friends spent Saturday morning October 11 at Rose Oaks celebrating World Migratory Bird Day's fall migration. Our tour began at the Buckhorn Lake Road Parking lot. Buckhorn Lake Road is a dirt road that cuts through the east entrance to the park. This road divides two of the park's lakes, Mallet Lake, and Cogger



Lake. Mike Dougherty, an Oakland Bird Alliance member, and wildlife photographer volunteered to co-lead this hike. Mike has extensive knowledge of Rose Oaks.

Once everyone arrived, the group walked south towards the Forestview Trail. Our bird checklist however, started even before leaving the parking lot. Red-winged Blackbirds were abundant and singing. This was a mixed flock of blackbirds including **Rusty Blackbirds** and Common Grackles. At a distance large flocks of blackbirds flew up from the wetlands with European Starlings. Meanwhile,

White-throated Sparrows were foraging on the ground near the parking lot. As the group crossed the boardwalk from the parking lot to the Forestview Trail, we paused and listened. A lone Swamp Sparrow lingered in the wetlands, a straggler from the rest of Swamp Sparrow flock that was already on their way south.



Walking into the forest from the boardwalk, the bird activity did not change. The forest was buzzing with birds. Mel called out a Brown Creeper, and everyone stopped to find it. Binoculars focused on all the tree trunks nearby. A large tree with cavities attracted several species of birds. Insects were mostly likely the reason for this level of interest. Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, and the **Brown Creeper** were observed at this stop. White-breasted Nuthatch were also seen adjacent to the trail. Several people got a good look at the Brown Creeper. Along the Forestview Trail, Red-bellied Woodpeckers cawed along with the frantic laughing call of the Northern Flicker as we continued.



Further down the trail, the group reached Richardson Lake. Our view opened and we saw more Blackbirds plus a Pileated Woodpecker. Dead standing trees surrounded part of the

lake and provided a buffet for woodpeckers. The Belted Kingfisher's rattle-like call vied in our ears by the water. This stocky crested bird with a long thick bill often patrols the lakes and rivers. The group also heard a Killdeer which was hunting along the exposed mudflats at the lakes' edge. We continued but stopped to see the trail that extended across another boardwalk into a meadow. The group decided to return instead of walking an additional mile. A Sandhill Crane flew into the marsh as we watched from the boardwalk. Its loud calls were answered by other Sandhill Cranes already feeding the wetland.



As the group continued around Richardson Lake, the soft song of the **Eastern Bluebird** was heard. The open fields north of the lake are ideal bluebird habitat. Eastern Bluebirds are resident to medium distance migrants. In this area, Eastern Bluebirds may migrate to the southeast United States, or some may linger here into the winter.



After circling around Richardson Lake, the group followed the trail to return to the parking lot. We surprised father and son archers tucked away in the forest. They were perfectly camouflaged. While walking through the forest, we witnessed a few late warblers, the Black-throated Blue Warbler and the **Yellow-rumped Warbler**. Most warblers have migrated by this time. A small group checked the lakes near the parking lot before ending our eBird checklist. This stop added Wood Ducks and a Great Blue Heron to our checklist. The group eBird checklist tallied thirty species and 242 individuals. The eBird checklist is available upon request.



The hike concluded with snacks and drinks. A special thank you to Mike Dougherty for sharing information about Rose Oaks with the Oakland Owlets' families and friends.

Photo Credits - Kathleen Dougherty, Mike Dougherty, Heather Klish and Oakland Bird Alliance.

