

Roaming the Rouge on June 17th, 2023



The Oakland Owlet's Families and Friends gathered on June 17th at Rouge Park in Detroit for our monthly birding hike to explore the Rouge River as it courses through this park. Rouge Park is owned and managed by the Detroit Parks and Recreation Department. Detroit Parks and Recreation Naturalist, Rachel Felder joined the Owlets as co-leader. Rachel has extensive knowledge of the area and uses this park regularly. It was a sunny and pleasant day. The group began at the Scout Hollow Campground and hiked about a mile

along the east side of the Rouge River. The trail was wooded with some great views of the river along the path. Habitats along the path included a mature forest, wetlands along the river and an edge/opening at the trail head. The group tallied 33 species of birds along the hike including Tree Swallows, a Great Blue Heron, and a Great-crested Flycatcher and of course, White-breasted Nuthatch. One surprise was the **Orchard Oriole** along the woodland edge at the beginning of the hike.



After the trial hike the group ventured to another location nearby within the park, the



Lahser Marsh. The Marsh features open water and an opportunity to see new birds associated with this habitat. The extra drive did not disappoint us. Several species of swallows glided over the wetland, including, Rough-winged and Barn Swallows, not seen during the trail hike. In addition, the group was able to observe more wetland species including Great Egrets and waterfowl. Surprisingly, a **Lesser Scaup** posed for everyone to see. **A**

special thank you to Blanche Wicke for identifying this bird. The area surrounding the marsh included a field and woodland. Overhead, Turkey Vultures soared while **Chimney Swifts** darted along with the Swallows. On the ground, the calls of Wild Turkeys could be heard. Amazingly, these large birds are present in this urban area.



A checklist submitted for the marsh included 25 species, some of which were not seen earlier. In total 48 species of birds were observed at the park combining both checklists.

Owlets spent about 30 minutes at the marsh birding. Fifteen new species were seen. At the conclusion of the program, snacks and drinks were offered to the group. Some people decided to stop at the Buffalo Soldier's Heritage site before departing Rouge Park. The Buffalo Soldier's Heritage site has a stable where the horses are kept. Buffalo Soldiers were African American troops responsible to protect national resources in the west after the Civil War. A few families stopped at the stable and were able to see the horses. The staff at the Heritage Center greeted the Owlets warmly.



Rouge Park is an amazing park in Detroit, making it Michigan's largest urban park, protecting the Rouge River as it courses through the park for 4.6 miles. In addition, Rouge Park has over 400 acres of forested habitat, 60 acres of prairies and multiple wetlands as well. **A special thank you to Rachel Felder for sharing her time and expertise guiding the Oakland Owlet's Families and friends during this visit.**



Photo Credits - Kathleen Dougherty, **Heather Klish** & OAS Gallery.

