

Oakland Owlets visit to the Drayton Plains Nature Center

The Oakland Owlets visited the Drayton Plains Nature Center on September 7th. OAS member and Director of Bird Studies at the Center, Terri Chapdelaine led a 3-mile hike along the Clinton River and in other habitats on the property. The Drayton Plains Nature Center is a 138-acre natural area in Waterford. The large portion of the property was formerly used as a state fish hatchery. In the early 1900's, the state fishery department created fish rearing ponds by channelizing the Clinton River. Today, this property and associated upland forest are owned by Waterford Township Parks and Recreation. A non-profit Friends group helps with fundraising and minor maintenance at the facility. The building has been converted into a nature interpretive center where visitors can learn about local wildlife. A few of the ponds are still used by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division for fish rearing, the remaining ponds offer habitat for wetland birds and other wildlife. Drayton Plains Nature Center has diverse habitats on a relatively small parcel of land which makes it great place to go birding. The facility has an impressive bird checklist of 176 species due to Terri's work and field observations.

Twenty-three new and longtime OAS friends including three young birders gathered on a beautiful late summer morning to explore the trails and wildlife at Drayton Plains Nature Center. The group was immediately treated to an unusual lone diving duck in one of the ponds. A female Bufflehead popped in and out of view as the group



watched. Luckily, one photographer was able to capture this image for eBird. The lone Bufflehead was seen among the many Canada Geese, Mallards and domestic ducks. These birds congregate near the main path hoping for some human handouts. Most of the waterfowl at the Center are habituated to people. Many of the ducks are approachable or will approach you. Our group had an extra member join the hike, a Mallard in eclipse plumage. He stayed with the group for some time and when we were finished, he joined us for a group photo. Everyone enjoyed his company.



Many of the ponds have grown into shrubby thickets or emergent marshes. These areas provide stopover habitat and cover for migrating birds. The pathways on the dikes surrounding the ponds allow birders to view into the shrubs at eye level. Four species of warblers were observed including a Black and White Warbler. Everyone was able to watch this warbler long enough to see its unique colors and learn its warbler ways. Warblers are hyperactive as soon as you can spot them, they move. A chance to really see a warbler is a gift. Drayton Plains Nature Center offers habitat for warblers to rest and refuel during migration.



Thirty-eight species of birds were seen on this field trip including the resident birds and migrants. The most unusual bird was the Bufflehead. A Broad-winged Hawk flew overhead as we concluded our hike, reminding us that migration is underway. Some of the summer residents lingered, but their numbers were reduced like the Eastern Wood-pewee, Yellow Warbler and Warbling Vireo. The weather was pleasant, and it was a good day to be outdoors birding.



After hiking, the group toured the nature center. The hands-on exhibits are kid friendly with the live animal displays of native snakes, frogs and turtles. **Thanks to Terri Chapdelaine for leading the hike and making special arrangements for OAS.** Almost everyone posed for a group photo near the covered bridge on the Clinton River.

Can you find the bird in the photo that joined the hike 😊?

Photo credits - Kathleen Dougherty, OAS Photo Gallery and Joy Bebry.

The bird checklist is as follows:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Canada Goose | Blue Jay |
| Mute Swan | American Crow |
| Mallard | Black-capped Chickadee |
| Mallard (Domestic type) | Tufted Titmouse |
| Bufflehead | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| Rock Pigeon | European Starling |
| Mourning Dove | Gray Catbird |
| Chimney Swift | American Robin |
| Killdeer | House Sparrow |
| Ring-billed Gull | American Goldfinch |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Song Sparrow |
| Great Blue Heron | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Great Egret | Common Grackle |
| Turkey Vulture | Black-and-white Warbler |
| Broad-winged Hawk | Magnolia Warbler |
| Belted Kingfisher | Yellow Warbler |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | Pine Warbler |
| Downy Woodpecker | Northern Cardinal |
| Northern Flicker | |
| Eastern Wood-Pewee | |
| Warbling Vireo | |