



Oakland Owlets Learn All About Owls

The Oakland Audubon board recently approved that one membership meeting program per year be designated for young birders. Young Birders' Club membership meeting programs are selected to appeal to children but are of interest to all members and guests. These programs often feature live animals with age appropriate information about local wildlife. The Young Birders' Club membership program is held at the June meeting close to the end of the school year, in hopes that young birders can attend an evening program during a school night. The young birders' club membership meeting was started in 2018 and suggested as part of a plan to rejuvenate the Oakland Audubon Young Birders' Club. The 2018 program was about Birds of Prey and presented by the Howell Nature Center.

This year's young birders' club program was **All About Owls** which is the moniker of the young birders' club – the Oakland Owlets. Christina Funk, educator and naturalist from the Troy Nature Center, shared information about several Owls from the nature center. The Troy Nature Center acquired these injured owls from the Organization for Bat Conservation when their facility closed in 2018. Ms. Funk was formerly an educator at the OBC prior to taking a position at the Troy Nature Center. She was familiar with these owls and has had a long-term relationship with several of these birds.

On June 11th, Ms. Funk introduced Oakland Audubon members and guests to Mortimer, Sam and Autumn, three resident owls at the Stage Nature Center in Troy. Sam is a female Barred Owl; Mortimer is a gray phased Screech Owl and Autumn is a female Great-horned Owl. Funk, an experienced and patient naturalist, took each owl around the room of over seventy attendees and shared natural history information and unique stories about their rehabilitation. These owls are unable to be released back into the wild and serve as educational ambassadors for their species. Although the room was filled with so many people, there was an overall silence and respect for these birds and speaker. It was a great opportunity for everyone to see these magnificent birds of prey up close and view their unique and beautiful adaptations. Everyone learned a lot and at times were treated to some unusual behaviors like the how far an owl can rotate its head. The young birders in the audience were extremely knowledgeable and keen to see the birds.



The Stage Nature Center has a webpage dedicated to the owls where visitors can explore each owl individually. The Stage Nature Center is undertaking a project to build new enclosures for these birds and is seeking funding for this effort. The owls are used

for educational programs at the Stage Nature Center. Christina Funk has been instrumental in supporting the re-homing of these educational owls. For more information about the owls and programs at the Stage Nature Center which is operated by the Troy Nature society visit their website: <https://troynaturesociety.org/>

In addition to the live owl presentation at the June OAS membership meeting, other young birder activities were offered. Prior to the presentation, the Young Birders' Club volunteers provided a chance for the kids to make and take a Great-horned Owl mask. A special thank you to Michele Petrosky and Kathleen Dougherty for their assistance with this activity. Young birders were also highlighted as part of the door prizes for the evening. Several members donated prizes for the young birders only drawing. Most kids took home prizes.



Oakland Audubon also recognizes the generous contribution of Mark and Diane Hoagland for contributing to the speaker's fee for this special program for young birders. Diane's son Jim was a former coordinator of the young birders' club when he was sixteen years old. The young birders' club at Oakland Audubon has a long history of support of youth programs involving in nature study and especially bird conservation. For information and field trips for young birders, visit the Oakland Audubon Young Birders' Club webpage: <https://www.oaklandaudubon.org/young-birders>

Oakland Audubon membership programs are held regularly on the second Tuesday of the month except July, August and December, from 7 -9 pm at the First United Methodist Church, 1589 West Maple Road, Birmingham. For more information, visit: <https://www.oaklandaudubon.org/meetings> Oakland Audubon Programs and field trips are free and open to the public.

Photo credits – Kathleen Dougherty & OAS photo gallery