

Oakland Owlets' Christmas Bird Count at Eagle Valley

The Oakland Owlets families and friends participated in the 123rd Christmas Bird Count on December 17, 2022 at Eagle Valley in Orion Township. Eagle Valley is a restricted area owned by WM serving the community with recycling and waste disposal services. Arrangements were made in advance to tour Eagle Valley with Community Representative Kathleen Klein. Eagle Valley provides wildlife habitat, and the property is certified through the Wildlife Habitat Council. Wildlife Habitat Council sets standards for businesses to create wildlife habitat on their lands.



Our small group gathered at the site office before birding. Ms. Klein shared a brief presentation about the site, industry safety measures in place to protect the environment plus the wildlife areas set aside at Eagle Valley. The presentation generated questions from the young birders which were answered before venturing on the property. People may not associate birding at Eagle Valley, but birds visit Eagle Valley regularly. The concentration of birds in turn attracts predators to the site. Eagle Valley is appropriately named since it is a local site that eagles frequent.

Before birding, Ms. Klein reviewed some of the site restrictions and then provided



members of our group with reflective vests. We carpoled along the perimeter road and stopped several times. At the first stop, many gulls were spotted circling the top of the landfill. The flock primarily included Ring-billed gulls of various ages. Gulls mature over several years. As they age, their plumage changes. We saw American Crows winging away from the site and heard their distinctive calls “caw” “caw”.

At another stop, Ms. Klein pointed out a mitigated wetland, where a few Mallards were feeding in the open water. The shrubby edges also provided opportunities to see some songbirds, including Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco, and Black-capped Chickadee. At each stop, the group walked short distances to listen and look. The weather was cold and windy, so we stayed close to the vehicles.



We travelled about a half mile toward the north end of Eagle Valley hoping to see more birds. However, bird activity was slow except for the gulls circling high at the top of the landfill. In about an hour, we returned to the office area. Upon arriving at the parking area, two **Bald Eagles** soared overhead along with a Red-



tailed Hawk, making the conclusion of the tour memorable. Everyone had a great chance to see both an immature and adult Bald Eagle. Bald Eagles undergo plumage changes as reach maturity. It takes four years for Bald Eagles to display the iconic white head and tail associated with this species.

Immature eagles are as large as adults, but without the characteristic

white head and tail. The group watched them for a time before leaving.

A small team traveled to the top of the landfill to verify the CBC checklist for Eagle Valley. Oakland Audubon supports the Wildlife Habitat Council certification at WM.



An eBird checklist submitted for this Oakland Owllet tour included **fifteen species**. The checklist included the following species. Species in bold are pictured.

Canada Goose
Mallard
Rock Pigeon
Ring-billed Gull
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Blue Jay

American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
European Starling
American Robin
American Tree Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Cardinal

A special thank you to Kathleen Klein and the WM staff at Eagle Valley for making this tour possible. CBC observers for this area continued to bird nearby through the day. Thanks to CBC team members – Audrey Greir, Kathleen Dougherty, Mike Dougherty, Gerry Lee, and Tony Stachurski. The final CBC report in the Oakland Audubon CBC area tallied 67 species. To see the complete Oakland Audubon CBC report, visit the Oakland Audubon field trip webpage.

Photo Credit Mike Dougherty, Kathleen Dougherty, and OAS Gallery.

