

Oakland Owlets Explore Bugs at Bear Creek

Oakland Owlets families and friends wandered the trails at Bear Creek Nature Park in Oakland Township on a very hot day in August searching for insects. The field trip was aided by two local insect experts, **Sue Greenlee, and Doris Applebaum**. Both women are veteran butterfly counters and conduct field surveys for the Michigan Butterfly Network and the North American Butterfly Association. Sue gathered the group for a quick orientation. Sue showed everyone common insects that could be heard and seen in August. Sue worked for the Nature Conservancy in the Midwest surveying grasshoppers; Sue shared some collections. Sue identified the call of the snowy tree cricket which is also known as the temperature cricket. This insect is part of the background sounds of summer and can be used to estimate the temperature.



Debbie Jackson, the regional Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist, joined the field trip and brought along two Monarch Butterflies that emerged from the chrysalids or “eclosed” during the field trip. Everyone was surprised to watch how quickly the butterflies changed and by the end of the field trip they were released.

Sue provided nets and demonstrated how to safely capture insects without harm to be identified and released. Many guests took nets and started finding bugs. We did

not get far down the trails before stopping. Along the path we captured and released many species. Sue placed specimens in jars, identified them and allowed the group to look at the various insects that were abundant along the pathway. Doris kept a butterfly list for the Michigan Butterfly Network, while Blanche and I worked to track the birds the group encountered. Bird activity was low, but insect activity was high.



In a short time, the group found more than 24 different species of insects along with several species of bumblebees. Sue pointed out that it was National Honeybee Day. Pollinators and insect predators were abundant at Bear Creek.

Insect species list is as follows:

Ruby Meadowhawk Dragonfly
Black Saddlebags Dragonfly
Carolina Ground Cricket
Two-spotted Tree Cricket
Snowy Tree Cricket
Carolina grasshopper
Two-striped grasshopper
Red-legged grasshopper
Spur-throated Grasshopper Nymph
Ground Cricket Nymph
Dog-day Cicada + two other species
Assassin Bug preying on caterpillar

Shield Bug
Goldenrod soldier beetle
Honeybee
Bumblebees
Daddy-longlegs
Spicebush Swallowtail
Cabbage White
Clouded Sulphur
Orange Sulphur
Pearl Crescent
Least Skipper



Cicada

The focus of the hike was on insects, but the group also tracked birds. The heat and the time-of-day lessened bird observations, however. Turkey Vultures floated over the fields while Chimney Swifts darted across the sky. Nearby Cedar Waxwings flew out to capture insects in midair. The link between the insects and birds was evident. The grassland restoration at Bear Creek is an ideal place to spot aerial insectivores. A checklist submitted to eBird reported nineteen species and 50 individuals.

The Bird Checklist is as follows:

Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Ring-billed Gull
Turkey Vulture
Red-tailed Hawk
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Eastern Kingbird
Blue Jay
American Crow

Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Cedar Waxwing
American Goldfinch
Common Grackle
Northern Cardinal



Wingspan = 14"



Wingspan =67"

A special thanks to Oakland Township Parks and Recreation for allowing the Young Birders' Club to use the shelter for orientation. Also thank you to the experts, **Doris Applebaum** and **Sue Greenlee** for donating their time and expertise for this field trip. In addition, **thank you to Debbie Jackson** for bringing monarch butterflies so everyone could see this amazing transformation of the pupae into adults.

Photo Credits; Kathleen Dougherty, Bug Guide & Audubon Photo Gallery

