

Oakland Owlets Visit Lake St. Clair



January 29th was one of the coldest days in January. Despite the snow and temperatures near zero, the Young Birders' Club families and friends gathered at Lake St. Clair Metropark. A group of ten started the morning at the Nature Center feeding station. The Nature Center was closed due to the recent outbreak of Omicron. However, the staff continued to supply food and water at the feeding station. The birds responded and gathered at this area along with squirrels, White-tailed Deer, and a

Muskrat. Surprisingly, several species of sparrows were seen including a Swamp Sparrow. The overall variety of birds at the feeding station was amazing and the group watched intently for a time. Concentrating on the birds, the group did not see a Muskrat nearby munching on vegetation near the trail.

The muskrat scurried across the path to shelter under the deck. Participants also enjoyed watching the deer eating side by side with the squirrel and birds.



A walk along the trails helped everyone generate body heat. We ventured to the spot along the trail where the Great-horned Owl has nested in a galvanized bucket for years. Erin Parker, District Interpretive Supervisor, shared stories about owl sightings, but we could not find the owls this morning. The regular winter woodland residents did show up, including the White-breasted Nuthatch, Oakland Audubon's logo bird.

After about a mile hike the group returned to nature center where Erin Parker had a warm fire. We gathered around the fire and thanked Erin for starting the warming blaze. Everyone took time to feel the heat and shared bird sightings so far at the park. The sun was shining and added some extra warmth. A total of twenty species of birds were observed at Lake St. Clair Metropark. The waters in the park however were frozen so the group opted to drive to a nearby boat launch on Lake St. Clair to search for ducks.





The group caravanned to the Harley Ensign Boat Launch on South River Road. At this site, a small sliver of open water was filled with several species of ducks. Everyone parked and unpacked spotting scopes to identify the ducks at a distance. A peninsula of land extended into the lake. A Northern Harrier flew low over the point as we arrived while Song Sparrows popped up along the

pathway. The group scanned the area for a time and noted Scaups, Redheads and Bald Eagles. Eleven additional

species were seen. The snow-covered lake scape was intriguing and lured young birders on the ice as the rest of the group dispersed. eBird checklists were submitted for the Oakland Owlets at both locations noting **thirty-one species** as follows:



Mourning Dove
 Ring-billed Gull
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 American Crow
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 White-breasted Nuthatch

European Starling
 House Sparrow
 House Finch
 American Goldfinch
 American Tree Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Northern Cardinal

Canada Goose
 swan sp.
 Mallard
 Canvasback
 Redhead
 Lesser Scaup

Bufflehead
 Common Goldeneye
 Common Merganser
Northern Harrier
 Bald Eagle
 Song Sparrow



Thank you to Erin Parker and everyone attending on such a frigid day

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