

Oakland Owlets Braving the November Winds on Belle Isle

The Oakland Owlets families and friends visited the Belle Isle on November 13th to explore the Island and search for birds on a windy November day. Belle Isle is Michigan's 102nd state park situated in the Detroit River. Belle Isle is an important recreation spot for everyone and is also an important birding hot spot in Wayne County. As the young birders' families and friends gathered in the Nature Center parking lot, an adult **Bald Eagle** flew overhead to greet us to the island. The Eagle's appearance was an impressive start to the hike on the island.



Erin Parker, Audubon member, educator, and former naturalist at the Belle Isle Nature Center, was one of the amazing guides for this field trip. Erin is extremely knowledgeable about the wildlife on the island. In addition, Allen Chartier, bird bander, author and expert birder joined the group. After a brief introduction, the group headed to the Lighthouse at



the northern tip of the island. Along the pathway, diving ducks, bobbed underwater as they were foraging on Blue Heron Lagoon. It is always wonderful to see **Hooded Mergansers** and Buffleheads. In addition, the group encountered impressive raptors including a Red-tailed Hawk and an American Kestrel. The Bald Eagle reappeared and perched on a tree so everyone could see this symbol of America.

The group reached the Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse. The lighthouse built a century ago to honor William Livingstone, a respected Detroit resident who contributed to the improving navigation of the Great Lakes. Livingstone was responsible for the creation of deep-water channel on the lower Detroit River. The 58-foot lighthouse made from Georgia marble and is the only one like this in America. Located along the north end of the island, this spot affords a view of the River toward Lake St. Clair. As Allen was discussing Cormorant nests, a Double-crested Cormorant flew overhead.



Returning to the Nature Center, the group stopped at the feeding station outside of the nature center. Although, the Nature Center was closed, however, the staff maintains a feeding station. There was little activity at the feeders, so the group traveled to middle of the island where many of the

cultural facilities are located including the Aquarium. It was also a good spot for a break. The morning was ending. Part of the group opted to visit the cultural venues while others decided to stay longer and travel with Erin and Allen to see the Osprey's and Eagle's nests. It was worth the extra time and effort. A small car caravan stopped along the park road to see this extremely impressive Bald Eagle's nest.

Although the weather was windy and cold, the morning at Belle Isle was worthwhile. An eBird checklist submitted that morning included **thirty-three** species. I added three species as I was leaving the island. The checklist included the following species:



Canada Goose
Mute Swan
Gadwall
Mallard
Redhead
Bufflehead
Hooded Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Pied-billed Grebe
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Blue Jay
American Crow
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling
American Robin
House Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
American Tree Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
Northern Cardinal



A special thank you to Erin Parker and Allen Chartier. Allen is a walking field guide and Erom helped find some amazing birds.

Photo Credit, Kathleen Dougherty, Erin Parker, and OAS Gallery.