

Oakland Owlets Investigate Clinton River Critters

Oakland Owlets families and friends were blessed with a beautiful day on the July 31st field trip to the Drayton Plains Nature Center in Waterford. Abundant sunshine, low humidity and mild temperatures were welcome conditions to all. The Drayton Plains Nature Center is located along the main branch of the Clinton River which runs through the property. Two leaders Terri Chapdelaine, OAS member and Director of Bird Studies at the Nature Center and Katie Sexton assisted with this field trip. Terri helped locate birds on the property, while Katie Sexton from the Clinton River Watershed Council introduced the group to life in water. Both experts were extremely engaging and shared their knowledge enthusiastically. Everyone learned something new.



Terri led the hike to the trails along ponds between the upper and lower branches of the river. Early in the 20th century, the Nature Center was a fish hatchery, and the ponds still supports fish rearing even today. In addition, the ponds provide habitat for wide array of birds from shorebirds to waterfowl. Terri's perfect bird calls assisted young birders learn some bird calls. Terri has tracked birds at the nature center for nearly 30 years and has compiled a bird list of over 170 species.



Upon reaching the ponds, the group encountered several birds including a Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Kingbird, Mallards, and Canada Geese. Overhead, Purple Martin, Tree and Barn Sallows soared. Terri gave everyone an OAS bird checklist. The checklist submitted to eBird for the group reported thirty-six species and 148 individuals.

The Bird Checklist is as follows:

Canada Goose
Mallard
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper

Double-crested Cormorant
Great Egret
Turkey Vulture
Red-tailed Hawk
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eastern Kingbird
Blue Jay
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
White-breasted Nuthatch
Marsh Wren
European Starling
Gray Catbird

American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Northern Cardinal



While the group was hiking, Katie Sexton from the Clinton River Watershed Council collected organisms from the water. Katie brought equipment and a few participants were able to net some critters from the river. Many of the critters in the water are what scientists call “biological indicators” which means that certain critters are highly sensitive to pollution and are only found in clean water while other organisms can live in polluted waters with sediments and low levels of oxygen.

Katie also brought identification keys and magnifiers so everyone could identify what they were seeing. Some of the organisms collected include **Bullfrog Tadpole**, **Water Scorpion**, **Planaria**, **Water Boatmen** and **Mayfly Larva**. Katie distributed materials about the mission and programs at the Clinton River Watershed Council.



A special thanks to Waterford Township Parks and Recreation for opening the nature center building for the young birders to use the restrooms. Also thank you to the experts, **Terri Chapdelaine** and **Katie Sexton** for assisting with the field trip. Thank you to the Clinton River Watershed Council for providing water monitoring equipment.



Photo Credits; Kathleen Dougherty, Katie Sexton, and the OAS Photo Gallery