

# Oakland Owlets at Proud Lake SRA ~ January 23, 2021

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On a cold, but sunny January morning a hardy bunch of young birders and friends met at Proud Lake State Recreation Area in Commerce for a brisk morning hike. Everyone was bundled in layers, prepared for the weather of the day. It was so cold that several photos of the group that morning showed a condensation haze from the difference between air temperature and a coat pocket. The birds were slow to appear and waited until the sun was higher in the sky before showing up.



Proud Lake State Recreation Area is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The 4,700-acre park has over 20 miles of trails and is a premium destination for outdoor enthusiasts. It is also one of the top 10 birding spots in Oakland County.



The scenic Huron River courses through the park. The rapidly moving water remains open even during the winter. Spots along the trail provided some views of in the water. The group encountered some waterfowl, but also enjoyed the beautiful vistas. At the bridge across the river as the water from Proud Lake empties into the river, one young birder spotted a lone Redhead near the lake. The group paused for a time.

We returned along the Marsh Trail and through the forest. Along the way, the ruckus calls of four crows caught everyone's attention. Gazing skyward four American Crows flew overhead in the relentless pursuit of a Red-tailed Hawk. This observation was a "teachable moment" where everyone could see a bird behavior known as "mobbing". Mobbing is a common behavior where smaller birds gang up and harass larger birds usually predators. The hawk flew away without injury. Mobbing is typically harmless.



Although Proud Lake is a top 10 birding spot, bird activity during the hike was low. Fourteen species of birds were seen during the 2-mile hike. At the end of the hike, two new species appeared in the parking lot as the group disbanded. In total, 14 species and one taxa of birds were observed on the field trip. The trip checklist is listed below.

Mute Swan  
Mallard  
Redhead  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
woodpecker sp.  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
American Robin  
Northern Cardinal



**A special thank you to Blanche Wicke** for assisting on the trail so the 12 participants could physically distance and help with bird identification. Proud Lake is a beautiful park to enjoy being outdoors.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty & OAS Photo Gallery