

Oakland Owlets' October Field Trip Report

The Oakland Audubon Young Birders' Club field trip in October was held at the Environmental Interpretive Center (EIC) at the University of Michigan Dearborn Campus on October 5. The group had a chance to tour the EIC and learn the history of the Rouge River Bird Observatory. Although research at the RRBO is now discontinued the Observatory provided critical information about the importance of urban natural areas as stopover sites for migratory birds.



A group of 10 people including three young birders explored the 300-acre Environmental Study Area adjacent to the EIC. Dorothy McLeer, EIC naturalist and program coordinator led the hike. Along the hike, the group visited various habitats and stopped to view the Rouge River, Fairlane Lake and the mature forests on the property. When the group



walked through the mature Beech Maple Forest, the towering trees and light filtering through the branches made everyone pause to reflect on the forest. Dorothy explained the differences between the trees we encountered along the trail and shared the ages of the different tree species. At stops to look for birds in the forest canopy, everyone was amazed by Dorothy's ability to mimic bird calls drawing them into view.

The Environmental Study Area has diverse plants. Everyone was entertained by Dorothy's interpretation of the plants we saw. Bristly Greenbrier, *Smilax hispida* was one of the native vines we found. This vine grows in thickets and floodplain forests as well as mature oak-hickory and beech-maple forests. The berries offer a source of food for birds. Dorothy explained what is being done by the EIC to remove and manage invasive plants on the property to restore native plants and habitats. The Environmental Study Area is part of the original Estate of Henry Ford. Fairlane, the historical home of Clara and Henry Ford is adjacent to the property. The EIC is open to the



public and regular offers programs for the community in addition to serving as educational resource for the students at the University.

Both water birds and woodland birds were seen on the hike. The Rouge River and the wetlands on the property offer habitat for waterfowl and other wetland birds. A young Double-crested Cormorant bobbed in and out of the water on Fairlane Lake giving everyone excellent views of its fishing techniques. In the forests, few wood warblers were seen along with many woodpeckers.



The group ended the field trip in the quiet room at the EIC and watched many of the birds we saw on the hike visiting the feeders. **A special thank you to Dorothy McLeer for sharing her morning** with the Young Birders' Club family and friends. It was a warm and sunny Saturday

Photo credits - Kathleen Dougherty & Oakland Audubon

The bird checklist is as follows:

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Canada Goose | Tufted Titmouse |
| Wood Duck | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| Mallard | Carolina Wren |
| Mourning Dove | European Starling |
| Chimney Swift | American Robin |
| Ring-billed Gull | House Sparrow |
| Double-crested Cormorant | American Goldfinch |
| Turkey Vulture | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Cooper's Hawk | Common Grackle |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | Magnolia Warbler |
| Downy Woodpecker | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| Northern Flicker | warbler sp. (Parulidae sp.) |
| Eastern Phoebe | Northern Cardinal |
| Blue Jay | |
| American Crow | |
| Black-capped Chickadee | |