

# 'Feathers and Fins'

March 18, 2012 Field Trip Report

by Kristina Polk



On a sunny, slightly breezy March morning, members of the Ohio Young Birders Club assembled at Castalia Pond in search of waterfowl. The group, comprised of about twenty members and their companions, quickly identified a pair of Mallards, while the distant group of ducks in the middle of the pond proved more difficult. Using a scope, binoculars, and a little assistance from the experienced members and leaders, the kids were able to find a Ring-necked Duck, Redhead, Gadwall, and American Wigeon. Canada Geese were also swimming among the other waterfowl, along with a pair of striking white-splattered domestic Mallard crosses. While Ethan Kistler, the Black Swamp Bird Observatory's Education and Outreach specialist visiting from the northern OYBC chapter, pointed out a Cooper's Hawk overhead, the kids seemed more interested in an egg they found near the bank of the pond. Upon inspection the egg was cold and unincubated; they had fun trying to figure out what bird laid it!



Next, after a few more bird sightings (European Starling, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird), the group piled into the cars and followed OYBC Advisor Tim Daniel to the Castalia fish hatchery, where they were shown the facilities where many rainbow trout and steelhead are raised from Michigan-originated eggs. These fish are deposited throughout Ohio for fishermen to catch. A brilliant immature Bald Eagle was sighted, and after a quick restroom break, two more eagles were spotted! The club took this as a good sign and filed back into their cars for a caravan to the local eagle nest. Walkie-talkies were distributed between the cars, and everyone had a blast competing to find birds! Team names were chosen, like 'Gas'hawks, Catfish, Birdstalkers, and Catbirds. Everyone found a bird or two, with sightings from Wood Duck to White-breasted Nuthatch. When the group reached the eagle nest, the scope was brought out and everyone had a look at the bird on her nest.



Then it was time to visit some less fortunate eagles and their friends—the rescued animals at the Back to the Wild rehab center. The presentation, which included a Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Screech Owl, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Bald Eagles, and a flying squirrel, was very entertaining, informative, and inspiring. Clearly, it is vital that everyone does their part in conserving and protecting our local habitat and wildlife for the continuation of the species and the beauty for generations to come. After lunch, the staff led the club around the facility and explained the stories of the other raptors, along with some songbirds, foxes, and a bobcat. A brief look inside the free-flight cage was allowed as well, where a Bald Eagle was untethered and free to stretch her wings. It was amazing to be so close to a large, powerful being in flight. Inside the center itself, a kindly volunteer taught about salamanders, dragonfly nymphs, snakes, and turtles. The entire Back to the Wild visit was amazing, and it left everyone with a better appreciation for the natural world.

As always, all the young birders had a blast hanging out with old friends and getting to know new ones, all the while sharing their love for birds and the outdoors. As they enhance their skills and build respect for our wild neighbors, the proud members of the Ohio Young Birders Club are transforming into the conservation leaders of the coming years. Passion and interest are welcomed and fostered, and the young birders are on their way to soaring heights.



### **Bird List from OYBC field trip to Castalia**

Greater White-fronted Goose  
Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Mallard  
Redhead  
Ring-necked Duck  
Bufflehead  
Great Blue Heron  
Turkey Vulture  
Bald Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
American Kestrel  
Killdeer  
Rock Pigeon  
Mourning Dove  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Eastern Phoebe  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Tree Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Carolina Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Eastern Bluebird  
American Robin  
European Starling  
Song Sparrow  
Northern Cardinal  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow