

Description of the all-day listers field trip to West Virginia

MOS Convention – Wisp (McHenry, MD - Garrett County), 19-21 2023

Trip Leader – Dr. Steve Sheffield

Join avid birder and Professor of Biology Steve Sheffield for this field trip through Preston and Tucker Counties, West Virginia. I will take you to areas I know very well from all of my Field Biology class field trips to these locations. We will work our way south from Wisp in the morning, starting at Cathedral Forest and continuing to Blackwater Falls State Park. At this point, we can get some lunch, either bring your own or purchase at the world-famous Hellbender Burritos or other shop in Davis, WV. Following lunch, we will explore Canaan Valley NWR, stopping at the Visitors Center and the Balsam Fir Swamp at the State Park, and the Freeland Rd site.

All locations should be really good for migrants. Cathedral Forest is an incredible, protected remnant of the once dominant eastern hemlock forests of the region, and these 133 acres have never been cut over (virgin E hemlock). Target birds include flycatchers, E wood-pewees, vireos, breeding winter wrens and juncos, scarlet tanagers, many warbler species (black-throated blue- and green, hooded, yellow-throated, Amer redstarts, N parulas, magnolia, Canada, ovenbirds, etc.), waterthrushes, woodpeckers, and grassland species along the edges.

Blackwater Falls State Park is good for warblers (Blackburnian, black-throated green, etc.), thrushes, vireos, woodpeckers, possible woodcock and ruffed grouse, and various raptors and vultures, among others. Canaan Valley NWR has a very nice visitor's center with a large bird feeding area behind it and nice trails. Birds which can be found here include gamebirds (woodcock and grouse), flycatchers, E bluebirds, warblers, N harriers and other grassland birds, and flyover ravens, among others.

The balsam fir swamp at Canaan Valley State Park is a very unique habitat which is difficult to find elsewhere. Birds found here include common yellowthroats, yellow, and other warblers, sparrows, swallows, flyover ravens, and various raptors and vultures, among others.

The Freeland Rd location is another highly unique wetland habitat with a fenced enclosure protecting a small balsam fir forest, a boardwalk winding through the wetland, a very cool sand springs, and active beaver activity, among other things. Birds which can be found here include a huge variety of warblers (yellow, common yellowthroat, etc.), flycatchers, swamp and song sparrows, grassland species (bobolinks, E meadowlarks, E kingbirds, grasshopper and savannah sparrows, etc.), swallows, brown thrashers, kingfishers, and various raptors and vultures, among others.

Difficulty: Moderate due to length of walking, pace will not be super fast but will not be slow either, comfortable boots recommended. **Facilities:** Yes (at most locations)