

# **A Birder's Guide to Charlottesville, Virginia and Vicinity**

**Monticello Bird Club**



**Compiled by Ken Klotz,  
May, 2003**

## Foreword

I recollect that about fifty years ago Roger Tory Peterson wrote that good birders could find birds even if they had never been in the area before. That is because good birders learn to read the environment and, understanding the habitat requirements of species, know where to look. Since that time, however, good birding locations have become more difficult to find because of the continuing pressures of human population and development. Thus, bird-finding guides have been written as useful tools for birding in a new locale. Ken Klotz of EcoVentures, LLC of Charlottesville suggested that the development of a bird-finding guide for the Charlottesville area in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Virginia Society for Ornithology might be a good idea. Under his editorship and with the cooperation of area bird-watchers, this guide has been prepared for your greater birding pleasure.

*John L. Zimmerman, president, Monticello Bird Club*

**The Monticello Bird Club** invites you to join our informal group of about 150 people who share an enthusiasm for birds. Our monthly meetings are free and open to the public and feature invited speakers from throughout the state who share their expertise with entertaining and informative presentations. Anyone interested is invited to join us on one of our field trips to areas around Charlottesville or around the state. This is a great way to meet others with an interest in birds and to share and learn from other experienced birders on a pleasant outing.

For more information visit our website at  
<http://www.monticellobirdclub.org>

## Photo Credits

Bill Leaning: pages 4, 7, 10, 12, 14, 20, 26, 33, 38, 40.

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Brenda Tekin: page 30

Marcelle Morel and Ken Klotz: front cover and pages 2, 52.

Thank you all for your contributions.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you Bill Minor and Mo Stevens for permission to reprint the *Birdwatcher's Check List: Birds of Albemarle County, Virginia* and to John Zimmerman for some final edits. We all benefit greatly from the time and effort you have put into this. Thanks also to Diana Foster of the Rivanna Trails Foundation for her generous assistance and helpful comments.

# A Birder's Guide to Charlottesville, Virginia and Vicinity

Compiled by Ken Klotz

Monticello Bird Club, May, 2003

## Introduction

It is my hope that this little book will be your guide to many exciting birding excursions close to Charlottesville. Many of the areas described here have been popular destinations of Monticello Bird Club field trips throughout the years. Others are less well known but offer some great birding opportunities.

What makes a good birding site? Sometimes it seems only the birds know the answer to that question for sure. Clearly some areas are only notable for certain species during particular seasons such as breeding or wintering. The rest of the year they may be unremarkable. Some of the requirements of good habitat for a given species are obvious: food source, water, elevation, vegetation type and cover for example. It is hard for us to see, however, why one rural roadside will host White-crowned Sparrows each winter while other identical looking roads have none. Perhaps there are subtle differences in the environment that we cannot see, or perhaps it is due to historical patterns that are carried in the birds themselves. Recognizing and protecting these important bird areas is critical to preservation of our diverse bird species.

This guide will be especially useful to those who are new to birding the Charlottesville area but even the more experienced birders living here may discover a new birding spot. I see this first edition as a work in progress that I hope will inspire future contributions and revisions. You can help make the next edition even more useful by taking notes of your sightings while you are in the field and suggesting other areas to be featured.

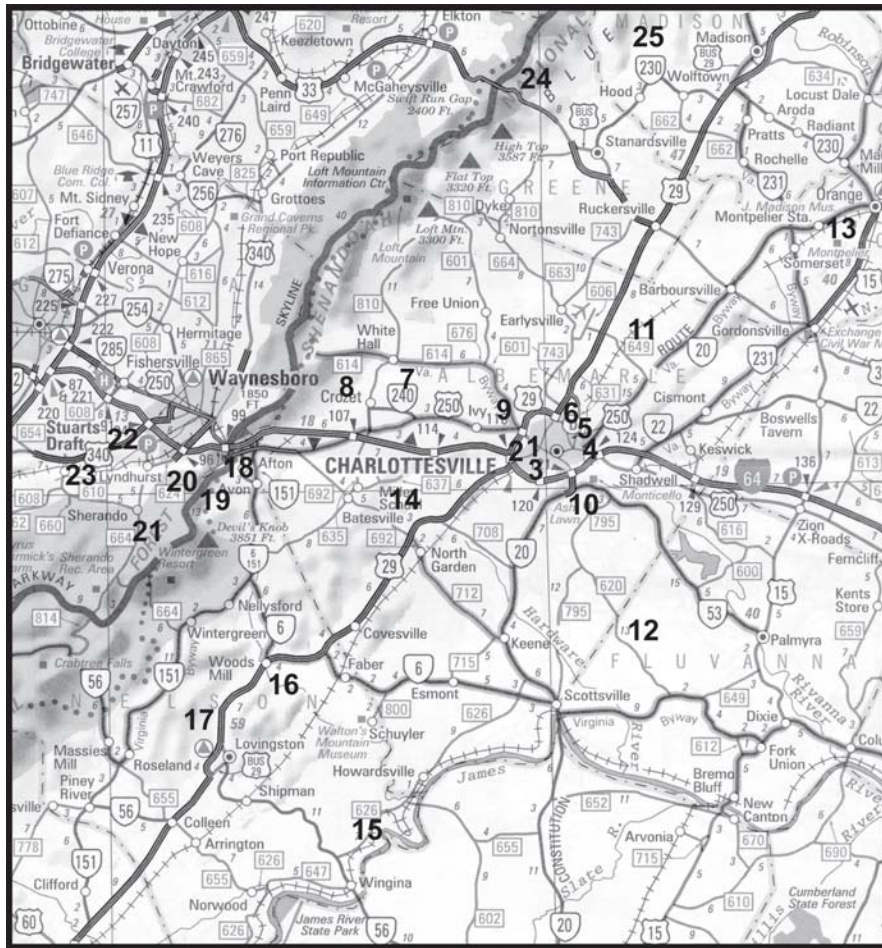
I would really like to thank everyone who has contributed to this endeavor, and particularly those who took the time to research and write about one of the corners of the county described here. I have included the authors' names with their site descriptions. Without all of you this wouldn't have been possible. I especially want to thank my wife, Marcelle, for her hands on help in editing this work and even more for her support throughout this project when there are so many other demands on our time.

Enjoy the birds,  
*Ken Klotz*

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# **OBSERVATORY MOUNTAIN**

*Dave Hogg*

## **DESCRIPTION**

While “O’ Hill” was formerly a relatively undeveloped mountain with the Leander McCormick Astronomical Observatory at its summit, the base of the mountain has now been developed for student residences and University research facilities. The Observatory area still dominates the summit, and hiking and biking trails crisscross the area. The Observatory continues to function as a training facility for students, and is open to the public at night on a regular schedule. This is an excellent place to go for a brief birding outing, since it is close to both the city and the University.

## **DIRECTIONS**

From the north, beginning at the intersection of Ivy Rd (US250 Business) and Alderman Rd: Follow Alderman Rd south 0.7 miles to a stop light at McCormick Rd. Turn right onto McCormick Rd. In 0.1 miles there will be a stop sign at a Y-intersection. Take the left-bearing branch (still McCormick Rd) 0.3 miles to a stop sign near the entrance to Hereford College. Turn right, and park along the side of the road at a wide place 0.1 mile from the turn. The summit of the hill is about 0.2 miles from this spot.

From the south, beginning at the exit from the US29/US250 Bypass onto Fontaine Ave. (Business US29 exit): Proceed into town on Fontaine Ave, past the Fontaine Avenue Research Park on the right. In 0.8 miles turn left at the traffic light, onto Maury Ave. Proceed on Maury Ave. to a stop sign, where it becomes Alderman Road. Continue on Alderman Rd past the stadium to the stop light at McCormick Rd. Turn left and proceed up Observatory Hill, as above.

## **HABITATS AND TRAILS**

The summit is a mixture of clearing and mature hardwood trees, and is excellent for “wood-edge” habitat. The flanks of the summit are heavily wooded, primarily Red, White, and Chestnut Oaks, with Maple, Beech, Hickory, and Black Gum as well. There are a few stands of White and Virginia Pine but the woods are predominantly deciduous. The undergrowth

undergrowth is occasionally heavy, with stands of Mountain Laurel. In the spring there is a spectacular display of Azaleas, apparently left over from plantings many years ago.

Birding is most frequently done from the loop road where you park. Other possibilities are the clearing for the power line near the summit, and a hiking trail that goes around the southern face of the hill, somewhat below the summit.

## **BIRDS**

Observatory Hill is most notable for the birds during the spring migration, between April 15 and May 15. On occasion a wave of warblers will descend at night, and will be actively feeding in the early morning. During such a wave as many as fifteen species of warblers and vireos can be seen. Typically the birds start near the Observatory at the summit at dawn, and work their way down the hill as the morning wears on, so that by mid-morning many are found along the loop road at the base of the hill.

About two dozen species of warblers have been seen here, including Blue-winged, Tennessee, Nashville, Cape May, Blackburnian, Yellow-Throated, Bay-breasted, and Cerulean. The Yellow-throated Vireo is a common visitor. There is some concern that the variety and numbers of warblers have declined since the early 1990’s, possibly because of development of facilities at the base of the hill, but it can still be a productive place.

Apart from the warblers, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and other forest birds can normally be found. Wood Thrushes are summer residents, but it is less common to see Veery and Swainson’s Thrushes than it was in the 1990’s. The fall offers occasional migrating hawks. Winter birds include the six common woodpeckers, as well as Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows.



## **RAGGED MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA**

*Dan Bieker*

### **DESCRIPTION**

Ragged Mountain Natural Area is a 980-acre forested wildlife sanctuary managed by the Ivy Creek Foundation, and owned by the city of Charlottesville. Fertile soils and relative non-disturbance for the past 100 years have produced a mature oak-poplar forest with shaded ravines, fern-dappled coves, and abundant wildlife. There are two lakes which together total 65 acres and provide over 4 miles of shoreline. Birding is good year-round, but especially in the spring with warblers and singing thrushes, and during the winter with unusual waterfowl sightings. Some famous denizens of the area include Meriwether Lewis, who was born nearby, and Edgar Allen Poe, who attended the University of Virginia in the mid 1820's. Poe and his college pals allegedly "escaped" to this nearby wilderness for fun and adventure; one of his short stories, "A Tale Of The Ragged Mountains," is set in these hills.

### **DIRECTIONS**

Ragged Mountain Natural Area is located 2 miles southwest of Charlottesville off Fontaine Avenue. From Interstate 64, take the US Rt. 29 (U.Va.) Exit, then take the first exit (Fontaine Ave.). Turn left on Fontaine (a right turn would lead to the University area); proceed ¼ mile and turn right onto Reservoir Road. Follow Reservoir Road for 1.8 miles until it dead-ends and Ragged Mountain Natural Area parking lot is on the right, across from Camp Holiday Trails.

### **HABITAT AND TRAILS**

Most of the area is heavily forested in mature timber. Oaks, hickories, Yellow Poplar, and Shortleaf Pine dominate the canopy, with Spicebush, Mountain Laurel, Dogwood and fern beds well represented beneath. The lakes harbor several narrow, sheltered inlets with plenty of thick cover favored by waterfowl. The high end of the upper lake is a seasonally flooded wetland – brushy and grassy most of the year, but often swampy in winter and spring. The Ivy Creek Foundation maintains over 7 miles of trails which pass through and skirt around

all of these areas. Elevations range from 600 feet (at water level) to 1200 feet.

### **BIRDS**

110 species have been recorded to date (2002). Warbler migration in spring is excellent, especially in the area near the parking lot and Round Top Mountain. Some notable species include Cerulean, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided and Parula. The area supports a high density of nesting Wood Thrushes; other nesters include Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Worm-eating Warbler, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and a variety of woodpeckers. Waterfowl often congregate on the lakes during winter. Wood Duck, Green and Blue-winged Teal, Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, Coot, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, and Ruddy Duck are some that have been recorded. Prothonotary Warbler (June sighting), Red-headed Woodpecker, and Common Loon have also been seen. Pre-1950 records include: White Ibis, Brown Pelican, Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw), and Bachman's Sparrow.

A 2002 study of the effects of forest fragmentation on nesting success of songbirds in 8 sites in the Piedmont found Ragged Mountain to be the most productive for Wood Thrushes with 64 nests and the greatest number of fledglings. Dr. Etterson of the Smithsonian Center for Migratory Birds attributes the success to the relative maturity of the intact forest at Ragged Mountain.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

Ragged Mountain Natural Area is open from 7 AM until dusk everyday. Visitors are asked to hike quietly and keep to the trails. Dogs, bicycles, and motorized vehicles are prohibited.



## **STRIBLING AVENUE AND A NEARBY SECTION OF THE RIVANNA TRAIL**

*Robyn Kells & Scott Clark*

### **DESCRIPTION**

Relatively quiet for much of the year, this outwardly unassuming small area sandwiched between a duplex-lined residential street and the Fontaine Research Park bursts into life (and song) for a brief period from the end of April through mid-May. A walk in early May down Stribling Avenue from its intersection with Fontaine and down the Rivanna Trail yields a bonanza of warblers, tanagers, thrushes, and other spring migrants and breeders as well as lingering winter visitors. Why? Part of the answer is certainly that this area sees few humans and lies close to the more famous Observatory Mountain (just across the street), but the true secret to this site's appeal to migrating songbirds is undoubtedly the small creek that runs alongside the entire length of Stribling and this section of the Rivanna Trail. A belt of mature trees on one side and the open grasses of the research park on the other ensure a diversity of birdlife. The entire stretch of this road and trail is public, but park with caution and consideration, particularly along Stribling Ave.

### **DIRECTIONS**

#### **Map on page 8.**

Stribling Avenue (Rt. 782) is a gravel road that is easily approached from the Fontaine Avenue exit of US 29. From the exit ramp, turn toward the city (as indicated by the blue "H" or football stadium signs). Just past the first traffic light, look for the sign for Rt. 782. Stribling drops steeply off Fontaine to the right and is not easy to see from Fontaine.

From downtown Charlottesville, take Jefferson Park Avenue away from the University of Virginia and continue on Fontaine (US 29 Business) southwest towards US 29. Stribling Ave. is on the left.

Once on Stribling, drive 0.1 mile to a Sprint station on the right. Stribling is slightly wider here, and there is room for one or two vehicles to park. The best birding is from this point on to the Rivanna Trail.

### **HABITATS AND TRAILS**

The east/south side of Stribling Avenue consists of a narrow but lush band of mature deciduous trees (primarily Yellow Poplar, oaks, and maples) along a small creek. Toward the latter third of this part of Stribling, the creek widens somewhat into a marshy area with willows and other wetland vegetation. The habitat to the north/west of Stribling is dominated by the landscaping of the Fontaine Research Park, primarily short grass, shrubs, and small trees. The recommended walk along Stribling is about 0.3 mile from the Sprint station to a point, just before Stribling passes under a railroad bridge, where the Rivanna Trail takes off to the right.

Habitat along the Rivanna Trail is similar at first to that of Stribling, with the creek on one side and mature deciduous trees. From this point on, however, the deciduous trees are mixed with pine. Some escapee bamboo stands round out the vegetation.

This stretch of the Rivanna Trail is fairly short, and soon intersects with Morey Creek. There is no bridge, but there is quite an impressive rock-hop. Once across the creek, the trail continues upstream along a shrubby floodplain. This section of the trail ends at a paved road (Natural Resources Drive).

An optional extension to the trail is to continue up the steep hill onto the trail built by the Forestry Department and now maintained by the Rivanna Trails Foundation. This trail crosses roads, etc., but it will be marked with blue paint dots. It passes through promising woodland and wetland habitat and occasionally yields nice bird finds.

### **BIRDS**

Hiking along this area in late April to mid-May yields the largest variety of transients and newly-arrived summer residents and also nice encounters with lingering winter visitors. Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-throated Sparrows may sing their songs here through the beginning of May. Most common Mid-Atlantic yardbirds can easily be found here, such as Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina and House Wrens, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Song and Chipping Sparrows, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, House Finch, and American Goldfinch. Flyover herons, egrets, Killdeer, Belted Kingfishers, and even an occasional Osprey (maybe headed for the nearby Ragged Mountain



Reservoir) may enliven the skies. Pileated, Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied woodpeckers are all possible.

As you walk along Stribling, watch and listen for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, and an impressive bevy of warblers: Golden-winged (see Additional Notes, below), Northern Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Pine, Prairie, Blackpoll, Black and White, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

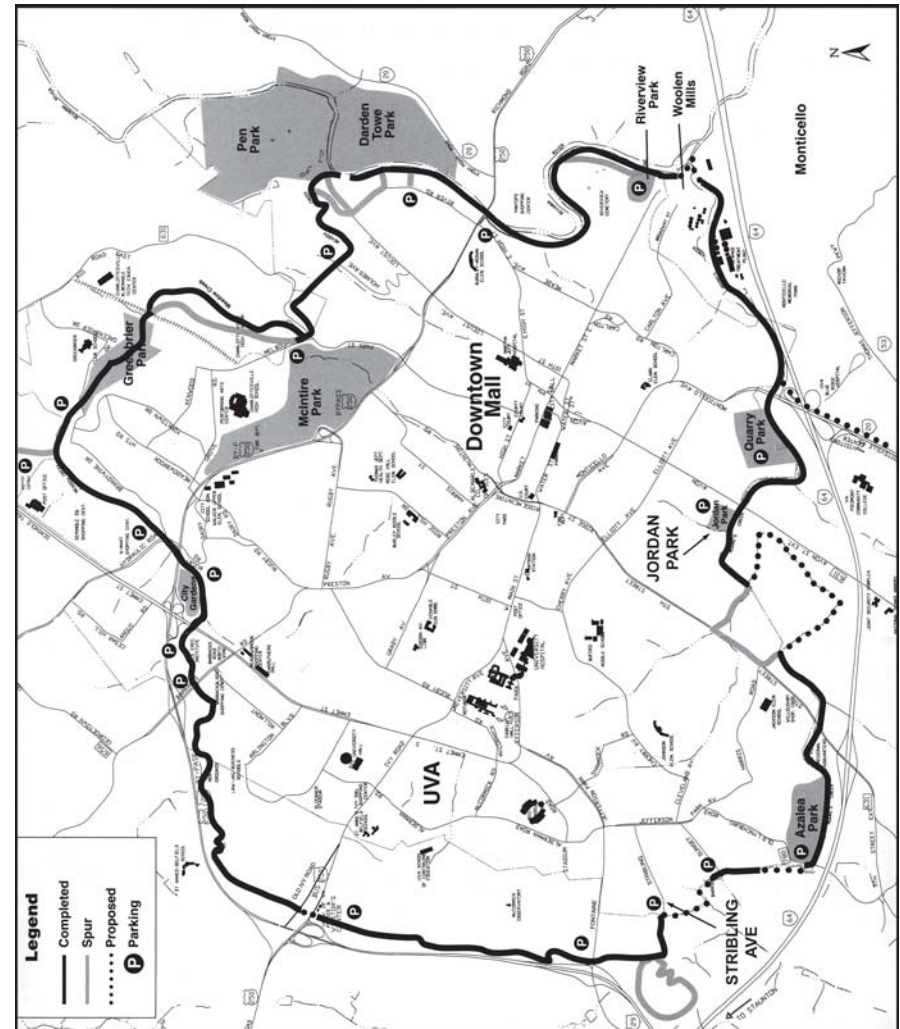
Aside from the possible addition of snickering Golden-crowned Kinglets in the pines, the Rivanna Trail harbors roughly the same species. Across and alongside Moore's Creek, the dense shrubby vegetation provides a prime haunt for flycatchers (Eastern Phoebe is by far the most common, but watch and listen for others) and White-eyed Vireos. The occasional Blue-headed Vireo is also found here.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

A pair of Great Horned Owls nested on the hill above Morey Creek to the west of the Rivanna Trail in 2001. Golden-winged Warblers were seen in some numbers in early May 2002 along Stribling Avenue. An Alder Flycatcher was heard, but not seen, across Stribling from the wetland area in May 2001.



## The Rivanna Trails Foundation, Charlottesville, VA



Go to their website to see the latest map on Google maps!

<http://avenue.org/rivanna/>

The Rivanna Trails Foundation has established a network of footpaths encircling the City of Charlottesville, and generally following the course of the Rivanna River and its tributaries. They incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1992, and to date have completed more than 20 miles of hiking trails for everyone to enjoy.

They cannot build and maintain the over twenty miles of trails planned without lots of help from our community. Anyone who would like to know more about the trails or the organization can contact them through their website above, or email them at [info@rivannatrails.org](mailto:info@rivannatrails.org). Join them for one of their regular work days and see first hand what beautiful wild spaces are right within our urban borders!

## RIVERVIEW PARK SECTION OF THE RIVANNA TRAIL

*Brenda Tekin*

### DESCRIPTION

Located within Charlottesville at the eastern city limits, Riverview Park consists of 26.6 acres bordering the Rivanna River, originally known as the River Anna. The Rivanna Trail is a pedestrian trail system that encircles the city and is maintained by the private nonprofit Rivanna Trails Foundation. The Riverview Park section of the Rivanna Trail is a handicapped-accessible paved trail that starts at the Park and meanders north along the Rivanna River about 1.25 miles to Free Bridge /US Route 250 East. This is a public right-of-way across private property. Please respect the adjacent private property by staying on the trail.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 8.

From I-64 take exit 121B and go north on Monticello Avenue approximately 3/4 mile. Turn right onto Carlton Avenue and continue on Carlton for several blocks across the railroad tracks. (Note: Carlton turns into Meade at the railroad tracks.) At the next traffic light after crossing over the tracks, turn right onto Chesapeake Street and continue several more blocks past Riverview Cemetery on your left to the entrance to Riverview Park at Riverview Avenue.

From the 250 Bypass take East High Street and turn left at the “Y” intersection onto Meade Avenue. Go three blocks and turn left onto Chesapeake Street and continue on Chesapeake Street to Riverside Avenue and the entrance to Riverview Park.

### BIRDS

Spring migration has produced neotropics that include Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, Redstart, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, White-eyed Vireo, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Summer residents include Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. Bald Eagles have been observed flying over the river in recent years.

Fall and winter have yielded good numbers of Brown Creeper and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker along with regular winter residents.

**Special Note:** As of this publication, dogs are allowed off-leash on designated portions of the Rivanna Greenbelt Trail on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only. On-leash days are Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. However, dogs are sometimes found off-leash on these days as well. Visitors are encouraged to report off-leash dogs to animal control (911) during the on-leash days. Part of the trail narrows with steep dropoffs along the riverbank.



## JORDAN PARK AND THE RIVANNA TRAIL

#### Map on page 8.

Diana Foster of the Rivanna Trails foundation recommends two areas of the Rivanna Trail with high bird activity. Jordan Park westward to the junction of Moore's Creek and Rock Creek is a wet lowland forest far from houses. It has a great variety of birds even midday in summer, including numerous water birds. The other area is Jordan Park eastward from Avon St. to the small concrete bridge over an unnamed stream that carries the trail into a mixed forest and uphill. There is a rock crossing but with heavy rains it may be under water. There is great edge effect of sycamore/maple forest right along Moore's Creek combined with meadow succeeding into forest with pioneer cedars, thick briers, and autumn olives. Parking is available in Jordan Park.



## PEN PARK NATURE TRAIL

*John Zimmerman*

### DESCRIPTION

Pen Park is the site of Charlottesville's Meadowcreek municipal golf course, but also provides tennis courts, baseball fields, a fitness trail, picnic areas, and a delightful nature trail along the Rivanna River.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 8.

From the intersection of US Rt. 29 north and Rio Road, drive east on Rio Road for 1.9 miles to turn left at the traffic light at Pen Park Road. From the 250 Bypass drive north then west on Park St./East Rio Road for 1.4 miles to reach Pen Park Road on your right. Turn on Pen Park Road and continue for 0.4 miles, then turn left following the sign indicating the Nature Trail and park in 0.2 miles at the parking area next to Shelter #2. The trail begins behind Shelter #2.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

Initially the trail is a paved path that traverses edge habitat where you will see typical park birds like American Robins, Common Grackles, and Northern Mockingbirds. It soon branches to the left where it is now a wood chip trail and passes through brushier habitat characterized by Indigo Buntings in summer and Eastern Towhees at all times of year. The trail goes uphill for a little way and then turns right at the fence on the park boundary, soon dropping down to a riparian forest of Sycamore, Hackberry, Tulip Poplar, Boxelder, Black Walnut, Black Locust, and Red Maple with a well developed understory and shrub layer. The trail ends 1.5 miles from the start. If you continue along the path for about another 200 yards beyond the sign marking the end of the trail you will come to a small old field along the edge of the golf course. In summer there are Field Sparrows, Song Sparrows, and often a Yellow-breasted Chat here and in winter a variety of sparrows in the brush piles. A worthwhile spur trail branches off the woodchip trail at the boundary fence where the main trail descends to the floodplain. Follow this trail along the fence toward the river where it meets a trail along the river. Go to your left (upriver) along this trail which is no

longer on public land and which eventually reaches a creek flowing into the river. The trail turns here and continues along the stream through a riparian woods which Acadian Flycatchers and Louisiana Waterthrushes frequent in summer. This trail crosses the stream and intersects the Dunlora Community nature trail at the edge of an open field. If you turn left here you will continue through edge habitat, eventually reaching a small cattail pond that is a reliable site for wintering Swamp Sparrows.

### BIRDS

In addition to the species already mentioned you can find Eastern Wood-pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, and Baltimore Oriole along the river during the breeding season. In winter expect to see Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and White-throated Sparrow as well as the permanent resident Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and all the woodpeckers. During migration a variety of warblers and other passerines can be expected. Mallards and Canada Geese occur along the river all year long, and Wood Duck are present in summer. In winter there is always the chance for a Bald Eagle.



## **GREENBRIER PARK SECTION OF THE RIVANNA TRAIL**

*John Zimmerman*

### **DESCRIPTION**

Greenbrier Park is a municipal park in the northern part of Charlottesville. Here a segment of the Rivanna Trail approximately one mile in length follows Meadow Creek.

### **DIRECTIONS**

#### **Map on page 8.**

Park behind the Senior Center located at the corner of Greenbrier Drive and Pepsi Place one block east of US Rt. 29. The entrance to the trail is adjacent to the bus stop at the northeastern corner of the parking lot. This trail can also be accessed from the corner of Brandywine Drive and Greenbrier Drive, at the end of Jamestown Drive, and along Greenbrier Drive at the intersection with Kerry Lane.

### **HABITATS AND TRAILS**

Initially the trail slopes gradually to the floodplain of Meadow Creek through young second growth cedars and deciduous trees along a small creek that flows from the north along Hillsdale Drive. The nature of this habitat is characterized in summer by Eastern Towhees, Song Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Gray Catbirds, and Brown Thrashers. In a quarter of a mile you cross over Meadow Creek on a bridge and intersect the Rivanna Trail where you should turn left. The forest here is more mature and dominated by Tulip Poplar, Red Maple, Boxelder, and Black Walnut with Red and White Oaks on the slope to your right. The trail again crosses Meadow Creek by way of stepping stones that require some agility to traverse and then crosses Brandywine Drive at its junction with Greenbrier Drive and enters Greenbrier Park. If you prefer to forego the stepping stones, you can access the park directly at this point. You can also access the trail in just a short distance by way of a major cross trail that connects Jamestown Drive to the right with Greenbrier Drive at Kerry Lane to the left. The trail through the park is level and wide, but can be wet after rains or high water. This section is mature floodplain forest with some large sycamores and willows

contributing to the canopy and harbors such breeding species as Great Crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, House Wren and Carolina Wren. The Greenbrier Park section of the trail ends in a little over a half-mile at the culvert through which Meadow Creek goes under the Norfolk and Southern Railway. The Rivanna Trail continues if you walk through the culvert.

### **BIRDS**

In addition to the species already mentioned, in summer there are Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, American Robin, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, White-eyed Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, and Tufted Titmouse. Red-shouldered Hawks have nested along this reach of Meadow Creek. During spring and fall migrations a total of 16 species of warblers have been recorded at this site.



## BEAVER CREEK RESERVOIR AND ROUTE 811

*Ken Klotz*

### DESCRIPTION

Beaver Creek is well used by fishermen and canoeists in the summer but swimming is not allowed as this reservoir provides some of the drinking water for the Charlottesville area. Route 811 is a quiet rural road that provides great habitat for fall and winter sparrows.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 16

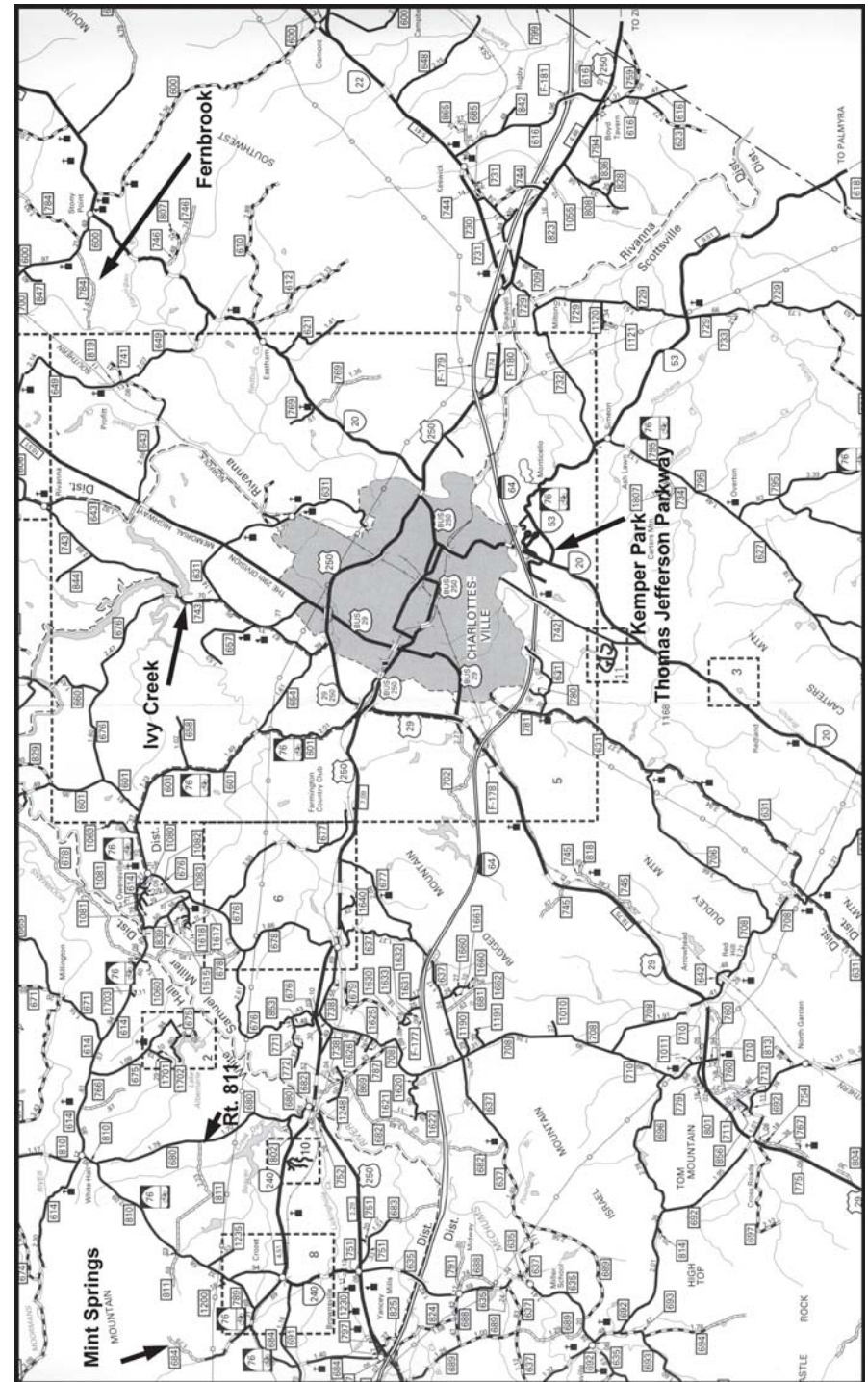
From Charlottesville go west on US Rt. 250 until a fork in the road where Rt. 240 takes off towards Crozet. At this junction turn right on Rt. 680 and follow Rt. 680 for 0.5 mile to the parking area for Beaver Creek on your left. If you continue on Rt. 680 for 1.8 miles you come to Rt. 811. Turn left and bird along Rt. 811 as it heads west.

### HABITAT AND TRAILS

At Beaver Creek there is easy walking on a trail around the reservoir, parking areas, and boat dock. The woods are typical mixed hardwood species. Grassy areas and inlets where streams empty into the reservoir provide a variety of habitats. Route 811 is a gravel road that crosses a bold stream and passes through fields and pastures as it heads west towards the mountains. With little traffic it is easy to pull over and walk along the roadside and brushy fencerows.

### BIRDS

Begin at Beaver Creek Reservoir where you may find Wood Ducks or a Pied-billed Grebe in season. The woods and open areas around the lake are home to the more common bird species throughout the year. The fencerows, fields, and streams along Route 811 have been a reliable place to find winter sparrows for many years. Even with more houses being built in the area it remains productive. An October outing at Beaver Creek and “Sparrow Road” can produce over 40 species including Lincoln, Vesper, Savannah, White-crowned, White-throated and Grasshopper Sparrows. Other species to be found there at that time of year include Northern Harrier, Kestrel, Tree Swallow, Winter Wren, both Kinglets, Palm Warbler and Common Yellowthroat.





## MINT SPRINGS VALLEY PARK

*John Zimmerman*

### DESCRIPTION

This roughly 500-acre tract is part of the Albemarle County park system. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day the beach at the small lake is open for swimming, but during the rest of the year the only “disturbances” a birder would encounter would be a few fishermen and neighbors running their dogs (even though there is a leash law).

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 16.

Take U S 250 west from Charlottesville. 5.9 miles beyond the Boar’s Head Inn (Ednam Lane), bear right on to Va. Rt. 240 to Crozet. In 3.0 miles you come to a stop sign in Crozet, cross Rt. 810 and continue on Railroad Avenue (Rt. 788) for 0.9 miles and then bear right on Rt. 684 (Mint Springs Rd.). The entrance to the park is on your left in 0.7 miles. Turn into the park and continue 0.4 miles to the parking lot adjacent to the lake.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

There is no trail map available at the park. Walk the asphalt road beyond the rail fence. After crossing the culvert go uphill to your right along the board fence of the playground to reach the Hollow Trail. This trail is marked by white squares (“blazes”) nailed to the trees. The trail ascends an intermittent stream valley through a forest of Tulip Poplar, various oaks, and Red Maple with a relatively open understory except for an extensive stand of Mountain Laurel on the slope above the trail. At the top of the ridge the Hollow Trail makes a T-intersection with the Fire (red) Trail. If you turn left the trail continues to the highest region of the park, progresses along the ridge, then descends through a valley with high canopy trees and an understory of Witchhazel and Spicebush, and returns to the lake in the picnic grounds. If you turn to the right, the trail passes through a forest with fewer Tulip Poplar and more walnut and hickory with a dense shrub layer that provides suitable habitat for numerous Kentucky Warblers and a few Hooded Warblers. The trail then descends to the area adjacent to the parking lot. If you

choose not to hike to the ridge, another route is to continue on the asphalt entrance road past the swimming area and through the picnic grounds to the River Trail that continues around the lake, returning to the parking area across the dam.

### BIRDS

The area provides good birding at all seasons of the year, although spring and summer provide the greatest diversity of forest birds. In winter, the better birding is along the forest edge and on the Lake Trail. Mint Springs Valley Park is the most probable place in Albemarle County for finding Kentucky Warblers in the breeding season. Other notable birds of summer to be expected are Acadian Flycatcher, Tree Swallows in the bluebird boxes, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager.



## IVY CREEK NATURAL AREA

*John Zimmerman*

### DESCRIPTION

Around 1870, Hugh Carr, a former slave, developed Riverview Farm on the site that is now the Ivy Creek Natural Area. The farm remained in the family and was actively farmed until the early 1960's. With the death of Hugh Carr's daughter, Mary Carr Greer, the farm was sold in the early 1970's. Between 1975 and 1981 that area was obtained by Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville and is managed as a natural area and a center for environmental education by the Ivy Creek Foundation. This 215 acre tract of largely second growth forest is bordered on the north by the Ivy Creek arm of the South Rivanna Reservoir, a water supply reservoir for the city of Charlottesville.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 16.

From the intersection of US Route 29 and Rio Road proceed west on Rio Road for 1.1 miles to Route 743, Earlysville Road. Turn right on Earlysville Road and proceed north for 0.5 miles to the entrance of Ivy Creek on your left. From the parking lot walk just a short distance to a shelter where pocket trail maps are available.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

While there are a few older trees, most of the forest is less than 50 years old with stands of early successional cedar and pine mixed with the Tulip Poplars, Red and White Oaks, Hickories, and American Beech which are the dominant trees in the forest. There are two old fields that are maintained by mowing in alternate years and two areas, previously of cool-season fescue, that are being restored to warm-season native Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, and Indian Grass. The areas around the barn and educational building are planted with a variety of shrubs and trees that provide good viewing. All these habitats can be reached by following the red trail, which makes a 1.6 mile loop through the site. It is also worthwhile to take a side trip on the peninsula (black) trail to where the reservoir narrows down to Ivy Creek. Siltation has led to the development of mud bars in this area of the reservoir that are

undergoing early succession with sedge, reeds, Willow, and Sycamore, providing the only wetland habitat on the site.

### BIRDS

Ivy Creek offers a heterogeneous landscape, resulting in a site list of 157 species of which 23 percent are permanent residents, 10 percent strictly winter residents, 21 percent summer residents, and 46 percent are migrants. During the winter 20 to 30 species are to be expected, including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Swamp Sparrow (in the sedge/reed/Willow habitat), White-throated Sparrow, and perhaps a Common Raven down from the foothills. During migration, in late April and May, 50 species can be seen. In March a few waterfowl as well as cormorants and Ospreys can be found in the Ivy Creek arm of the reservoir. Breeding species include Wood Duck, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Pine Warbler (in pine patches), Prairie Warbler (in the old fields), Louisiana Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat (in the sedge/reed habitat), and Scarlet Tanager.



## THOMAS JEFFERSON PARKWAY AND KEMPER PARK

*Peggy Cornett*

### DESCRIPTION

The Thomas Jefferson Parkway is a linear park along Route 53, the entrance corridor to Monticello. It was completed at a cost of \$6.5 million and was dedicated in a ceremony in November, 2002. The Parkway includes the two mile Saunders-Monticello trail, which leads from a trailhead parking area to the Monticello Shuttle Station. The trail is open year around from sunrise to sunset. You may call 434-984-9877 for more information.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

The two mile crushed stone and boardwalk trail begins with open fields and low wet-areas where you may encounter Prairie Warblers, a chorus of Towhees, a Catbird, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, or the White-eyed Vireo. Here the 89 acre Kemper Park and Arboretum is planted with trees and shrubs native to Albemarle County. At 0.5 mile along the trail you will come to the lake and then continue through a mixed hardwood forest where the melodious Wood Thrush can be abundant in season. Spur trails to the sides should also be explored. The lake itself may host a pair of Canada geese or even an Osprey. Further along the trail are the elevated boardwalks that will lift you higher into the trees, making warbler watching that much easier. An even greater advantage is afforded by the uppermost rail of the walkway, which runs about five feet high and provides a perfect cradle for aching warbler necks.

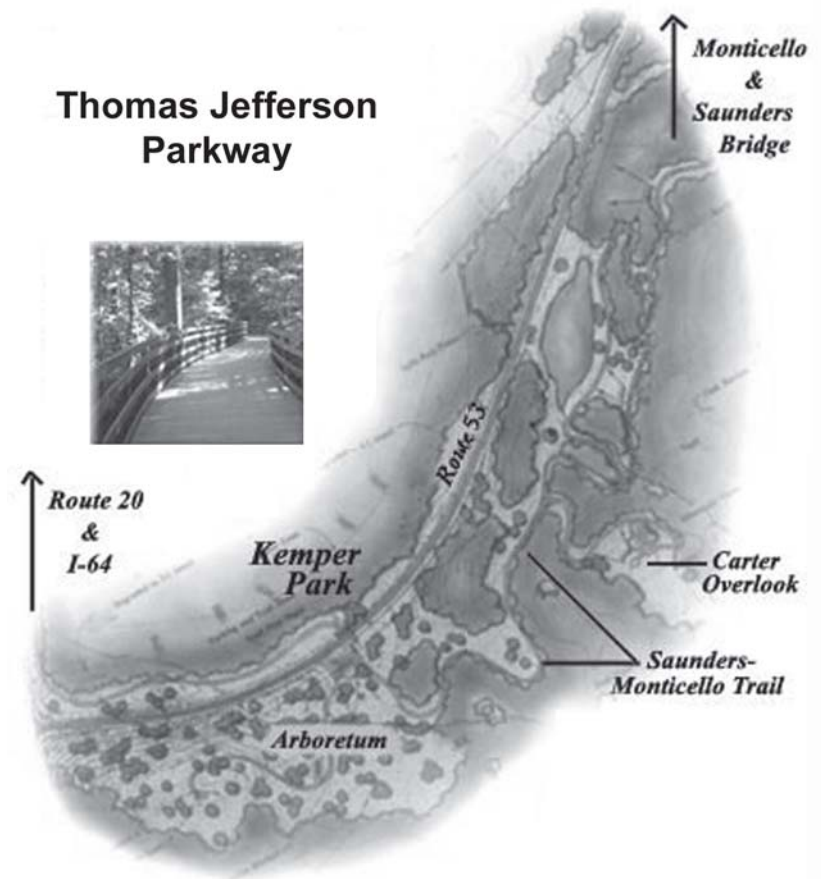
### DIRECTIONS

**Map on page 16.**

From Interstate 64 take exit 121A, Route 20 South. Go 0.7 miles on Route 20 South and turn left on Route 53, the "Thomas Jefferson Parkway," going toward Monticello. The trailhead and parking is the first entrance on the right.

### BIRDS

The variety of habitats from low wet areas to mixed hardwoods and a lake makes this a very productive trail for finding a number of resident and migratory species. The first official count on the parkway, conducted while still under construction in April, 1999, produced 36 species including Prairie Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Parula Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Rufous-sided Towhee, White-throated Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Goldfinch, Phoebe, Scarlet Tanager (pair), Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Veery or Swainson's Thrush, and Osprey.





## **FERNBROOK NATURAL AREA**

*John Zimmerman*

### **DESCRIPTION**

This 63 acres of maturing second growth deciduous forest bordered by the North Fork of the Rivanna River has been managed by The Nature Conservancy since 1963. Not only is the area protected for migrant and resident birds, it is known for the variety of wildflowers and the older age of the forested upland which had been allowed to return to forest at the time of the Civil War. Like most other Conservancy sites, access is limited to foot traffic.

### **DIRECTIONS**

#### **Map on page 16.**

At the intersection of east US Route 250 with Va. Route 20 at the Pantops Shopping Center, turn north on Rt. 20 and proceed for 7.7 miles to Stony Point. Here the highway turns right, but to reach Fernbrook, turn left on Rt. 600 (Watts Passage) and continue for 0.7 miles to Rt. 784 (Burnt Hill Rd.). Turn left on to this gravel road and continue for 0.8 miles to the small parking area for Fernbrook on your left.

### **HABITATS AND TRAILS**

There is a single trail from the parking area into the site. Initially the trail passes through old upland oak-hickory-beech with a well developed understory of young Red Maples, saplings of the dominant trees, and shrubs. A few Virginia and Short-leaf Pine occur as remnants of an earlier serial stage. The area is dissected by small stream valleys, and the trail continues down, passing over several small bridges. The terminus of the trail is a loop that if taken to the left skirts the floodplain of the river with its denser undergrowth and numerous Tulip Poplar, Sycamore, Ash, Hackberry, Red Maple, Black Walnut and Yellow Poplar trees. Along the trail there is a rocky outcrop on the bluffs above the river. It is thought that the village of Stony Point may have been named for this rocky outcrop.

The small streams and springs that run through the natural area support a variety of wildflowers such as Spotted Joe-pye-weed, Virginia

Knotweed, Partridge Pea, dwarf Saint-John's-wort, Blue Phlox and a host of others that may be found blooming at various times of the year. There are also several uncommon species, such as the Southern Adder's Tongue.

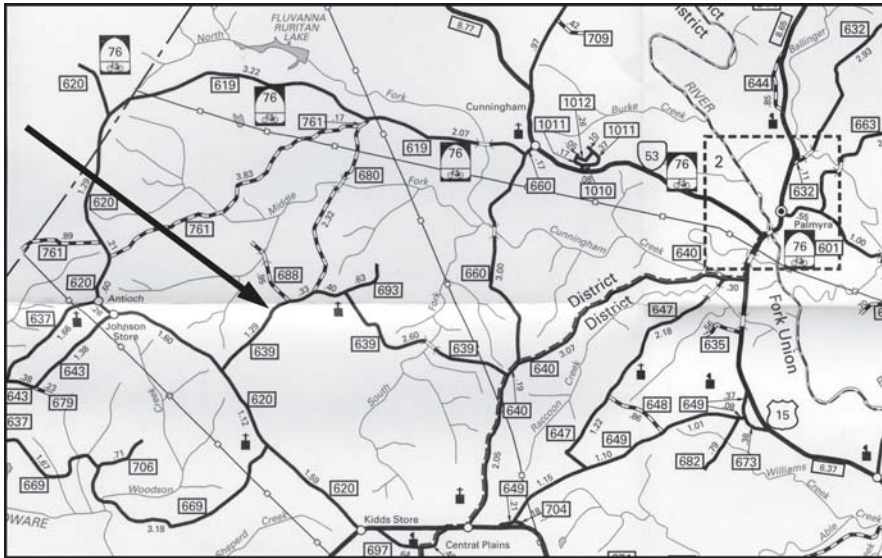
### **BIRDS**

Winter residents are typical of other hardwood sites in the region, but the stream valleys are worth investigating for Winter Wrens. The canopy of the forest is high and closed with few open edge areas, so observation of migrants is difficult. In summer there is a relatively high density of Acadian Flycatchers as well as numerous Eastern Wood-pewees, Red-eyed Vireos, and Wood Thrushes. Other summer residents include Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager.



## SCHEIER NATURAL AREA

*John Zimmerman*



### DESCRIPTION

This 100-acre site is owned and managed by the Rivanna Conservation Society (P.O.Box 141, Palmyra, VA 22963). No dogs, bikes, motorized vehicles or horses are allowed. The three miles of trails, however, provide opportunity for good birding in an upland oak forest cut by several stream valleys. While several species of oak predominate, hickories, Tulip Poplars, and Red Maples contribute to the canopy while a good understory is provided by these species as well as American Beech, flowering Dogwood and, in some patches, Mountain Laurel.

### DIRECTIONS

From exit 121 on Interstate 64, take Route 20 south for 0.4 miles. Then turn left on Rt. 53 and continue for 3.1 miles to Rt. 795. Turn right on Rt. 795. At 2.5 miles beyond this junction continue on Rt. 795 as it turns sharply left, continuing as Rolling Road. At 0.7 miles beyond this turn, Rt. 795 turns right but go straight on Rolling Road which is now Rt. 620, as it enters into Fluvanna County. After 10.2 miles turn left on Rt. 639 (Long Acre Rd.) and go for 0.9 miles to the parking area for the Scheier Natural Area on your left.

## HABITATS AND TRAILS

In a shelter adjacent to the parking lot there is a large map of the area as well as pocket trail maps. Across Rt. 639 the green trail leads to a series of spring-fed ponds that were once used in aquaculture but now teem with fish, insects, and other invertebrates as well as amphibians. Not many water birds are associated with these ponds, although they do provide a resting site for Wood Ducks that nest in the adjacent forest and a stopover for migrant water birds like Solitary Sandpipers. The other trails lead from the parking lot. A good sampling of habitats and birds can be experienced by taking the blue trail along the southern edge of the property, where Northern Bobwhite often are found. The trail then turns north and leads to the red trail. The red trail continues north and descends into the major creek valley, which provides the only habitat for Louisiana Waterthrushes and Acadian Flycatchers. The yellow trail branches south from the red trail and eventually joins the blue-red-yellow trail that leads back to the parking lot through a stand of young pines.

### BIRDS

Like any upland forest site, the winter bird community is not diverse. During migration, especially in the spring, a list of 40 species including a variety of transient warblers is attainable in a 2-hour walk through the site. In summer the Wood Thrushes and occasionally the Summer Tanager occur. Ovenbirds are numerous, while Black-and-white Warblers, Worm-eating Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and other warblers are to be expected. Other summer forest species include Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great-crowned Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Baltimore Oriole.



## MONTPELIER

*Jim Nix*

### DESCRIPTION

Montpelier is the home of James Madison, fourth president of the United States and “Father of the Constitution.” You enter at the Visitor Center and Museum Shop where all admission tickets must be purchased. The shop was built in 1911 to serve the area as its general store. The grounds of the 2,750-acre property include archaeological dig sites, formal gardens, and the Madison family and slave cemeteries. Close to 100 prehistoric and historic sites have been identified and recorded and a half dozen have been the focus of intensive archaeological investigation.

From November to March, the house is open daily for tours from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. From April to October the house closes at 5:30 p.m. The grounds and Museum Store close one-half hour after the house. Montpelier is closed on New Year’s Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Admission ranges from \$6.00 for children to \$11.00 for adults. For general information call 540-672-2728.

### DIRECTIONS

From Charlottesville, Va. (about 45 minutes) take US Route 29 north to Ruckersville, then turn right onto US Route 33 east. At Barboursville, take a left onto Route 20 north towards Orange. Go about 8 miles, and the Montpelier Visitor Center is on the left. Please be aware there is a town of Montpelier located on Route 33 outside of Richmond, Va., which is NOT the home of James Madison.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

Montpelier boasts a 200-acre National Natural Landmark Forest. This is one of the premiere areas in the Piedmont representing a relatively undisturbed old growth deciduous forest. It is the best example of a mature forest dominated primarily by Tulip Poplar and Spicebush in the Piedmont of eastern North America. Recently, these 200 acres have also been protected with an easement through the Nature Conservancy. This forest is open to the public during regular visitor hours. The self-guided trail is a new feature at Montpelier that includes part of an

original Madison-era road (Mountain Mill Road) that led to a mill for grain processing.

The 200 acres of trees found in the James Madison Natural Landmark Forest have been virtually undisturbed by man. Trees include oaks (Red, Scarlet, Chestnut, Black, White), Tulip Poplars and hickories (Mockernut, Pignut). Understory plants include dogwoods, redbuds, Spicebush, Virginia Creeper, Honeysuckle and grapevines. A few of the oaks, poplars and hickories are between 200-300 years old with diameters at breast high of 36-48" although some measure up to 5 feet.

### BIRDS

Some of the most interesting birds at Montpelier are the Red-headed Woodpeckers. The colony is small; the most ever seen on a single visit was 7 or 8. They can most often be found along Back Road which is a left turn off of the main entry road shortly after you cross the railroad tracks. The birds are also sometimes in two islands of trees in the horse fields that run parallel to Back Road.

A morning ramble here in April turned up the following species among others: Worm-eating, Nashville, Black-and-White, Black-throated Green and Yellow-Rumped Warblers, Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Swainson’s Thrush, Hermit Thrush, White Eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo and Field Sparrow.

A checklist has been compiled with the seasonal abundance of 120 species of birds observed at Montpelier during the period of 2000-2001. Some common species include Grasshopper, White-throated and Field Sparrows, Scarlet Tanager, Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Chimney Swift, Barn Swallow, and Eastern Screech Owl. Uncommon and occasional species observed included Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Acadian Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Great-crested Flycatcher, Great Horned Owl, Yellow-throated Vireo, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Kentucky, Hooded, Palm, Prairie and Blackpoll Warblers, Redstart and Summer Tanager.

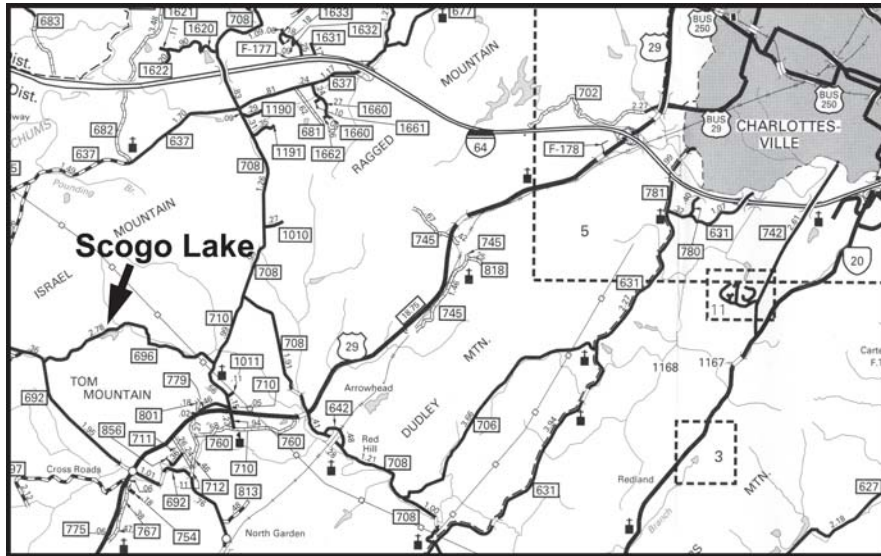




## SCOGO LAKE

Brenda Tekin

Please note that this property is under new ownership since this booklet was published in 2003. Please ask permission before visiting here.



## DESCRIPTION

Situated in a rural scenic area of southern Albemarle County, Scogo Lake is a small fishing lake located on private property on the side of Tom Mountain. The landowner genuinely welcomes birders to this part of his property but requests that visits be limited to the areas near the lake.

## DIRECTIONS

From I-64 at US Rt. 29 south interchange, go south on Rt. 29 6.8 miles to Route 710/Taylor's Gap Rd. Turn right onto Rt. 710 and go 0.7 miles to left on Rt. 696/Edge Valley Rd. Travel 1.6 miles to Scogo Lake on your left. Drive down the narrow graveled road across the spillover and park in the parking area.

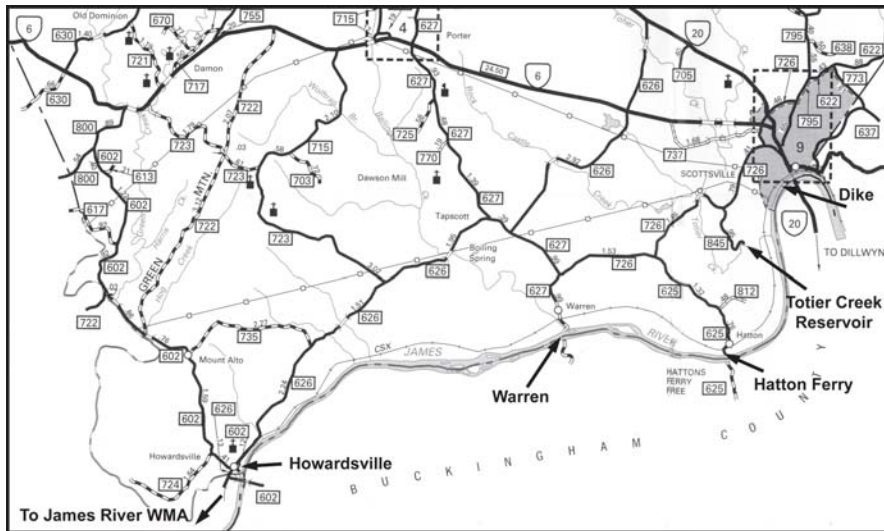
## HABITATS, TRAILS AND BIRDS

Either walk or drive slowly on Rt. 696 along the lakeside searching the shoreline and marshy areas. Be attentive while driving as this is a narrow country road with limited pull-off areas. Grasshopper Sparrows are more often times heard than seen along the grassy slope parallel to the graveled road. The brushy areas on the far side have produced Blue Grosbeak and Yellow-breasted Chat in recent years. Brown Thrasher, Green Heron, Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawk are occasionally seen. Great-blue Heron are regular visitors, and be on the lookout for a possible Great Egret. Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Eastern Bluebird, and Tree Swallow can be found nesting and actively feeding during the spring and summer. The lower marshy area is good for Common Snipe, wrens and a variety of sparrows including Song, Field and Swamp Sparrow.



## JAMES RIVER ROUTE: FROM SCOTTSVILLE TO THE JAMES RIVER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Ken Klotz



### DESCRIPTION

Starting at the historic little town of Scottsville this birding route roughly parallels the James River through an area of large farms and woodlands. Several boat landings and a bridge along the way allow access to the river. At Hatton Ferry you can cross the James on one of the last hand-poled ferries still operating in America. The last stop on this route is the James River Wildlife Management Area that provides excellent habitat for grassland birds, warblers and sometimes waterfowl.

### DIRECTIONS

From Charlottesville follow Route 20 south approximately 18 miles to Scottsville. As you approach the main business district turn right on Warren St., Rt. 1302, and bearing to the left you will quickly be on Rt. 726 which converges with Rt. 626. Following Rt. 626 to the west you will pass turn offs to Totier Creek Reservoir (1.5 mile from Scottsville), Hatton Ferry (another 2.7 miles), Warren (another 2.0 miles past Hatton), Howardsville and Rt. 602 bridge (7.1 miles past Warren), and the James River Wildlife Management Area (7.2 miles past Howardsville). Each of these areas is described below.

### LOCATIONS, HABITATS, AND BIRDS

**Scottsville** offers some good birding along the dike accessed behind the old Scottsville school. Walking along this dike, built to protect Scottsville from floods, takes you through brushy habitat at the river's edge and adjacent to privately owned farmland and woodlots harboring a variety of species.

The turn off for **Totier Creek Reservoir** is 1.5 miles west of Scottsville on Rt. 726. Turn left on Totier Creek Road and go one half mile to Scottsville's water supply. This is a popular fishing spot but when it is quiet it is a good place to look for Wood Ducks, Canada Geese, and Green-backed Herons. Mixed woodland surrounds the reservoir, protecting the watershed and providing habitat for typical woodland bird species.

About 2.7 miles on Rt. 726 from the Totier Creek turn off is the turn off for **Hatton Ferry**. Turn left here and go 2.1 miles to the river. This historic ferry will take you across the river and back free of charge from 9 am to 5 pm Friday through Sunday. Most of the property here is owned by James River Runners and is now posted but if you want to arrange a float trip by tube or canoe this is a good place to do it. You can ask for permission to bird along the river here but even from the parking area you may see an assortment of birds including Baltimore Oriole. When the mulberry tree is fruiting it can host simultaneously Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Robin, Catbird, and Mockingbird.

About 2.0 miles from the turn off to Hatton on Rt. 726 is the turn off to **Warren**. Turn left here on Rt. 627 and go 0.9 mile to the river. This was once another ferry crossing but now is a popular boat launch for canoeists and fishermen. Most of the land along here is private but there is limited public parking. A large creek flows into the river here and there is some adjacent farmland. In this varied habitat you may see Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Yellow-throated Warbler, or Northern Bobwhite.

Continuing to the west along the river 7.1 miles from the Warren turn off you will follow Rt 627 until it intersects with Rt. 626, then bear left and follow Rt. 626, Howardsville Road, until you get to **Howardsville** and the Rt. 602 bridge across the James River into Buckingham County. Just past the store in Howardsville and before crossing the Rockfish River, turn to your left and cross over the railroad

tracks to the James River. There is public parking here and a Porta Potty. Orchard Orioles nest in this area and are frequently seen, as are Baltimore Orioles and Eastern Kingbirds. A little further to the west on Rt. 626 is the Rt. 602 bridge over the James. Park at the end of the bridge and walk over. You will be walking at tree top level for part of the distance so check the 'canopy views'. Near the middle of the bridge during the summer you will be surrounded by Cliff Swallows that nest underneath, accompanied by Barn Swallows, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. You may see a muskrat in the river, hear the call of the Barred Owl, or see Kildeer and Green Herons along the banks.

Another 7.2 miles to the west of Howardsville on Rt. 626 brings you to the turn off for the **James River Wildlife Management Area**. Turn left here on Rt. 743, Midway Mills Lane, and go 0.1 mile to the WMA. This area is managed for hunting but the measures taken to enhance habitat for deer, dove, and goose are also excellent for nongame bird species. There are some grassy open areas with walnut and chestnut trees as well as brushy areas with Autumn Olive, Smooth Sumac, blackberry, elderberry and multiflora rose. There are also areas planted in small grains, sorghum, sunflower, or corn. In the winter a part of the area is flooded for waterfowl with water pumped from the river. Warblers are abundant here in the spring. There is excellent sparrow habitat that deserves more attention beyond the easily seen Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow. Throughout the summer the area is host to dozens of Common Yellow-throated Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow Warbler, Prairie Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting, American Goldfinch, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and an occasional Blue Grosbeak. The woods along the river banks are easily accessible and host to at least four species of woodpeckers. Hooded Mergansers have been seen swimming in the river here in the winter. Waterfowl hunting (Canada Goose) is permitted only Wednesdays and Saturdays in season.



## LOWER ROCKFISH VALLEY - NELSON COUNTY

*Allen Hale*

### DESCRIPTION

This site lies along the Rockfish River on Rt. 617 (Rockfish River Road) from US Rt. 29 east to Rockfish Depot and on to its confluence with the James River at Howardsville. The focus of this description is the five mile section from 29 to Rockfish. The proximity to the river, wooded hillsides, minimal development, light traffic and wide shoulders make this a pleasant excursion for birding by foot or by car.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 36

From Charlottesville, proceed south on US Rt. 29 about twenty miles from Interstate 64 to Rt. 617. Turn left and enter the Rockfish River Road after crossing the northbound lanes of 29. This first stretch runs along Buck Creek until it joins the Rockfish River at Old Stage Bridge. This section from Old Stage Bridge to Rt. 639 (Laurel Road) is about five miles in length.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

The habitat along the Rockfish River is typical of the rugged Piedmont of Nelson County with deciduous woods composed of oak, hickory, poplar, and maple with occasional pines. The river stage varies greatly from a rolling river after heavy precipitation (at flood stage the road is closed) to an easily wadeable stream during dry periods. The grassy shoulder on the riverside is wide enough to pull over and park in many spots. Beyond the right of way for the road, all the property is privately owned, so foot travel is limited to the roadside. As with most forested areas of Nelson County, logging occurs periodically except on the steepest slopes, so the forest stands are of varying age. The rock cuts and exposed bedrock along the river reveal much of interest to geologists, and are visited by geology classes from across the Commonwealth.

### BIRDS

Winter doesn't provide the abundance of species or the rich songs of Spring and Summer, but satisfying encounters with year round residents



such as the Belted Kingfisher, five species of woodpeckers, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, kinglets, and Song and White-throated Sparrows can be expected. The Great Blue Heron is regular and Hooded Mergansers occasional. The Eastern Phoebe usually lingers through the winter. Our earliest nesters, the Great Horned Owl and Common Raven, have both fledged young from the Norfolk-Southern Railway bridge at Rockfish Depot. Wild Turkeys may be seen striding through the forest or flying from one side of the river to the other. Flocks of Blue Jays, American Robins, and Cedar Waxwings often occur in great numbers.

Spring birding is always exciting in Virginia and this is especially so along the Rockfish where you can very nearly tell the date by the arriving neotropical migrants. Individuals of some species, such as the Blue-headed Vireo and Eastern Towhee, remain through the winter in some years. In March, you listen first for the Pine Warbler and soon thereafter the Louisiana Waterthrush and the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher can be heard. The Osprey is regular along the river in migration, appearing during the first week of April. New species arrive almost daily from mid-April to mid-May with vireos, warblers, tanagers, and orioles occupying the treetops as the new leaves unfold. White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos linger into May before heading north or upwards, respectively. Bluebirds, cardinals, thrashers, and many other species will have begun nesting by this time.

Early Summer when the nesting season is in full swing brings the rich song of the Wood Thrush, the endless phrases of the Red-eyed Vireo, and the throaty whistles of the Scarlet Tanager. The Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers sing from the wooded ravines while the Northern Parula prefers the tangled foliage along the river bank. The Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, and Red-shouldered Hawk have all nested within a mile or two of Rockfish Depot. Wood Ducks and Canada Geese will be seen escorting young along the river bank. The Laurel Road bridge over the Rockfish River has nesting Barn Swallows and a colony of Cliff Swallows. When the birding slows down and the sun is hot, you can jump in the Rockfish River for a refreshing swim. American Goldfinches and Cedar Waxwings are among the last species to raise their young each year, waiting for the abundance of fruit and grains.

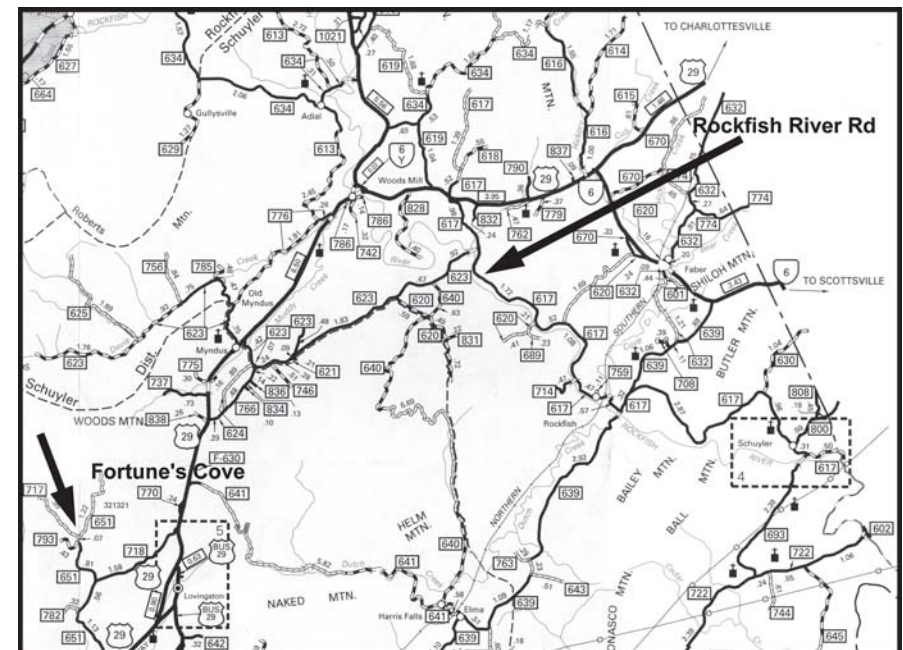
Migration in the Fall isn't quite as exciting as in spring, but there are many challenges with the abundance of immature birds and confusing fall plumages. It isn't uncommon to see kettles of Broadwings away from their main migratory route along the Blue Ridge.

Migration in the Fall isn't quite as exciting as in spring, but there are many challenges with the abundance of immature birds and confusing fall plumages. It isn't uncommon to see kettles of Broadwings away from their main migratory route along the Blue Ridge.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

With an expanding population of Bald Eagles, this species has been seen in most months of the year and nesting may soon be discovered. Some of the rarities seen along the Rockfish River: Wood Stork, Golden Eagle, Brewster's Warbler, and Connecticut Warbler.

When in the Rockfish Valley, birdwatchers and ornithologists may want to schedule a visit to Buteo Books, a bookstore offering the largest selection of new, used, and rare ornithology books in the country. Call 434-263-8671 for information.



## FORTUNE'S COVE PRESERVE

*Ken Klotz*

### DESCRIPTION

This newly opened Nature Conservancy preserve is easily accessible from the Charlottesville area. Fortune's Cove Preserve provides a challenging hike that rewards visitors with stunning mountain vistas. The preserve is 755 acres situated within some 29,000 acres of relatively unfragmented forest habitat. The plant communities on a series of rocky glades are thought to be extremely rare, with fewer than 20 examples known to occur worldwide. The Preserve is open daily, dawn to dusk, year-round.

The west-facing slopes at Fortune's Cove are broken by a series of rocky glades. These openings support expanses of lichens and rock mosses. Please tread carefully on these as you take in the spectacular views, as these fragile pioneers are easily abraded away by foot traffic. Little Bluestem, a prairie grass, dominates the grassy portions of the glades, while the woodlands are abundant with Fringetree, also known as Grandfather's Beard. When this shrub blooms (late April/early May), you may notice its sweet fragrance before catching sight of the blossom's unusual white plume. Wild Azalea, Mountain Laurel, and Fire Pink also bloom around this time. The oak-hickory forests at Fortune's Cove are representative of this part of the Appalachians. Most of this forest is young, but uncut Chestnut Oak grows in a small area near the ridgeline of Woods Mountain.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 36.

From the north (Charlottesville area): Take US Rt.29 south towards Lovingson. Before reaching Lovingson, turn right onto Rt. 718, Mountain Cove Road. (Follow signs to Mountain Cove Vineyard.) Go 1.5 miles and turn right onto Rt. 651, Fortune's Cove Lane. Continue 1.2 miles to vineyard, then bear left onto gravel road. Go 0.2 miles, then turn left into preserve parking area.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

The 5.5 mile loop trail climbs steeply from the parking area, gaining some 1,500 feet in elevation before reaching its highest point. Hikers should be in good physical condition and should allow six hours to complete the entire loop. A gravel parking area and kiosk with trail map are at the preserve entrance; there are no restrooms.

### BIRDS

Blue-winged Warblers can be seen in the wet meadow near the parking lot. Other bird species include Northern Bobwhite and Turkey as well as Cerulean, Blue-winged, Hooded, Worm-eating and Prairie Warblers, Scarlet Tanager, Yellow-breasted Chat, Orchard Oriole, Whip-poor-will, Hairy Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Raven. The list is still growing for this new TNC Preserve. Over 60 species were documented here one day in April.



## ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH

*Brenda Tekin*

### DESCRIPTION

Established in 1976, Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch is one of Virginia's premier fall hawk migration observation points and in some years has led all other hawk lookouts in the state in total number of raptors seen. One reason for this is that the Blue Ridge Mountains, which form a great natural flyway for birds of prey, narrow to a single neck at Rockfish Gap, concentrating the birds in an area that can be watched from one location. Updrafts from wind bouncing off the mountainside, or rising air currents (thermals) due to uneven heating of the ground by the sun provide lift for them, and thus help them conserve energy for their long migration.

The hawk watch is a volunteer endeavor and is cosponsored by Augusta, Monticello, and Rockingham Bird Clubs. Observation is held on the grounds of The Inn at Afton near the intersection of Interstate 64, US 250, the Skyline Drive/Blue Ridge Parkway and Rt. 610. Weather permitting and depending on the availability of volunteers, the count is held each day from mid-August through the Sunday before Thanksgiving, usually between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Through the courtesies extended to the watchers by the motel management, Rockfish Gap is widely known among North American hawk watchers as "the posh lookout" for its ease of access and comfortable facilities close at hand.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 44.

From Charlottesville, take I-64 west and travel approximately 22 miles to exit 99 at the top of Afton Mountain. From the exit ramp turn right onto US Rt. 250 East and travel 0.1 mile under the overpass and turn right onto Afton Circle. Follow Afton Circle up and around to The Inn at Afton and park in the outer areas of the parking lot. Observation is held from the patio underneath the restaurant overhang and can be reached by following the sidewalk on the left (north) side of building around to the patio. In addition to binoculars, visitors should bring a chair, hat, and sunscreen.

Currently information about the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch is available at the following website: [http://home.ntelos.net/~btkin/rockfish\\_gap\\_hawk\\_watch/](http://home.ntelos.net/~btkin/rockfish_gap_hawk_watch/). Data collected is submitted to the Hawk Migration Association of North America and can be accessed on their webpage <http://www.hmana.org/>. While the count is underway in the fall, frequent updates are posted on the VA-BIRDS listserve. More information about VA-BIRDS is included in the Other Resources section at the end of this book.

### BIRDS

Though eighteen species of raptors have been recorded here, the record set in 1999 for the maximum number seen in a single day is fourteen. The greatest numbers of hawks can be seen between September 11<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The greatest variety of raptor species can be seen between September 18<sup>th</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup>. Species seen include: Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Mississippi Kite.

Fall (peak mid-September to mid-October) and spring migration (mid-April to mid-May) at Rockfish Gap also produce non-raptor species that include migrating neotropics, sparrows and more. A drive along Afton Circle and Rt. 610 to the Blue Ridge Parkway can be very productive during this time.





## HUMPBACK ROCKS PICNIC AREA

*Peter Brask*

### DESCRIPTION

This area provides access to the Appalachian Trail (AT) and a cliff-top viewpoint on the south side of Humpback Mountain. The land is part of the Blue Ridge Parkway system.

This is an excellent bird watching site in spring. Mid to late May is especially good, with the leaves not fully out and azaleas in bloom. In other seasons it makes a pleasant walk, but unexceptional birding.

### DIRECTIONS

**Map on page 44.**

The picnic area is between mileposts 8 and 9 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. From Charlottesville take I-64 or US 250 west about 17 miles to the top of the Blue Ridge at Rockfish Gap. Go south on the Blue Ridge Parkway which begins here. The picnic area is 2.7 miles on the left, beyond the visitors' center and Humpback Gap.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

Take the outer loop around the picnic area (not the "return loop") until you see an AT symbol. This is the start of a trail with blue blazes that hits the AT in 0.3 miles. Go left (north) on the AT, following white blazes. The trail is fairly level for a mile, passing through mature hardwood forest, then goes up quite steeply for a few hundred yards, arriving atop the south-facing cliffs. The walk to the cliffs is 1.5 miles one way. Lots of azalea are in bloom along the trail in mid-May, as well as Spiderwort and an occasional Lady Slipper. Mountain Laurel blooms near the first of June.

Back at the AT sign in the picnic area, there is another trail to the right leading 1000 feet to a nice view of the Shenandoah Valley. There are warblers here in the spring, and it is a good hawk viewing site in September/October.

## BIRDS

Among the usual springtime birds on the trail are Cerulean, Chestnut-sided, and Hooded Warblers, Redstarts, Ovenbirds, Vireos, Veerys, Scarlet Tanagers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. On the cliff-top hawks, vultures and ravens are usually seen. The picnic area itself provides good spring birding with warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and tanagers.

This area is high enough (3,000' to 3500') to be a breeding ground for birds absent in the Charlottesville vicinity. These include the Veery, Junco, Rose-beaked Grosbeak, Solitary Vireo, and several warblers. So although it is quiet in the summer, these birds are possibilities. Ruffed Grouse is possible at any season.

## HUMPBACK ROCKS PIONEER FARM VISITORS CENTER

*Ken Klotz*

The Humpback Rocks visitor center and pioneer farm exhibit is located 5.7 miles south of Rockfish Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway. You will pass it on your way to the picnic area. There is an easy paved walk around the demonstration garden, the log cabin and outbuildings that have been reconstructed here.

The grassy areas beside the visitor center and the pioneer farm are very reliable places for observing the courtship flight of the Woodcock in the spring. This spectacle of sound and flight can be seen most evenings from mid February through April, beginning just before dusk. Listen for the repetitive "peeent" call of the male and watch as he soars high into the air and returns with a twittering of wings to his place at the edge of the woods.



## ROUTE 610

*Ken Klotz*

### DESCRIPTION

Another way to enjoy birding our nearby mountains is to travel along Route 610, Howardsville Turnpike, as it parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway and then winds down the western slope towards Stuarts Draft and Sherando Lake Recreation Area. This road has virtually no traffic and few signs of habitation. It passes a golf course, an abandoned orchard, a pond, and miles of hardwood forest. From many points to pull off you can peer into the tops of the trees on this steep downhill slope. Along the road there are some clearings and paths where Thimbleberry and Wild Ginger grow.

### DIRECTIONS

#### Map on page 44.

From Rockfish Gap where Route 250 and Interstate 64 cross Afton Mountain take the road just off the Parkway that goes past the entrance to the Inn at Afton. This is Route 610, the historic Howardsville Turnpike that once carried wagonloads of goods from the James River landings across the mountains and into the Ohio River Valley. You will follow this road as it runs parallel to the Blue Ridge Parkway for about 4.5 miles, then winds 3.5 miles as a narrow gravel road down the mountain to its intersection with Route 664. All along this route there are places to stop, listen, and look for birds.

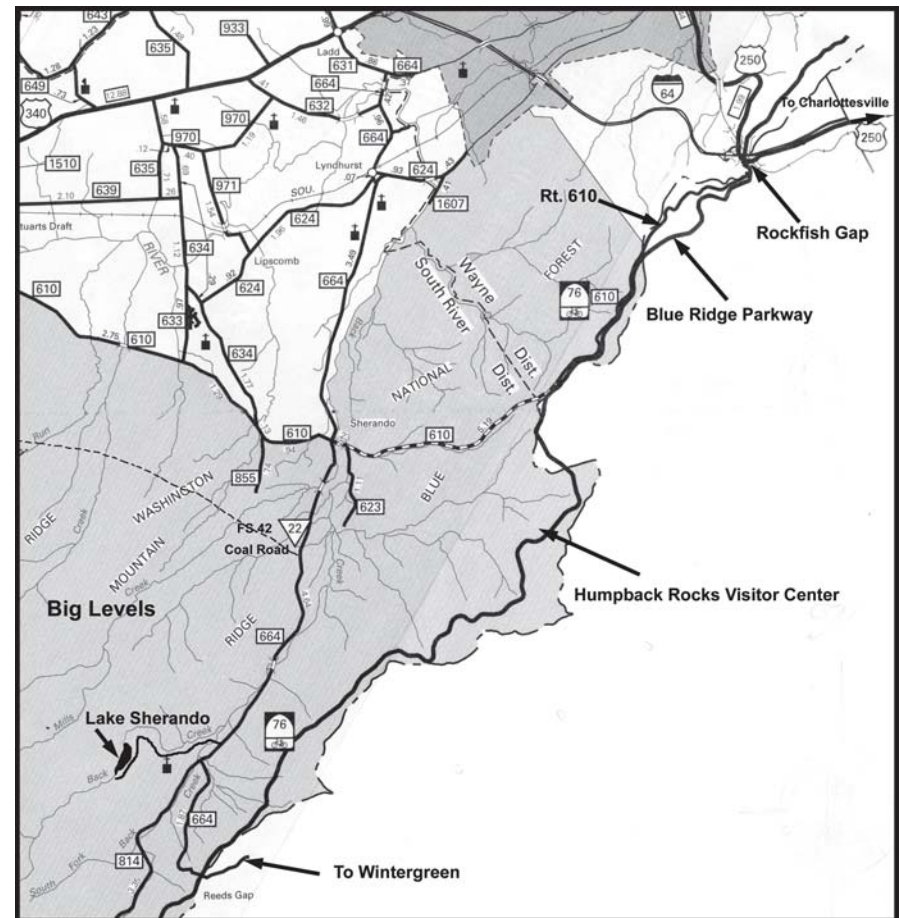
This is an alternate route to Sherando Lake and Big Levels (see description on page 50). Turn left on Rt. 664 and go 1.3 miles to Forest Service Road 42 (Coal Road). A right on Coal road will take you to the Big Levels area. If you continue on Rt. 664 for another 2.6 miles you will reach the Sherando Lake Recreation Area. See the description of these areas on page 50.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

There are no trails as such along Rt. 610 but there are many places to pull off and walk for a while. Starting at an elevation of 3000' - 3500' it descends to the Shenandoah Valley in Stuarts Draft.

## BIRDS

Spring and fall see many migrants along the Blue Ridge Parkway and Route 610 is a good place to find them. A good variety of warblers is likely including Northern Parula, American Redstart, Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Hooded, Pine, Black and White, Kentucky, Cerulean, and Worm-eating Warblers. Wood Thrushes are likely and Eastern Towhees abundant. Kinglets, Gnatcatchers, Chickadees and Great-crested Flycatchers are here. Ravens nest in the microwave tower.



## BIG LEVELS AND SHERANDO LAKE

*Ken Klotz*

### DESCRIPTION

Big Levels Game Reserve is a 30,000 acre tract of hardwood forest adjoining the St. Marys Wilderness Area. Criss-crossed by abundantly flowing streams it encompasses 3300 ft. mountain peaks down to low wetland areas at 1800 ft. Two idyllic ponds covering 6 or 7 acres and a large reservoir attract waterfowl. Big Levels is easily accessible by a Forest Service road and the many jeep trails and fire roads provide ample opportunities to look for birds away from the main road. These roads also provide access for the many hunters that use this area in season.

Sherando Lake Recreation Area in the George Washington National Forest is a very busy area during the summer when hundreds of local residents come to stay in the campgrounds and enjoy the cool waters and sandy beach of this small but beautiful mountain lake. During the cooler seasons, fall through spring, it is mainly left to those who enjoy a quiet walk in the woods or birdwatching. The lake is fed by a bold rushing trout stream with limestone outcroppings along its banks. The forest here is primarily oaks with Tulip Poplar, Hickory, and Red Maple. Evergreen Mountain Laurel and Rhododendron help fill in the understory along with Witch Hazel, Mountain Holly, Hawthorn and other species.

### DIRECTIONS

#### **Map on page 44.**

If you are going directly to Big Levels or Sherando Lake from Charlottesville the fastest route is to take I-64 West. Take the first Waynesboro exit after crossing Afton Mountain and turn left on Rt. 624. Go about 3 miles and turn left on Rt. 664. After 3.5 miles on Rt. 664 you will pass the intersection with Rt. 610 (a left here will take you to the Blue Ridge Parkway) and 1.3 miles farther will bring you to Coal Road (Forest Service Road 42). Turn right on Coal Road and you will be entering the Big Levels area. You can bird all along the 13.5 mile length of Coal Road. To reach Sherando Lake return on Coal Rd. to Rt. 664, turn right, and continue on 2.6 miles from Coal Rd. to the entrance to the lake.

Big Levels and Sherando Lake can also be reached from Rockfish Gap or when birding along Route 610. Take Route 610 south parallel to the Blue Ridge Parkway for about 4.5 miles. Then follow it as it winds 3.5 miles down the mountain to its intersection with Route 664. All along this route there are places to stop, listen, and look for birds. Turn left on Rt. 664 and go 1.3 mile to Coal Rd (Big Levels) and another 2.6 miles to Sherando Lake Recreation Area. Alternatively you can take the BR Parkway 9-10 miles past Humpback Rocks to the small mountaintop hamlet of Love, Va. Turn right on Rt. 814 and follow it down to Sherando Lake.

### HABITATS AND TRAILS

Big Levels is a prime birding area with a great diversity of habitats. From the gravel FS42 road you can easily access large grassy meadows, bold streams, and low lying areas as well as Twin Ponds and a larger reservoir. Many spur roads invite foot traffic or 4X4 travel. Twin Ponds is just off Coal Road 2.0 miles from Rt. 664. Look for a semi-circular parking area edged with large limestone boulders on the right. There are no signs indicating the ponds are here. Follow the small trail perpendicular to the road that leads from the parking area 400 ft. to the first of the series of two ponds. At Sherando Lake there are several well marked trails. The trail that circles the lake provides some of the best birding opportunities.

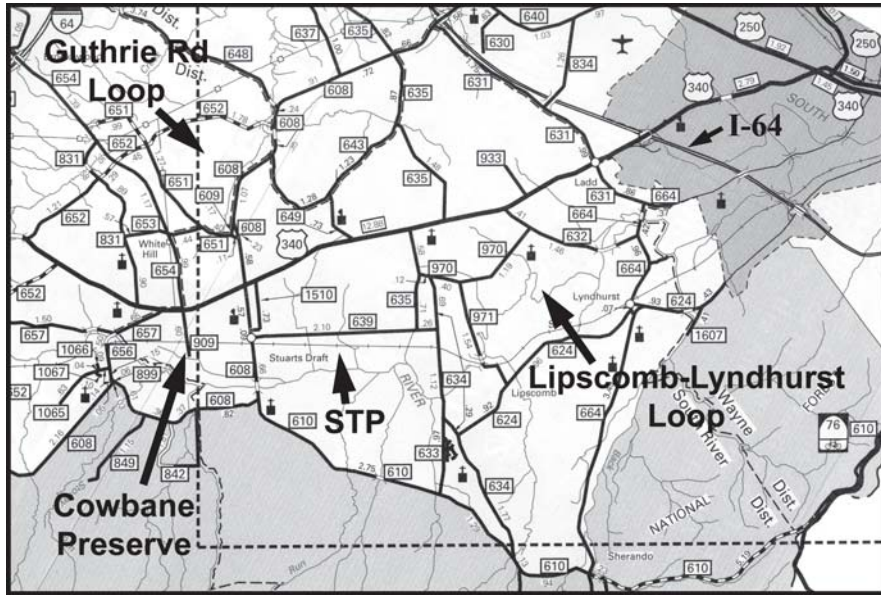
### BIRDS

This is a good area to find migrants in the spring and in the fall. In addition to the more common residents of Titmice, Carolina Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatch, a Big Levels walk in late August turned up Common Yellowthroat, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, and Black and White Warblers, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Great-crested Flycatcher. A spring birding foray revealed Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, five species of Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Wood Thrush among other species. The ponds and lakes of the area host Wood Duck, Canada Goose, Mallard, and Belted Kingfisher with other waterfowl a possibility, particularly during migration.



## STUARTS DRAFT AREA

*Ken Klotz*



### DESCRIPTION

Stuarts Draft is in the Shenandoah Valley just south of Waynesboro. The fertile farmland here nurtures a strong Mennonite community as evidenced by the inspirational signs displayed on gateposts. The farms, fields, fencerows and riparian habitats host a good variety of grassland birds and sparrows in the winter. Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers can be found hunting low over the fields. Shorebirds and waterfowl can be found in the impoundments, particularly in the winter when a diligent observer may be rewarded with a sighting of some unusual migrants like the Trumpeter Swans that stayed in a farm pond for several weeks in 2001. Any of the fields or ponds in the area is worth a look but there are some areas that have been especially productive over the years.

### DIRECTIONS

**Lipscomb - Lyndhurst Loop:** Take I-64 west 11 miles past Rockfish Gap to exit 94. Go south on Rt. 340 to the second light and turn left on Rt. 635, Mt. Vernon Rd. Follow it 1.3 miles to the end and check the feedlots to the left of the Target distribution warehouse for Horned Larks, American Pipits, Lapland Larkspurs, and Snow Buntings. When snow is on the ground is an excellent time to look for these winter birds as the flocks concentrate in areas where food is available.

From the feedlots at Target turn left on Rt. 639 and go 0.2 mile to the McKee Bakery, always checking the fields for flocks. Turn left on Rt. 634, go 0.7 mile and turn right on Rt. 970. This is the beginning of a loop through fields, brushy borders, and South River bottomland. Stop for flocks of sparrows to identify. Follow Rt. 970 1.6 miles to Rt. 632, Shalom Rd; turn right on Rt. 632 and go 1.5 mile to Rt. 664; turn right at Waynesboro Nurseries on Rt. 664 and go 1 mile to Lyndhurst; turn right on Rt. 664, Lyndhurst Rd. and go 2 miles to Lipscomb; turn right on Rt. 971, Lipscomb Rd, and go 1.5 mile to return to the beginning of the loop at Rt. 970.

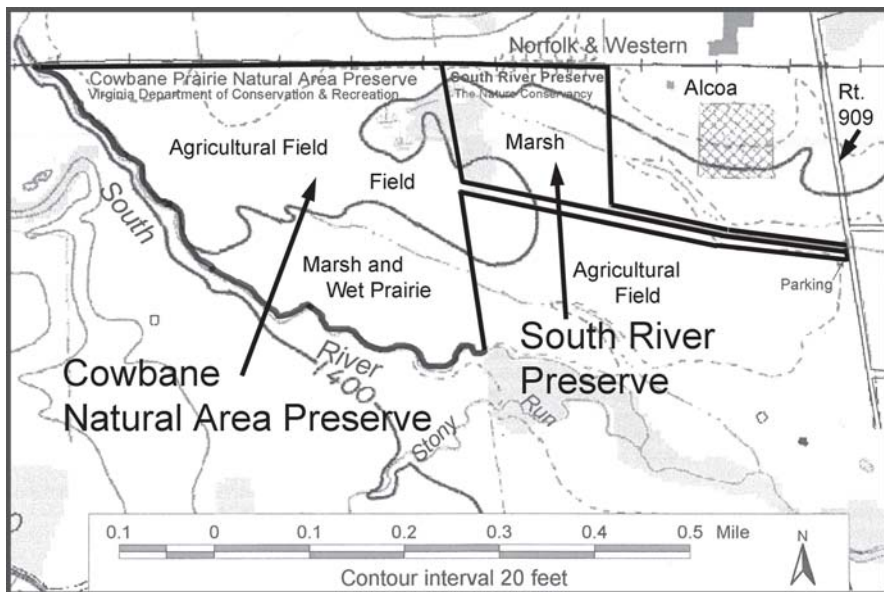
**Stuarts Draft Wastewater Treatment Plant:** From the McKee Bakery take Rt. 639 1.4 miles west towards Stuarts Draft. Just over the top of a hill and immediately before a small housing development there is a road on the left, very narrow, looking like a driveway, that goes along a fence row and over the railroad tracks to the treatment plant. The pond here is a great draw for winter migrant waterfowl and shorebirds. It may or may not be open on a weekend. From here you can continue west on Rt. 639, 0.9 miles to Stuarts Draft and turn right on Rt. 608 to the Guthrie Road loop on the other side of Route 340 .

**Guthrie Road Loop:** From exit 94 on Interstate 64 take Rt. 340 south approximately 6 miles. Turn right on Rt. 608, Tinkling Spring Road. In 0.6 mi., just before The Cheese Shop, turn left to begin the loop on Rt. 651, Churchman's Mill Rd. Go 1.7 miles to a gravel road Rt. 652, Guthrie Rd.; go 1.7 miles to Rt. 608; turn right and go 2 miles back past The Cheese Shop to Rt. 340. If time permits you can wander other back roads in the White Hill area checking the fields and borders for birds.

## BIRDS

Some of the best birding in this area is in the winter when both of the driving loops may produce flocks of 100, 200, or more Horned Larks with occasional Lapland Larkspurs, American Pipits, and Snow Buntings. It takes some patience and perseverance to pick out these birds in the larger flocks. Many species of sparrows are found along the roadsides and fencerows in this area. White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows are abundant along with Song, Savannah, and Field Sparrows. Individual Vesper, Tree, Fox, and Grasshopper Sparrows may be seen along with more common Chipping Sparrows and Swamp Sparrows. Guthrie Road has seen Short-eared Owl and Rusty Blackbirds in January. A birding foray in May could produce an abundance of Willow Flycatchers or Cliff Swallows. In 2001 a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes nested successfully along Rt. 648 about 0.25 mile NW of its intersection with Rt. 608 and were seen along Guthrie Road.

The Stuarts Draft Sewage Treatment Plant has hosted Spotted, Solitary, Pectoral, Least, Semipalmated, or Western Sandpipers, both Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover, Great Egret, and Cliff Swallows. The new improved facility may not be as productive for birds but is still a place worth checking out.



## COWBANE PRESERVE, STUARTS DRAFT

*Ken Klotz*

### DESCRIPTION

The Division of Natural Heritage's Cowbane Natural Area and the adjacent Nature Conservancy South River Preserve near Waynesboro protect an excellent wet prairie ecosystem, one of the last of its kind in the Shenandoah Valley. The area is great for birdwatching and botanizing, too. It is most productive in the fall for sparrows but winter and spring can be nice as well. This is a fragile area and care should be taken to stay on the dry trails and not damage the wetland areas. Call 540-265-5234 for information about Cowbane or visit the website at [www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/cowbane](http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/cowbane). You can obtain information from TNC by calling 434-295-6106 before visiting the South River Preserve.

### DIRECTIONS

**Maps on pages 47 and 49.**

Cowbane is behind the Nibco Plant in Stuarts Draft. Go through Stuarts Draft on Rt. 340. Turn left at Rt. 909, Johnson Dr/White Hill Rd. This is the entry road to the Nibco plant as well as Hershey Foods. After you cross the railroad tracks the Nibco plant is on the right and Hershey is on the left. Just past the turnoff to Hershey, you will see a small gravel parking area for Cowbane on your right. Park here and take the trail on the right into the fields, marsh and woods. Hug the right edge of the agricultural field and follow a small trail through the strip of woods into an open field beyond, where a circular path has been mowed.

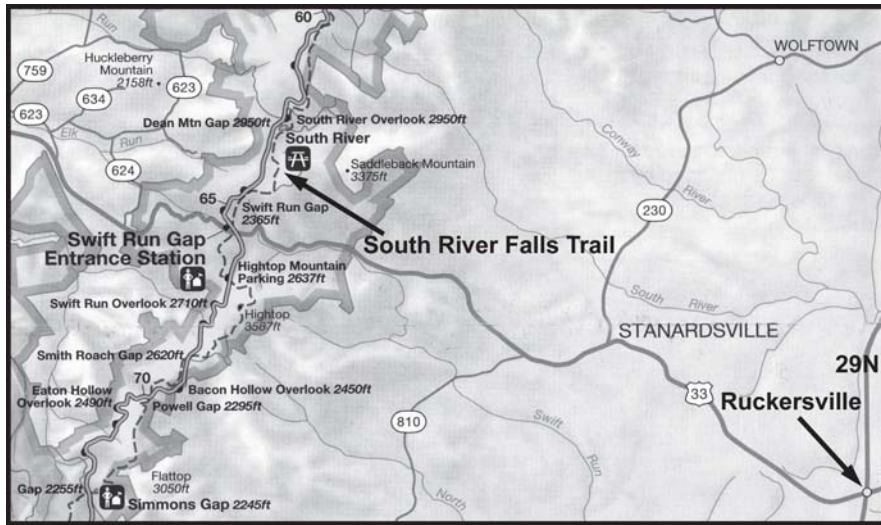
## BIRDS

Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks have been seen actively hunting over the Preserve. White-crowned Sparrows are abundant and in a single outing you can also find Swamp, Tree, White-throated, Song, and Savannah Sparrows. As many as seven Lincoln's Sparrows and Rusty Blackbirds have been seen here on a day in October. Warbling Vireos and many species of warblers can be found here including Bay-breasted, Palm and Common Yellowthroat. Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Sora, Snipe, and American Bittern can be found in the marshy areas. Virginia Rail is a probable breeder here. Willow Flycatchers are abundant breeders.



## SOUTH RIVER FALLS TRAIL SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

John Zimmerman



### DESCRIPTION

This hike provides a 3.5 mile loop descending from an elevation of 2940 feet on Skyline Drive to 2120 feet at the top of the falls on South River through a second growth deciduous forest of oak, maple and hickory with patches of pine and then back up to Skyline Drive. The best birding is during spring from the middle of April through the breeding season. Fall migration is less intense and the diversity of the winter bird population is low.

### DIRECTIONS

From the intersection of US Rt. 29 north and Rio Road at The Fashion Square Mall, proceed north for 12 miles to Ruckersville. Turn left (west) on US Rt. 33 and continue for 14.4 miles to the Swift Run Gap entrance station into Shenandoah National Park (fee required). Go through the entrance and then turn north, towards Front Royal, and continue for 3.0 miles to the entrance to South River Falls Picnic Area at milepost 62.8 on Skyline Drive. Follow the one-way road into the picnic grounds for 0.3 miles to a parking area at the trailhead.

## HABITATS AND TRAILS

The picnic grounds area is open with scattered trees and forest edge. Chestnut-sided Warbler and Hooded Warblers can be seen here as well as Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, and Gray Catbird. The trail immediately descends, crossing the Appalachian Trail, and then through a series of switchbacks reaches South River with a once lush stand of hemlock now suffering from *Adelgid* infestation. Here you should expect Acadian Flycatcher, Canada Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush. You should continue on to the falls overlook and follow the trail to a junction with a road that would take you to the base of the falls if you turned right, but to complete the loop, turn uphill to the left. You will merge with the South River Fire Road in about 0.5 mile which continues for about a mile to Skyline Drive near the entrance to the picnic grounds. An alternate is to return to the parking area by turning left on to the Appalachian trail which then intersects with the South River Falls Trail in 0.4 miles. This return leg from the falls is the best area for Yellow-throated Vireo, Veery, and Cerulean Warbler. A topographic map of the Central District of Shenandoah National Park is recommended and can be obtained at the Byrd Visitors' Center at Big Meadows.

### BIRDS

In addition to the species already mentioned, you are most likely to find the following species anywhere along the trail: Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Great-crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Carolina Wren, Wood Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager. During migration this list is enhanced by a variety of transient warblers.





## GRAVE'S MILL TRAIL AND STAUNTON RIVER TRAIL, SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

*George Harris*

### DESCRIPTION

Shenandoah National Park, Madison County, is located northwest from Charlottesville and is accessed by a trailhead at the end of Route 662. Both trails are very scenic with tumbling streams and forested areas. The Staunton River trail offers better birding since it is away from the sound of the cascading stream and tall trees. The scenery on Route 230 and Route 662 and the trails in the park are especially beautiful.

### DIRECTIONS

From downtown Charlottesville go north on US Rt. 29 for approximately 28 miles. About 2 miles south of the town of Madison, turn left (west) onto Rt. 230, go 4 miles to Wolfstown and bear right onto Rt. 662; continue on for 5.4 miles to Graves Mill, turn right, staying on Rt. 662 for 1.3 miles to the parking lot and end of the road.

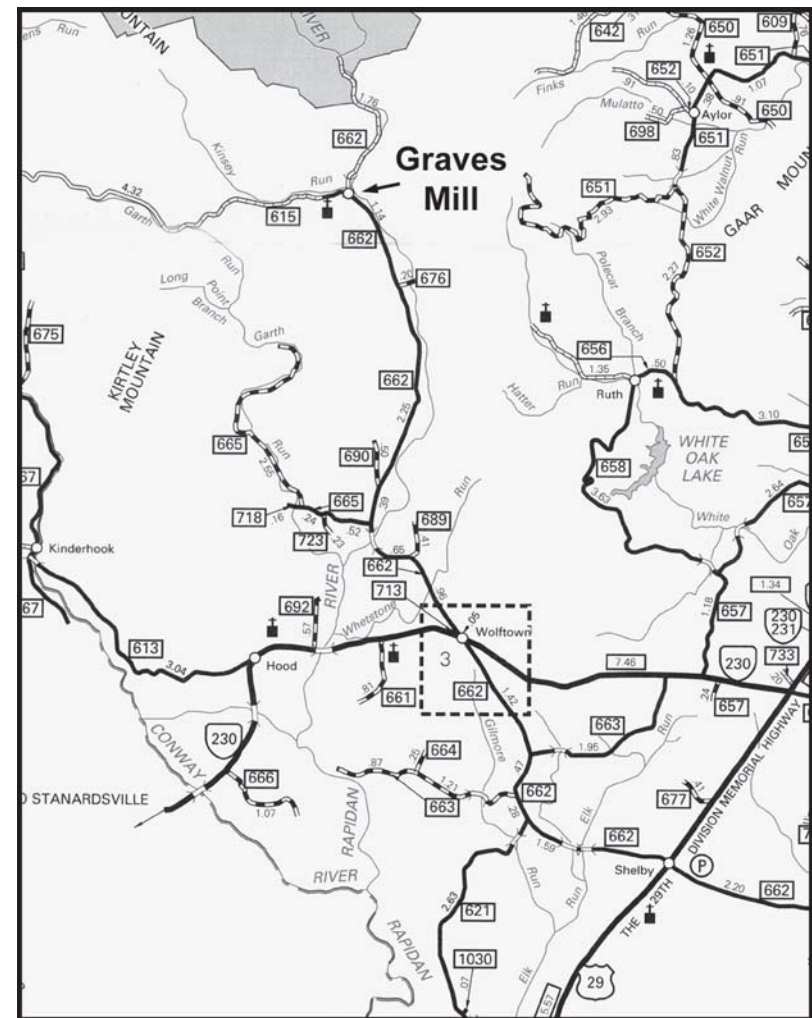
### HABITATS AND TRAILS

Graves Mill Trail commences at the parking lot and follows the river for several miles. It has yellow markings. Approximately one-half mile from the parking lot, the Staunton River Trail branches off to the left and continues for several miles to the top of the mountain and the Skyline Drive. A cement post with signs marks the junction of the trails. Staunton River Trail is blazed with blue markings. Horseback riding is permitted on the Graves Mill Trail but not the Staunton River Trail.

### BIRDS

The birds common to deciduous and coniferous trees and brushy habitat may be found along the trails and streams. Permanent residents include Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, Kingfishers, Pileated, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse.

In the spring migrating warblers, thrushes, vireos and tanagers may be observed. Expect to see Cerulian, Hooded, Louisiana Waterthrush, American Redstart, Ovenbird, and Kentucky Warblers. Summer breeding birds include Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Louisiana Waterthrush, Eastern Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and Acadian Flycatcher. In the fall migrating warblers and other passerines are again passing thru the Piedmont region of Virginia. Winter residents include Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren; Pileated, Hairy, Downy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, and Eastern Phoebe may be found.



# Birdwatcher's Check List

BIRDS OF ALBEMARLE CO., VIRGINIA

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Birds of Albemarle County, Virginia

Compiled by Bill Minor  
&  
Charles E. Stevens, Jr.  
for

## The Monticello Bird Club

December 2000 (revised)

Spring: March - May  
Summer: June - July  
Fall: August - November  
Winter: December - February

- V:** Very Common - likely in large numbers in proper habitat at the proper season.  
**C:** Common - seen most of the time or in small numbers in proper habitat/season.  
**U:** Uncommon - occurs in small numbers or in limited habitat  
**O:** Occasional - seen only a few times each season.  
**R:** Rare - occurs irregularly in small numbers.  
**A:** Accidental - out of normal range (or for season)  
**•:** Breeds locally - some breeding evidence, not necessarily a nest record.  
**#:** Summer resident restricted to the mountains.  
  
As of December, 2000  
286 Total Species  
269 Regular Species  
17 Accidental Species

Species	Sp	S	F	W
Red-throated Loon	R	R	R	R
Common Loon	O	R	R	R
Pied-billed Grebe	U	R	U	U
Horned Grebe	O	R	R	R
Red-necked Grebe	R	R	R	R
Brown Pelican	A	A	A	A
Double-crested Cormorant	R	R	R	R
Magnificent Frigatebird	A	A	A	A
American Bittern	R	R	R	R
Least Bittern	A	A	A	A
Great Blue Heron	U	O	U	U
Great Egret	O	U	U	U
Snowy Egret	R	R	R	R
Little Blue Heron	R	O	R	R
Tricolored Heron	R	R	R	R
Cattle Egret	U	C	U	U
Green Heron*	U	C	U	U
Black-crowned Night-heron	R	R	R	R
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	R	R	R	R
White Ibis	R	R	R	R
Glossy Ibis	R	R	R	R
Black Vulture*	U	U	U	U
Turkey Vulture*	C	C	C	C
Great White-fronted Goose	A	A	A	A
Snow Goose	R	R	R	R
Canada Goose*	C	C	C	C
Mute Swan	R	R	R	R
Tundra Swan	U	U	U	U
Wood Duck*	O	O	O	O
Gadwall	O	O	O	O
Eurasian Wigeon	A	A	A	A
American Wigeon	O	R	R	R
American Black Duck	U	R	U	U
Mallard*	C	U	C	U
Blue-winged Teal	U	U	U	U
Northern Shoveler	R	R	R	R

Species	Sp	S	F	W	Species	Sp	S	F	W
Northern Pintail	R	R	R	R	Killdeer*	C	U	C	O
Green-winged Teal	U	U	U	U	American Avocet	R	R	R	R
Canvasback*	R	R	R	R	Greater Yellowlegs	U	U	U	O
Redhead	R	R	R	R	Lesser Yellowlegs	U	U	U	C
Ring-necked Duck	U	U	U	U	Solitary Sandpiper	C	C	C	C
Greater Scaup	R	R	R	R	Willet	R	R	R	R
Lesser Scaup	C	R	O	O	Spotted Sandpiper	C	R	C	R
White-winged Scoter	R	R	R	R	Upland Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Long-tailed Duck	R	R	R	R	Whimbrel	A	A	A	A
Bufflehead	R	O	O	O	Ruddy Turnstone	R	R	R	R
Common Goldeneye	O	R	R	R	Sanderling	R	R	R	R
Hooded Merganser*	U	O	U	U	Semipalmated Sandpiper	O	O	O	O
Common Merganser	O	R	R	R	Western Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Red-breasted Merganser	O	R	R	R	Least Sandpiper	C	O	O	O
Ruddy Duck	O	R	O	R	White-rumped Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Osprey	U	R	U	U	Baird's Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Mississippi Kite	A	A	A	A	Pectoral Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Bald Eagle*	R	R	R	R	Dunlin	R	R	R	R
Northern Harrier	U	R	U	U	Stilt Sandpiper	R	R	R	R
Sharp-shinned Hawk#	U	U	U	U	Short-billed Dowitcher	R	R	R	R
Northern Goshawk	U	U	U	U	Wilson's Shrike	C	U	O	U
Red-shouldered Hawk*	C	U	U	U	American Woodcock*	U	O	U	R
Broad-winged Hawk*	C	C	C	C	Wilson's Phalarope	R	R	R	R
Red-tailed Hawk*	C	C	C	C	Red-necked Phalarope	R	R	R	R
Rough-legged Hawk	R	R	R	R	Laughing Gull	R	R	R	R
Golden Eagle	U	U	U	U	Bonaparte's Gull	O	O	R	R
American Kestrel*	R	R	R	R	Ring-billed Gull	O	O	R	R
Merlin	R	R	R	R	Herring Gull	R	R	R	R
Peregrine Falcon	R	R	R	R	Caspian Tern	R	R	R	R
Ring-necked Pheasant*	R	R	R	R	Royal Tern	R	R	R	R
Ruffed Grouse*	U	U	U	U	Common Tern	R	R	R	R
Wild Turkey*	O	O	O	O	Forster's Tern	R	R	R	R
Northern Bobwhite*	R	R	R	R	Least Tern	R	R	R	R
Virginia Rail	R	R	R	R	Black Tern	R	R	R	R
Clapper Rail	A	A	A	A	Black Skimmer	A	A	A	A
King Rail	R	R	R	R	Rock Dove*	C	C	C	C
Sora	R	R	R	R	Mourning Dove*	C	C	C	C
Common Moorhen	R	R	R	R	Black-billed Cuckoo*	R	R	R	R
American Coot	R	R	R	R	Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	C	C	C	C
Black-bellied Plover	R	R	R	R	Barn Owl	R	R	R	R
American Golden-plover	R	R	R	R	Eastern Screech-owl*	C	C	C	C
Semipalmated Plover	R	R	R	R	Great Horned Owl*	U	U	U	U

Species	Sp	S	F	W
Snowy Owl	U	U	U	U
Barred Owl*	U	U	U	U
Long-eared Owl	R	R	R	R
Short-eared Owl	R	R	R	R
Northern Saw-whet Owl	R	R	R	R
Burrowing Owl	A	A	A	A
Common Nighthawk	O	R	U	U
Chuck-will's-widow	R	R	R	R
Whip-poor-will*	U	U	U	U
Chimney Swift*	V	V	V	V
Throat-throated Hummingbird*	C	C	C	C
Rufous Hummingbird	A	A	A	A
Belted Kingfisher*	C	C	C	C
Red-headed Woodpecker*	R	R	R	R
Red-bellied Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	C	C	C	C
Downy Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
Hairy Woodpecker*	U	U	U	U
Northern Flicker*	C	C	C	C
Pileated Woodpecker*	U	U	U	U
Olive-sided Flycatcher	R	R	R	R
Eastern Wood-pewee*	C	C	C	C
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	R	R	R	R
Acadian Flycatcher*	C	C	C	C
Willow Flycatcher	O	O	O	O
Least Flycatcher	R	R	R	R
Eastern Phoebe*	C	C	C	C
Great Crested Flycatcher*	U	U	U	U
Eastern Kingbird*	U	U	U	U
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	A	A	A	A
Loggerhead Shrike*	R	R	R	R
White-eyed Vireo*	U	U	U	U
Yellow-throated Vireo*	U	U	U	U
Blue-headed Vireo#	U	U	U	U
Warbling Vireo*	R	R	R	R
Philadelphia Vireo	R	R	R	R
Red-eyed Vireo*	V	V	V	V
Blue Jay*	C	C	C	C
American Crow*	V	V	V	V
Fish Crow*	C	C	C	C
Common Raven*	C	C	C	C
Horned Lark*	R	R	R	R

Species	Sp	S	F	W	Species	Sp	S	F	W
Lark Sparrow	R	R	R	R	Song Sparrow*	C	C	C	C
Savannah Sparrow	U	U	U	U	Lincoln's Sparrow	R	R	R	R
Grasshopper Sparrow*	U	U	U	U	Swamp Sparrow	U	U	U	U
Henslow's Sparrow	R	R	R	R	White-throated Sparrow	C	A	C	C
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	R	R	R	R	White-crowned Sparrow	U	U	U	U
Fox Sparrow	O	O	O	O	Dark-eyed Junco	C	U	C	C
Song Sparrow*	C	C	C	C	Lapland Longspur	R	R	R	R
Lincoln's Sparrow	R	R	R	R	Snow Bunting	R	R	R	R
Swamp Sparrow	U	U	U	U	Northern Cardinal*	V	V	V	V
White-throated Sparrow	C	A	C	C	Rose-breasted Grosbeak#	U	O	U	R
White-crowned Sparrow	U	U	U	U	Black-headed Grosbeak	A	A	A	A
Dark-eyed Junco	C	U	C	C	Blue Grosbeak*	U	U	U	A
Lapland Longspur	R	R	R	R	Indigo Bunting*	V	V	V	A
Snow Bunting	R	R	R	R	Painted Bunting	A	A	A	A
Northern Cardinal*	V	V	V	V	Dickcissel	R	R	R	R
Rose-breasted Grosbeak#	U	O	U	R	Bobolink	U	U	U	U
Black-headed Grosbeak	A	A	A	A	Red-winged Blackbird*	V	C	C	U
Blue Grosbeak*	U	U	U	A	Eastern Meadowlark*	C	C	C	U
Indigo Bunting*	V	V	V	A	Rusty Blackbird	U	U	U	U
Painted Bunting	A	A	A	A	Common Grackle*	V	V	V	U
Dickcissel	R	R	R	R	Brown-headed Cowbird*	C	C	C	O
Bobolink	U	U	U	U	Orchard Oriole*	U	U	U	R
Red-winged Blackbird*	V	C	C	U	Baltimore Oriole*	U	U	U	R
Eastern Meadowlark*	C	C	C	U	Purple Finch	U	U	U	U
Rusty Blackbird	U	U	U	U	House Finch*	V	C	C	V
Common Grackle*	V	V	V	U	Red Crossbill	R	R	R	R
Brown-headed Cowbird*	C	C	C	O	White-winged Crossbill	R	R	R	R
Orchard Oriole*	U	U	U	R	Common Redpoll	R	R	R	R
Baltimore Oriole*	U	U	U	R	Pine Siskin	O	O	O	O
Purple Finch	U	U	U	U	American Goldfinch*	C	C	C	C
House Finch*	V	C	C	V	Evening Grosbeak	U	U	U	U
Red Crossbill	R	R	R	R	House Sparrow*	U	U	U	U
White-winged Crossbill	R	R	R	R					
Common Redpoll	R	R	R	R					
Pine Siskin	O	O	O	O					
American Goldfinch*	C	C	C	C					
Evening Grosbeak	U	U	U	U					
House Sparrow*	U	U	U	U					

Species	Sp	S	F	W
Northern Parula*	C	C	C	C
Yellow Warbler*	C	C	C	A
Chestnut-sided Warbler#	C	U	C	A
Magnolia Warbler	C	C	C	C
Cap May Warbler	C	C	A	A
Black-throated Blue Warbler#	C	U	C	U
Yellow-rumped Warbler	C	C	C	C
Black-throat. Green Warbler*	U	U	U	U
Blackburnian Warbler#	U	U	U	U
Yellow-throated Warbler*	U	U	U	U
Pine Warbler*	C	C	C	R
Prairie Warbler*	C	C	U	U
Palm Warbler	U	U	U	U
Bay-breasted Warbler	U	U	U	U
Blackpoll Warbler	U	U	U	U
Cerulean Warbler*	U	U	U	U
Black-and-white Warbler*	U	U	U	U
American Redstart*	C	C	C	C
Prothonotary Warbler	O	O	O	O
Worm-eating Warbler*	C	C	O	O
Swainson's Warbler	R	R	R	R
Ovenbird*	C	C	C	C
Northern Waterthrush	O	R	R	R
Louisiana Waterthrush*	C	C	R	R
Kentucky Warbler*	U	U	U	U
Connecticut Warbler	R	R	R	R
Mourning Warbler	C	C	R	R
Common Yellowthroat*	C	C	C	C
Hooded Warbler*	C	C	C	C
Wilson's Warbler	O	O	O	O
Yellow-breasted Chat*	U	O	C	A
Summer Tanager*	U	U	U	U
Scarlet Tanager*	C	C	C	C
Western Tanager	A	A	A	A
Eastern Towhee*	C	C	C	U
Bachman's Sparrow	R	R	R	R
American Tree Sparrow	C	C	C	U
Chipping Sparrow*	C	C	C	R
Clay-colored Sparrow	A	A	A	A
Field Sparrow*	C	C	C	C
Vesper Sparrow*	U	U	U	U

Species	Sp	S	F	W
Purple Martin*	O	O	O	O
Tree Swallow*	C	C	O	U
No. Rough-winged Swallow*	C	C	O	U
Bank Swallow	O	R	O	O
Cliff Swallow*	U	O	O	O
Barn Swallow*	C	C	C	C
Carolina Chickadee*	C	C	C	C
Black-capped Chickadee	R	R	R	R
Tufted Titmouse*	C	C	C	C
Red-breasted Nuthatch	U	U	U	U
White-breasted Nuthatch*	C	C	C	C
Brown-headed Nuthatch	A	A	A	A
Brown Creeper	U	U	U	U
Carolina Wren*	C	C	C	C
Bewick's Wren	R	R	R	R
House Wren*	U	U	U	U
Winter Wren#	U	U	U	U
Sedge Wren	R	R	R	R
Marsh Wren	R	R	R	R
Golden-crowned Kinglet	U	U	U	U
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	U	U	U	U
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*	C	C	C	C
Eastern Bluebird*	C	C	C	C
Veery#	U	O	U	U
Gray-cheeked Thrush	O	O	O	O
Swainson's Thrush	U	U	U	U
Hermit Thrush	U	U	U	U
Wood Thrush*	C	C	C	C
American Robin*	V	V	V	U
Varied Thrush	A	A	A	A
Northern Wheatear	C	C	C	R
Gray Catbird*	C	C	C	C
Northern Mockingbird*	U	U	U	U
Brown Thrasher*	V	V	V	V
European Starling*	V	V	V	V
American Pipit	U	U	U	U
Cedar Waxwing*	U	U	U	U
Blue-winged Warbler	R	R	R	R
Golden-winged Warbler#	R	R	R	R
Tennessee Warbler	U	U	U	U
Orange-crowned Warbler	R	R	R	R
Nashville Warbler	U	U	U	U



## BOOKS FOR VIRGINIA BIRDERS

**A Birder's Guide to Virginia**, David Johnston, compiler, 1997, American Birding Association, Inc., Colorado Springs CO.

This book has site descriptions, driving directions, and information on birds seen at 70 different areas throughout the state of Virginia.

**Finding Birds in the National Capital Area**, Claudia Wilds, 1992, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.

This is another excellent book that has site descriptions, driving directions, and information on birds to be found from Delaware and the Eastern Shore to Shenandoah National Park and Highland County.

**A Birder's Guide to Metropolitan Richmond**, Jerry Uhlman, 1998, Richmond Audubon Society, P.O. Box 804, Richmond VA 23207-0804.

This is an excellent guide to approximately 40 productive birding sites in the greater Richmond metropolitan area.

**Birds of Augusta County**, YuLee Lerner, ed., 1998, Augusta Bird Club, Staunton VA. The status, breeding, and records of occurrence of the 292 species recorded in Augusta County is well documented.

**Virginia's Birdlife, An Annotated Checklist**, , 2008, VSO, the long awaited "Gold Book." Available from the Virginia Society of Ornithology, [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net). The status, breeding, and records of occurrence of the bird species recorded in Virginia is well documented.

## ORGANIZATIONS

**The Monticello Bird Club** in Charlottesville is an informal group of about 150 people who share an enthusiasm for birds. Their monthly meetings are free and open to the public and feature invited speakers from throughout the state who share their expertise with entertaining and informative presentations. Anyone interested is invited to join them on one of their field trips to areas around Charlottesville or around the state. This is a great way to meet others with an interest in birds and to share and learn from other experienced birders while on a pleasant outing.

For more information visit our website at  
<http://www.monticellobirdclub.org>

**The Virginia Society of Ornithology, Inc.** exists to encourage the systematic study of birds in Virginia, to stimulate interest in birds, and to assist the conservation of wildlife and other natural resources. Present membership includes every level of interest, from professional scientific ornithologists to enthusiastic amateurs. VSO meetings and field trips provide excellent opportunities to share and learn more about birding.

Visit their website at [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net)

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**VA-BIRDS** is a listserve that allows subscribers to post notes informing other subscribers about bird sightings across the state. Subscribers can choose to receive individual bird reports as they are reported or to receive a "digest" version of the reports. Or for those who only wish to read reports that have previously been reported, they can go to the archives whenever they wish without having to subscribe.

To subscribe or read the archives go to:

<http://mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/va-bird>

There are many other listserver active in Virginia for the exchange of current information of interest to birders and to communicate quickly information about sightings of rare and unusual birds. For complete details about these listserves and how you can join go to the **VSO website**:

<http://www.virginiabirds.net/list.html>

**The Voice of the Naturalist** also reports sightings in the Central Atlantic states. It is published by the Audubon Naturalist Society (not affiliated with the National Audubon Society). You can get more information about their activities and publications at [www.audubonnaturalist.org](http://www.audubonnaturalist.org).

Links to many other useful and informative websites can be found on the **Monticelo Bird Club website**:  
[www.monticellobirdclub.org/bird\\_links.html](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org/bird_links.html)



# Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/>



From the Atlantic Ocean on Virginia's eastern border, to the towering Mt. Rogers at its southwest corner, the Commonwealth includes every bird and animal habitat that occurs naturally between Maine and Florida. The state also offers a long history, rich culture, and tradition of warm hospitality to welcome visitors.

Within Virginia's 43,000 square miles of diverse natural habitat, you can find some 400 species of birds, 250 species of fish, 150 species of terrestrial and marine animals, 150 species of amphibians and reptiles, and a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. The Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail celebrates this diversity. In fact, it is the first statewide program of its kind in the United States. In Virginia, three phases of the trail link wildlife viewing sites throughout the state.

## **Coastal Trail**

The Coastal Area was the first to be developed. It features untouched barrier islands, cypress swamps, great stands of pine forest, and bayside salt marshes. Here are 18 trail loops for you to explore. Be on the lookout for birds, butterflies, snakes, turtles, dragonflies, and more.

## **Mountain Trail**

The Mountain Phase was the second phase to be developed. It features expansive mountain vistas, endless forest trails, large inland reservoirs and a taste of the western Piedmont. Here are 34 loops for you to explore. Now don't forget your binoculars!

## **Piedmont Trail**

Completing the first statewide birding and wildlife trail in the U.S., the Piedmont Area offers 13 loops. The Piedmont area includes expansive grasslands, large forested tracts, pineland savannahs, several large reservoirs, and an abundance of rich history and culture!

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If you have any questions, please send a note to:  
Larry R. Lynch, birder6@juno.com

A listserve that focuses on the Shenandoah Valley region is **shenvalbirds@yahoogroups.com**. Members post their sightings from throughout the Shenandoah Valley. If you want to subscribe to this listserve send an email to John Spahr: jspahr@augustamed.com

**The Voice of the Naturalist** reports Rare Bird sightings in the Virginia, Washington DC and Maryland region. Visit their website at: <http://www.sitesbysteve.com/nvbc/voice.txt>

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