

# 2024 WILDFLOWER PILGRIMAGE

RATING DESCRIPTION	
1. <i>EASY:</i>	MOSTLY DRIVING WITH LITTLE TO NO WALKING. ANY WALKING WILL BE SHORT DISTANCE ALONG EVEN TERRAIN.
2. <i>MODERATE:</i>	LONGER WALKING IS REQUIRED TO SEE AREAS OF INTEREST AND MAY ENCOUNTER SHORT SECTIONS OF GENTLE TO MODERATE UNEVEN TERRAIN.
3. <i>DIFFICULT:</i>	LONG WALKING DISTANCES AND/OR VERY RUGGED TERRAIN. HIKERS SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED. HIKING SHOES NECESSARY.
4. <i>EXTREMELY DIFFICULT:</i>	VERY RUGGED TERRAIN AND ROCKY TRAILS. HIKERS MUST BE EXTREMELY FIT AND DISCUSS TOUR PARTICIPATION WITH LEADERS. STURDY HIKING BOOTS ARE REQUIRED.

## TOUR/RATING DESCRIPTIONS

### FRIDAY TOURS

#### FRIDAY TOUR #1

##### *ALL BIRDING TOUR: CANAAN VALLEY AND SENECA ROCKS*

RATING: 1-2 mostly even terrain TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 70 TOTAL WALKING MILES: 3

An early morning departure will provide birding experiences in Canaan Valley, Seneca Rocks area, and Dolly Sods Wilderness. We will walk the floor of Canaan Valley looking for marsh and farm field birds such as swamp sparrows, alder flycatchers, willow flycatchers, bobolinks, and meadowlarks. We will drive to the canyon rim for high mountain thrushes and warblers while walking among mixed spruce/maple/birch forest and rhododendron. This is one of the few locations of breeding Swainson's thrush in West Virginia. We could also see and/or hear winter wren, Blackburnian warblers, and black-throated blue warblers. We will then travel to the valley of North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River at Seneca Rocks. We will bird the lowlands for cerulean warblers, both black-billed and yellow-billed cuckoo species, white-eyed vireos, orchard orioles, Baltimore orioles, American redstarts, and Louisiana waterthrushes. A search of the river may turn up a few breeding common mergansers amongst an assortment of warblers, flycatchers, and vireos. We will enjoy a picnic of our packed lunches together in the Seneca Rocks Visitors Center. After lunch we will travel back to Blackwater Falls State Park via Dolly Sods stopping at Table Mountain Pine habitat to search for pine warblers and worm-eating warblers. Traveling up the Allegheny Front we will stop at early succession areas looking for golden-winged warblers and chestnut-sided warblers. We make one more stop in the Dolly Sods Wilderness to search for veeries, Canada warblers, and northern waterthrushes. Given the variety of habitats we will encounter, this trip should provide participants with a lengthy trip bird list and opportunities to see some quite localized breeding birds. Restrooms available at Seneca Rocks Visitors Center.

### FRIDAY TOUR #2

#### *SINKS OF GANDY – SPRUCE LAKE – SPRUCE KNOB (EPIC RANDOLPH COUNTY)*

RATING: 2      TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 140

This tour will showcase many of the beloved and epic places in the Randolph County highlands. The trip will leave Blackwater Falls State Park and travel south to Job. From Job, the caravan will continue to Whitmer and eventually leave the paved road onto a gravel road along Gandy Creek. Following Gandy Creek, we will make a quick stop at Swallow Rock to experience a mountain stream and the unique rock formation. Some quick roadside exploration along the route for wildflowers should yield some usual rich forest beauties. The first major stop will be at the Sinks of Gandy, an iconic cave that offers a short easy half-mile hike to the entrance through a farm field. A brief history and local lore will be discussed. Skirting the field is a high elevation spruce swamp forest, home to some rare plants. The Sinks cave entrance offers an opportunity to photograph one of the most renowned places in WV. Lunch will be at the grassy lakeside shore along Spruce Knob Lake. Bring a blanket or towel to sit on. After lunch the tour will end up at Spruce Knob, the highest point in WV. An easy quarter-mile trail takes hikers out to an observation tower with spectacular views. Backtracking our route to Job, (if time allows) we will plan to stop at Still Hollow Distillery for an opportunity to see one of West Virginia's newest and highly acclaimed businesses. Wildflowers will be sporadic and the best opportunities will be on the roadside stops and around the Sinks of Gandy. Restrooms (pit toilets) will be available.

### FRIDAY TOUR #3

#### *DOLLY SODS WILDERNESS HIKE: ROHRBAUGH PLAINS/ WILDLIFE TRAILS*

RATING: 4    DRIVING MILES: 60    HIKING MILES: 4.5

Our drive takes us south on Route 32 through Canaan Valley. Approximately two miles south of Canaan we turn left onto Laneville Rd. and continue to the Rohrbaugh Plains trailhead on top of Dolly Sods. The trail is not a loop trail and one vehicle will have to be left at the Wildlife Trail trailhead. The hike begins through a mixed Red Spruce/deciduous woodland where we will be greeted with a variety of bird songs; mostly warblers - Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Ovenbird, Yellow-rumped, and Magnolia. This trail is rocky at times and eventually becomes a mixed hardwood/evergreen forest. Lunch will be at the Rohrbaugh Plains vista looking south through the Red Creek Valley and west toward Rocky Point (Lion's Head). The vista is one of the best scenic overlooks in West Virginia. The return hike is on the Wildlife Trail, a mostly open trail traveling through several meadows and bordered by deciduous woodlands. There will be opportunities for wildflower and bird identification, however, this tour's primary focus is the spectacular beauty of Dolly Sods. **Hiking shoes/boots are required. Appropriate rain gear is required.** There will be restroom facilities available at the Dolly Sods Picnic Area before the hike.

### FRIDAY TOUR #4

#### *CRANESVILLE SWAMP*

RATING: 2    TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 90    TOTAL WALKING MILES: 3

Travel US Route 219 to Oakland, MD, and follow country roads on the WV/MD border to find the Cranesville Swamp Nature Preserve managed by The Nature Conservancy. At Cranesville Swamp wind, water, mountain geology and temperature have created a beautiful and rare "frost pocket" (low area that collects moisture and cooler temperatures) reminiscent of Canadian environments. Eastern hemlock, red spruce, and larch are some of the few trees in the acidic boreal bog. The northern relict wetland complex also supports a wide variety of smaller plants such as goldthread, trailing arbutus, gay wings, several sundews, cranberry, several ferns, and many mosses. Nineteen diverse wetland communities are home to such birds as

blackburnian, magnolia, and chestnut-sided warblers, alder flycatcher, golden-crowned kinglet, indigo bunting, and saw-whet owl. We'll explore the boardwalk trail in the northern section of the swamp, and then venture off the trail into the seldom visited southern part of the swamp. Restrooms are available at Oakland and "Facilitrees" are available at Cranesville Swamp.

**FRIDAY TOUR #5**

***WILDFLOWERS, BREEDING BIRDS AND VERNAL POOLS***

**RATING: 2 TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 50**

One of the most diverse habitats in the area is the Upper Dry Fork. We will travel through Davis and Canaan Valley to Dry Fork. After crossing the Dry Fork River, we will survey an abundance of wildflowers and ferns along the cliffs and floodplain and search for unique mole salamanders. While visiting an old farm site along the river, we'll observe a swampy area with an active vernal pool. View a variety of nesting birds including hawks and warblers.

**FRIDAY TOUR #6**

***DOUGLAS FALLS HIKE***

**RATING: 1-2 TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 30**

This tour leaves Blackwater Falls State Park and goes five miles north on WV Route 32 to Thomas. Participants will drive down to the old Douglas coke furnaces and park near Douglas Falls. A short quarter mile hike to the waterfall on an old railroad grade may reveal some wildflowers and more interesting plants will be found on the rock outcrops as the trail enters the forest. The falls can be viewed from the railroad grade. Those that want to hike the short extension down to the base should wear hiking boots and be prepared for a strenuous and unstable climb over rocks on a steep slope. Interesting natural history facts, such as ecological impacts or human uses, about the plants observed will be discussed. The actual hike on the railroad grade will be short but go as long as birds and botany remain interesting (probably less than a half mile total walking). A discussion of the coke ovens and their history will be a roadside stop, as well. On the return trip to Blackwater Falls State Park, participants can gather at the local ice cream shop in Davis for a final treat. Restrooms will be available in Thomas. Limited to 6 vehicles.

**FRIDAY TOUR #7**

***FERNOW FOREST: EMPHASIZING BIRDS AND WILDFLOWERS***

**RATING: 1 TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 50**

The 3,640 acres of typical Appalachian forests near Parsons known as Fernow Experimental Forest is a beautiful flower garden and peaceful paradise with an unusual combination of at least 100 herbs, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs found on a wide variety of soils and elevations. Deciduous forest birds as well as others found in eastern forest types may be found. Canada warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, and Acadian flycatcher are often encountered. A good all-weather gravel road provides public access. Restroom facilities are available in Parsons.

**FRIDAY TOUR #8**

***JENNINGSTON - GLADWIN***

**RATING: 1 TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 46**

Visit a forgotten corner of West Virginia where the wildflowers bloom in secret hollows and three rivers join the Dry Fork to cut a gorge through the Allegheny Mountains. We will see globally rare plants in limestone glens and witness a profusion of wildflowers in spectacular natural beds. Enjoy the gracious hospitality of Katy McClane, daughter of woodwork artist Joan Crawford, as we enjoy lunch on her property, and marvel at the beautiful architectural artwork Joan had incorporated into

her home, gate house, and landscape! We will have plenty of time for leisurely exploration at each of six stops, since wildflowers and birding sites are all within 100 yards of the road. We may also get to have a special stop at a local B&B and experience a birds of prey presentation. Restrooms are available at the Crawford property.

#### **FRIDAY TOUR #9**

##### ***BLACK FORK: FERNS, EPHEMERALS, AND AVIFAUNA***

**RATING: 1    TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 50**

This tour will emphasize the ferns and birds of the Black Fork and Lower Dry Fork area but will also include other plants, trees, and shrubs. The road follows the river and is rich and diverse with a lush fern population which makes comparison of different species easy. This is one of our favorite places to observe ferns and commonly provides over 20 species depending on the progress of spring. Identification of birds and their songs will be given. Lower Dry Fork is located on the river road below Fernow Forest. We will leave the lodge and travel north on WV Route 32 to Thomas where we will turn left onto US Route 219 south to Parsons. There we will pick up CR 219/7 in Parsons between the bridges and travel to the Fernow intersection. The tour will be along the Black Fork and Lower Dry Fork. Mother Nature will provide restroom facilities. Lunch will be enjoyed along the river.

#### **FRIDAY TOUR #10**

##### ***MOSES EXTRAVAGANZA AND AURORA PROJECT AT CATHEDRAL STATE PARK***

**RATING: 2    TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 50**

Travel north on US Route 219 to Silver Lake then WV Route 24 to US Route 50 and west to Cathedral State Park which has been entered in the National Registry of Natural History Landmarks by the US Department of Interior/National Park Service. The park contains a majestic stand of virgin hemlock and hardwoods, which includes the largest hemlock known in Eastern North America. A walk through the centuries-old trees inspires a cathedral-like reverence. Participants on this tour will use hand lens to explore ferns, wildflowers, and non-vascular plants while the ecology of Cathedral State Park is discussed. There will also be a visit and tour of the Brookside Farm which is adjacent to Cathedral State Park. The area was once part of a large 19<sup>th</sup> Century summer resort community and now consists of restored historic buildings, including a general store that now houses the Aurora Area Historical Society and the Brookside Inn. Good birding opportunities exist on this tour. The ecology of Cathedral State Park will also be discussed. Lunch will be at the park and restroom facilities are available.

#### **FRIDAY TOUR #11**

##### ***RED CREEK TRAIL FOR WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS***

**RATING: 2    DRIVING MILES: 56**

This trip has one stop, the Laneville Trail Head to the Red Creek Trail in the Dolly Sods Wilderness. At Davis take WV Route 32 east through Canaan Valley. After several large road cuts, turn left at the small, brown Dolly Sods Wilderness sign onto Laneville Road which takes us to the trail head. The entire day will be along this trail with plenty of wildflowers and birds to see and identify. Folklore and natural history of wildflowers will be emphasized as well as edibility, medicinal use, and poisonous qualities of selected plants. There are many species of birds to see and hear. The trail is mostly level and walking distance is 3 miles round trip for those who want to walk. Others can find ample wildflowers and birds closer to where the cars are parked. Lunch will be on a large flat rock along Red Creek, at the beginning of Little Stonecoal Trail. Weather permitting; this is wonderful place to cool off in the stream. Restroom facilities will be available before and after hike. Waterproof boots are recommended.

### FRIDAY TOUR # 12

#### *WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP: A Focus on Plant Form and Description*

**RATING: 1-2    TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 15    WALKING MILES: 1-2**

The focus of this wildflower tour will be on 'how to experience a plant'. We will discuss the iterative identification process, where we first look at the whole plant including its habitat, then analyze its parts, then synthesize to make a conclusion about the identification. This process is remarkably effective at asking the observer to use all their senses and all the best available information to identify a plant. We will also gain experience using botanical tools, including hand lenses, rulers, observation applications such as iNaturalist, and 'floras' or guides to the plant life of a region. We will start the class in the conference room of the lodge, and after some class time, take a brief outing directly from the lodge. After a lunch break, we will then proceed in cars to several nearby field sites that offer a wide variety of plants to practice our identification. A desired outcome of this course will be to empower you to use botanical tools and observation skills to build your ability to identify plants. Restrooms will be available in the morning at the lodge.

### FRIDAY TOUR # 13

#### *GLADE RUN – MIDDLE VALLEY HIKE*

**RATING: 2    TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 40    WALKING MILES: 5.5**

Tour caravans from Blackwater Falls State Park approximately 10 miles east on WV Route 93 to A-Frame Road and then turns south on A-Frame for 10 more miles to the end of the road and parking lot. From here participants will hike a total of 5.5 on South Glade Run Crossing and Middle Valley trails. The open views of Canaan Valley are spectacular and we will hopefully see bald eagles. Interesting natural history facts, such as ecological impacts or human uses, about the plants observed will be discussed. Participants should wear hiking boots and bring wading shoes such as Texas, Crocs, or flip flops (there is one wet, knee deep 20 feet wide stream crossing). Two large trash bags could also serve as "waders" if you don't want to remove your boots on the wet crossing. A walking stick is advised, and you will carry your lunch. No restroom facilities are available. Canaan Valley conservation efforts and history will be discussed.

# **SATURDAY TOURS**

## **SATURDAY TOUR #1**

### ***OLD HEMLOCK TOUR***

**RATING: 1            TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 98**

Old Hemlock was the home of George Bird and Kathryn Harris Evans. Mr. Evans was a noted artist, author, outdoorsman and developer of the famous line of Old Hemlock line of English Setters. Mrs. Evans co-authored, edited, and published books and articles. The Old Hemlock property contains virgin hemlock trees and is maintained in its natural state with multi-age woodlands as a nature and wildlife preserve. The site is also a registered bird banding laboratory. The Evans house was built in about 1815 on property originally deeded in 1782. The property was added to the National Register of Historic Places on December 16, 2015. The excursion will include a tour of the historic house, an overview of George's and Kay's Life, a short presentation on the scientific management of 232 acres, introduction to the Old Hemlock setters, and will end with an optional visit to the virgin hemlock forest. More information can be found at [oldhemlock.org](http://oldhemlock.org). Restrooms facilities are available. Limited to 20 pilgrims.

## **SATURDAY TOUR #2**

### ***FLATROCK RUN TRAIL***

**RATING: 2            TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 36            TOTAL HIKING MILES: 4**

This tour is 20 miles south of Blackwater Falls State Park on WV Route 32 to Bonner Mountain Road. Parking will be in a public parking lot at the Bonner Mountain Road bridge over Red Creek. From here, hikers will venture up Flatrock Run Trail, an old railroad grade that follows a roaring mountain stream. This forested trail traverses rich woods where many wildflowers are expected. Interesting natural history facts, such as ecological impacts or human uses, about the plants observed will be discussed. The trail is a gentle grade and requires a return on the same path (out and back). Hikers will go no further than 2 miles before turning around and returning to the cars (4 miles total). This should be a casual and comfortable hike. Hikers should wear hiking boots and a walking staff is recommended. No restrooms available on this tour.

## **SATURDAY TOUR #3**

### ***NATURAL HISTORY OF WEST VIRGINIA WILDFLOWERS***

**RATING: 1            TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 28**

This trip will go to Olson Fire Tower and then to Fernow Experimental Forest. There will be plenty of wildflowers and birds to identify. The major emphasis on this trip will be the folklore and natural history of the plants we find. The edibility, medicinal use, and poisonous qualities of many plants will be discussed. Restroom facilities will be available at our lunch stop at Mill Race Park in Parsons.

## **SATURDAY TOUR #4**

### ***THE LIMESTONE HIGHWAY: Bickle Knob Botanical Foray***

**RATING: 2            TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 80            TOTAL WALKING MILES: 2**

Observe a wide range of beautiful wildflowers on this circumnavigation of Bickle Knob on the Monongahela National Forest east of Elkins and observe the influence of geology on natural communities. We will drive from Blackwater Falls State Park and turn at Low Gap just west of Alpena on US Route 33. From there, our first stop will be a rich cove above a small stream, Taylor Run, which offers a wide variety of ephemeral wildflowers and woody plants. Our next stop will be at Bear Haven campground (restroom facilities available) where we can observe beautiful sandstone boulder formations, rhododendron thickets, wildflowers including Clinton's lily and painted trillium, and eat our lunch. If time and weather conditions permit, we will stop at the Bickle Knob observation tower, where we get 360-degree views and can observe forest birds at eye-level. We will continue west on Stuart Memorial drive and

turn onto Old Route 33. We will make our way to Bickle Run and hike up onto Bickle Slope, a limestone underlain area with a true abundance of wildflowers in an old-growth forest.

#### **SATURDAY TOUR #5**

##### ***FERNOW FOREST: EMPHASIZING BIRDS AND WILDFLOWERS***

**RATING: 1                      DRIVING MILES: 50**

The 3,640 acres of typical Appalachian forests near Parsons known as Fernow Experimental Forest is a beautiful flower garden and peaceful paradise with an unusual combination of at least 100 herbs, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs found on a wide variety of soils and elevations. Deciduous forest birds as well as others found in eastern forest types may be found. Canada warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, and Acadian flycatcher are often encountered. A good all-weather gravel road provides public access. Restroom facilities are available in Parsons.

#### **SATURDAY TOUR #6**

##### ***YELLOW BIRCH AND BLACKWATER RIVER TRAILS***

**RATING: 2            DRIVING MILES: 34            WALKING MILES: 1.75**

A 35-minute drive south on WV Route 32 will take us to Canaan Valley State Resort Park where we will take the Blackwater River Loop Trail: a 0.75 mile walk with great views of Canaan Valley, luxuriant lichens and bryophytes cloak trees, boulders, and limestone rocks (resembling tombstones) that support a distinctive flora. In the diverse forest and wetland habitats we will observe varied wildflowers, birds, and trees. Lunch will be a picnic by the Nature Center. After lunch, we will return to Blackwater Falls State Park via WV Route 32 and County Road 29/1 and park at the Gentle Trail or across the road in the Service Area. Our afternoon walk will be on the first half-mile of the Yellow Trail (Allegheny Trail) in a shady hemlock-hardwood forest with mossy sandstone boulders. The trail emerges from deep shade onto a boardwalk running along the edge of a large, delightful Sphagnum (peat moss) wetland or fen, with abundant cranberries and cottongrasses. Our return will be either by backtracking or walking along the road (downslope and to the right) to the parking area, just a few minutes' drive from Blackwater Falls Lodge. Restroom facilities are available at the Nature Center.

#### **SATURDAY TOUR #7**

##### ***BLACKWATER FALLS/CANAAN VALLEY GEOLOGY WORKSHOP AND FIELD TRIP***

**RATING: 2            DRIVING MILES: 30            HIKING MILES: 1**

This hands-on workshop provides an overview of West Virginia's geology and the specifics of the Blackwater Falls/Canaan Valley area. During the workshop, we will look at details in the rock layers to determine how West Virginia became the Mountain State. Next, we will identify the state's most common minerals and rocks, and how they weather. The evidence revealed in the rocks will tell us if their original sediments were laid down in a swamp, a stream, an ocean, a tidal flat, etc. During the afternoon field trip of easy walking around Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley Resort State Park, and the Canaan Valley area, we will look for clues in the rocks and fossils to key into the area's 300+ million-year-old history. Restroom facilities are available.

#### **SATURDAY TOUR #8**

##### ***JENNINGSTON - GLADWIN***

**RATING: 1            TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 46**

Visit a forgotten corner of West Virginia where the wildflowers bloom in secret hollows and three rivers join the Dry Fork to cut a gorge through the Allegheny Mountains. We will see globally rare plants in limestone glens and witness a profusion of wildflowers in spectacular natural beds. Enjoy the gracious hospitality of Katy McClane, daughter of woodwork artist Joan Crawford, as we enjoy lunch on her

property, and marvel at the beautiful architectural artwork Joan had incorporated into her home, gate house, and landscape! We will have plenty of time for leisurely exploration at each of six stops since wildflowers and birding sites are all within 100 yards of the road. Restrooms will be available on the Crawford property.

### **SATURDAY TOUR #9**

#### ***DOLLY SODS DRIVING TOUR***

**RATING: 2      DRIVING MILES: 60**

Drive through Canaan Valley to Lanesville with a stop to view bobolinks. Proceed to Dolly Sods – an area of unique northern relic communities such as heath barrens and bogs. After several short stops we will then hike to the Alder Run bog and lunch at the Red Creek Campground. See wildflowers at lower elevations in Canaan Valley as well as several locations at ca. 4000' on Dolly Sods and a stop to view shooting star in Jordan Run Valley. Restroom facilities are available.

### **SATURDAY TOUR #10**

#### ***LOWER GLADYFORK TRAIL***

**RATING: 2      DRIVING MILES: 46      HIKING MILES: 2**

Leave the park and drive to WV Route 32 in Davis and follow to Back Hollow Road, then Back Hollow Road to WV Route 72 to Jenningsston Road to Jenningsston. Cross the Dry Fork River and turn right onto Gladwin Road and drive to Gladwin. There might be one or two stops along the way depending on the flora availability at the hike destination. The hike will begin at Lower Gladly Creek from Gladwin and proceed upstream for approximately two miles, see numerous flowers including showy orchids and yellow lady slippers as well as ferns. Pilgrims are likely to see Yellow-throated warbler, Black-throated blue warbler, and Hooded scarlet tanager as well as other bird species. Hiking boots and wading shoes are recommended as one feeder creek will be crossed/waded during the hike. There are no restroom facilities available.

### **SATURDAY TOUR #11**

#### ***RED SPRUCE BOGS AND VERNAL POOLS***

**RATING: 2      TOTAL DRIVING MILES: 35**

Depart Blackwater Falls State Park and travel Route 32 South toward Canaan Valley to turn onto Canaan Loop Road (unpaved Forest Road 13). Travel approximately 10 miles through Northern Evergreen Forest with wetlands, mosses, ferns, highland birds, and vernal pools. Descend from an elevation of 3,800 feet into a Northern Hardwood Forest with changing plant and animal communities, including species of orchids and native wildflowers. Lunch beside Red Run, a beautiful native trout stream. The last 4 miles of Canaan Loop Road into Blackwater Falls State Park is not passable by car so this drive will be out and back. There are no restroom facilities available.

### **SATURDAY TOUR #12**

#### ***PLANTS & BIRDS: FLOOR TO CEILING***

**RATING: 2      DRIVING MILES: 34      HIKING MILES: 0.4**

This trip will take participants from the floor of Canaan Valley to the lofty ceiling overlooking it all. We will begin along Freeland Road with stops at spring-fed, balsam wetlands. Continuing uphill just a little, we will spend time in the rich, edge habitat of grassland and forested slope, with a side visit to a more wooded wetland area. Not far up Forest Road 80 is Idleman's Run Trail, a 0.4-mile loop that traverses the deciduous woods along Idleman's Run (time permitting we will explore this area). After a few more northern hardwood, forest-interior stops on the way up, we will top out on Dolly Sods at the edge of the red spruce habitat that once covered the entire Valley. The emphasis of this trip is to visit a wide variety of habitats harboring a nice assortment of wildflowers and birds while traveling a relatively short distance with a 1000-foot elevation change. Likely bird species include bobolink, several sparrow possibilities, northern harrier, and American Kestrel in the lowlands; forest interior breeders such as



rose-breasted Grosbeak, ovenbird, and Hooded Warbler along the way up; and mountaintop species such as blackburnian warbler and golden-crowned kinglet at the top. Along the way, we will listen closely for Valley specialties such as Canada Warbler and winter wren. There are no restroom facilities available.

**SATURDAY TOUR # 13**

***OTTER CREEK WILDERNESS HIKE***

**RATING: 2-3      DRIVING MILES: 45      WALKING MILES: 1-3**

At Davis take WV Route 32 west 2 miles to Thomas. Turn left on US Route 219 south and drive 13 miles to junction with WV Route 72 (near Parsons). Turn left and take WV Route 72 eastward to Hendricks. Continue eastward approximately 2 miles to a parking lot for the Otter Creek Wilderness area. Follow the hiking trail 1/3 mile down to a suspension bridge across Dry Fork River and then continue along Otter Creek. Only the first part (1/4 mile) of the trail after the bridge will be difficult walking. This section contains many plant species endemic to moist limestone habitat. We should see many types of violets and ferns (such as walking fern), as well as orchids, (at least two species), and columbine. The trail continues for up to one mile past this unique area. A variety of floodplain birds and typical spring ephemerals will be observed. Lunch is along the creek. Other stops may be made. Restroom facilities available in Parsons.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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Please note that tours and tour descriptions are subject to change. Changes or modifications to the described tours may be necessary due to variations in weather conditions, road conditions and other circumstances beyond our control. Our goal is always to maintain the high-quality experience participants are accustomed to and any changes will reflect that goal.