

# Canaan Valley Birding Festival – Walk Schedule 2017

## Thursday, June 1st (Pre-festival walks)

### **2pm – 4:30pm: Early Festival Nature and Bird Walk**

We will walk trails in the state park and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in wetlands, grasslands and forests. We will likely see or hear a variety of birds including several kinds of sparrows, kingbirds, bobolinks, yellow warblers, flycatchers, cedar waxwings and many others. We will see 3 species of conifer; red spruce, hemlock and Balsam Fir; several species of hardwoods, a beaver dam, pond inhabitants and many species of wildflowers. Leader: Jackie Burns (Difficulty: 2)

### **4:30pm – 6:15pm: Dinner on own**

### **6:15pm – 6:30pm: Introduction to the Area**

**6:30pm – 7:15pm: KEYNOTE SPEAKER, Richard Bailey** öState of the Birds in WVö.

### **7:30pm – 8:30pm: Evening Sounds**

Enjoy an evening walk and discover sounds that you hear at night and have always wanted to know what was making them. Many animals (birds, insects, and amphibians) are more likely to be out at night as they forage for food, so the more quiet we are the more we will see and hear. Please wear comfortable shoes or boots. Leaders: Ken Dzaack (Difficulty: 1 ó 2)

## Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> (All day walks)

### **5:30am – 4:30pm: Seneca Rocks and the South Branch of the Potomac**

Participants will carpool. An early morning departure will put us at the base of Seneca Rocks, the only ötrue peakö on the East Coast, just as the songbirds begin to tune-up. We will walk together up a well maintained but steep 1.3 mile trail to reach the observation platform and a morning chorus of Pine Warblers. Along the trail we frequently encounter Worm-eating Warblers, both Cuckoo species and a host of other songbirds. After surveying one of the best views in the state and perhaps even a soaring raptor or Raven, we will explore the grounds near the visitorö center which are usually quite productive for passerines including the much sought after Cerulean Warbler. We will then work our way north along the course of the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River. We might venture into the canyon of the Smoke Hole River which usually turns up a few breeding Common Mergansers amongst an assortment of warblers, flycatchers and vireos. We will end the trip in the grass and farm lands north of Petersburg where such state rarities as Dickcissel and Loggerhead Shrike are known to breed. Given the variety of habitats we will encounter, this trip should provide participants with a lengthy trip list and opportunities to see some quite localized breeding birds. We will enjoy a picnic of boxed lunches together in the SpruceKnob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area. Leaders: LeJay Graffious, Derek Courtney, Caden Haines (Difficulty: Fast-paced hike to the top Seneca Rocks 3-4; remainder of trip will be light walking along mostly flat, stable ground 1-2)

**6:00am – 3:30pm: Stuart Memorial**

Participants will carpool. Driving time to Stuart Memorial is approximately 45 minutes each way. This is a West Virginia high elevation specialties trip. Traditionally one of the most popular trips of the festival, it's a wonderful 10-mile drive through mixed hardwood and Red Spruce forests with elevations ranging between 2,500 - 4,000 feet. Typically, 15-18 species of warbler are seen/heard which includes the possibility of Golden-winged Warbler and Mourning Warbler. Species which we should also see/hear at the highest elevations include Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Other species include Least Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finch. We will lunch near/on the observation deck at Bickle Knob which offers a stunning 360 degree panorama of the West Virginia mountains. Leaders: Bill Beatty and Jan Runyan (Difficulty: 2-3)

**(Half Day Walks)**

**6:15am – 11:30am: Stop, Look and Listen**

Participants will carpool. We will visit two or three different habitats spending approximately 1 - 2 hours at each. This is an excellent walk for beginners AND anyone who likes to observe bird behaviors. Birds are usually up-close-and-personal. We will primarily be still and observe with our senses what comes to us. One of the sites will be a private property in Harman where we should hear and hopefully see the Golden-winged Warbler. Last year it turned out to be a Brewster's Warbler. We have spent time observing nesting Baltimore Orioles, nosy Redstarts and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and many others. The other sites will be a riverside habitat along the Dry Fork and a wetland habitat on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This should be an easy event with no long distance or difficult walking. Bring your eyes, ears and binoculars, and if you would like a **camera** (and maybe a tripod). We will also try to identify any butterflies that we see. You may also want a portable seat or blanket to sit on the ground. Leaders: Herb Myers, Jackie Burns. (Difficulty rating 1 ó 2)

**11:30am – 12:30pm: Lunch** (Box lunch provided for full day walks)

**1pm – 4:00pm: Bird, Butterflies and Wildflowers**

A nearby location/s will be chosen to highlight the greatest diversity of butterflies, birds and wildflowers. Over 20 butterfly species could be seen, including Pink-edged Sulphur, Harris' Checkerspot and Common Ringlet. We will try netting and releasing a few butterflies for close viewing and identification. Birds and wildflowers seen or heard along the way will be shared. This session may be broken into groups and locations based on participants' interests. Leaders: Fran and Bill Pope, Jackie Burns (Difficulty: 1-2)

**4pm – 6:15pm: Dinner on own**

**6:15pm: Friday Reception**

**6:30pm – 7:15pm: KEYNOTE SPEAKER, Katie Fallon, "Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird"**

**7:30pm – 8:30pm: Evening Sounds**

Enjoy an evening walk and discover sounds that you hear at night and have always wanted to know what was making them. Many animals (birds, insects, and amphibians) are more likely to be out at night as they forage for food, so the more quiet we are the more we will see and hear.

Please wear comfortable shoes or boots.

Leaders: Ken Dzaack (Difficulty: 1 ó 2)

**Saturday, June 3**

**(All Day Walks)**

**5:30am – 4:00pm: Sparrows of West Virginia**

This will be the quintessential wetlands and grasslands birding trip. There are 11 species of new world sparrows regularly breeding in WV; more than any other family of birds except the wood warblers. The Canaan Valley area is the best place in state to see them all. We will begin by carpooling to the most remote and least visited part of the National Wildlife Refuge. Habitat here includes little-visited wetlands, early-successional meadows and hardwood forest. The expanded tour offering this year gives us a great chance to find difficult to see breeders like American Bittern and Mourning Warbler. We will have good opportunity to study the differences between Alder and Willow Flycatcher. Northern Harriers frequently are seen here in one of their few breeding areas, and of course we have the sparrows. If we are lucky we will see and hear such rarities as Clay-colored, Vesper and Henslow's sparrows all in this one section.

Other sparrows and warblers will also be well represented.

After the morning session in the remote wilds of the NWR, we will enjoy a boxed lunch together and briefly explore the trails near Blackwater Falls State Park where we will hopefully add Dark-eyed Junco to our sparrow list. Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, and maybe even a Nashville Warbler could also be found.

We will finish the day near the Fairfax Stone Historical Marker, one of the premiere places in the state to find Vesper and Henslow's Sparrows, if we didn't happen upon those species on the Valley floor.

Leaders: LeeJay Graffious, Derek Courtney, Caden Haines **(A note on difficulty rating: Participants will need to be prepared to ford a small stream in order to take full advantage of the birding opportunities. Stream depth is often only a few inches deep, but depending on rainfall can be shin to knee high. Difficulty: 3-4 due to the stream crossing and a short but steep uphill hike)**

**5:45am-3:30pm: Olsen Fire Tower + Big Run Bog then Fernow Forest**

Participants will carpool. Driving miles: 80 miles Round Trip. Our first stop will be at the Olsen Fire Tower area where we usually find numerous Canada Warblers singing on territory. The Olsen/Big Run area is home to many nesting warbler, thrush and vireo species as well as many other kinds of birds. The area where Big Run Bog empties into Big Run is often home to nesting Northern Waterthrushes. Just before arriving at Fernow Experimental Forest is an area which often has Blue-winged, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers as well as American Redstarts and more. Most of our day will be spent in the Fernow Forest where we will hear and see lowland forest birds as well as higher elevation birds. The managed forest plots create a wide variety of forest habitats. Along Elklick Run in Fernow there are Louisiana Waterthrushes. Other warbler species we could encounter there are: Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Canada, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Worm-eating, Hooded, Mourning, Common Yellowthroat and Ovenbird. Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks as well as many other species are common. Public restrooms will be available at a stop between Big Run and Fernow.

Leaders: Bill Beatty and Jan Runyan Difficulty rating: 1-2: Most of the time we will be along dirt/gravel roadways near the cars. People who want to chase a particular bird might get into more difficult terrain.

**(Half Day Walks)**

**7:15am – 11:30am: Bobolinks and Warblers**

Participants will bird short distances from the car on level ground. We will leave from Canaan Valley Lodge driving south on Rt. 32 stopping along the way to see & hear Bobolinks and their bubbling, in-flight warble. Warblers expected are Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Ovenbird, among many others. All three vireos, Red-eyed, Warbling, & Blue-headed are possible. We will search the tree tops for Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Indigo Bunting. Bald Eagles are often seen flying up & down the river. Expect 40 species of birds on this trip.

Leaders: Laura Ceperley and Martha Hopper (Difficulty rating: 1)

**7:30am -11:30am: Blackwater for Beginners**

Blackwater Birds for Beginners Driving Time 6 15 minutes. Participants will carpool to Blackwater Falls State Park to the Harold Walters Nature Center. Walk will be along Pendleton Lake and an old railroad grade. Bird opportunities will include Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, Hermit Thrush, Field Sparrow, Chestnut-sided Warbler, etc.

Leader: Paulita Cousin (Difficulty: 1)

**11:30am – 12:30pm: Lunch** (Box lunch provided for full day walks)

**1pm – 4:30pm: Birds, Butterflies and Wildflowers**

A nearby location/s will be chosen to highlight the greatest diversity of butterflies, birds and wildflowers. Over 20 butterfly species could be seen, including Pink-edged Sulphur, Harris' Checkerspot and Common Ringlet. We will try netting and releasing a few butterflies for close viewing and identification. Birds and wildflowers seen or heard along the way will be shared. This session may be broken into groups and locations based on participants' interests. Leaders: Fran and Bill Pope, Jackie Burns (Difficulty: 1-2)

**1pm – 4:30pm: Close-Up and Close-By**

Participants will car pool to the Freeland boardwalk about 15 minutes from the lodge. This walk will be a slow-paced, **camera friendly**, birding meander. Both leaders take beautiful bird photographs. The area has a good mix of grasslands, wetlands and conifer woods, so a variety of birds could be seen. Likely birds include Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Kingbird, Swamp, Field and Vesper, and if we are lucky Henslow's Sparrows, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Cedar Waxwings and Alder Flycatchers. If the birds are not out and about, we may drive about 15 minutes to the Beall Trails to add to our numbers. The Beall trails pass through forest, field, shrub, swamp and bog habitats, with spur trails leading to the Blackwater River. The forested areas should produce a variety of warblers, thrushes and vireos. Kingfishers and flycatchers are often seen along the trails near the river. The grassland areas have produced over half a dozen sparrow species along the route. With such variety of habitat, the possibilities are certainly broad ranging. Leaders: Laura Ceperley and Martha Hopper (Difficulty: Freeland 1, Beall 1-2)

**4pm – 6:15pm: Dinner on own**

**6:30pm – 7:15pm: KEYNOTE SPEAKER**, Bill Beatty, "I See Your Hooded and Raise You a Wilson's"

**7:30pm – 8:30pm: Evening Sounds**

Enjoy an evening walk and discover sounds that you hear at night and have always wanted to know what was making them. Many animals (birds, insects, and amphibians) are more likely to be out at night as they forage for food, so the more quiet we are the more we will see and hear. Please wear comfortable shoes or boots. Leaders: Ken Dzaack (Difficulty: 1 ó 2)

**Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup>**

**5:30am – 11:30am: Floor to Ceiling: Forest Road 80**

Participants will carpool. This trip will take participants from the floor of Canaan Valley to the lofty ceiling overlooking it all, providing almost 1000 feet of elevation change in the process. We will begin along Freeland Road with stops in agricultural grasslands and 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. After a few more

northern hardwood, forest-interior stops on the way up, we will top out in the edge of the red (Sunday continuedí )

spruce habitat that once covered the entire Valley. Likely 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, Winter Wren, and hopefully even a Swainson's Thrush. Leaders: LeJay Graffious, Derek Courtney, Caden Haines (Difficulty: 1-2)

**6:30am – 11:30am: Beall Tract – Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

Participants will carpool to the Beall Tract, approximately 20 minutes from the lodge. The Beall trails pass through forest, field, shrub, swamp and bog habitats, with spur trails leading to the Blackwater River. The forested areas should produce a variety of warblers, thrushes and vireos. Kingfishers and flycatchers are often seen along the trails near the river. The grassland areas have produced over half a dozen sparrow species along the route. With such variety of habitat, the possibilities are certainly broad ranging. Leaders: Bill Beatty and Jan Runyan (Difficulty: 2)

**6:45am – 11:30am: Birding the Dry Fork**

Participants will carpool and walk short distances from the car. We will park & walk along the Dry Fork River searching for Baltimore & Orchard Orioles. We should see and hear Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting singing from their perches at the tops of trees. Warblers we will be searching for include American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler and many more. Vireos will be warbling in the sycamores. Yellow-billed Cuckoos should be seen and heard. Common Merganser and Wood Ducks may be seen swimming along the stream. There will also be wildflowers galore when the birds are hiding from us. This is a very good field trip both for birds & wildflowers; it will be a beautiful time to be out & about. Leaders: Laura Ceperley and Martha Hopper (Difficulty: 1)

**11:30am: Buffet Lunch** ó Pine Room (Main Lodge)

**12:30pm: Event Overview / Tally Bird List**