

Trip Report
Orchard at Altapass and Heffner Gap
September 18, 2020

The day after the remnants of Hurricane Sally passed through the Southern Appalachians we were welcomed with a beautiful and birdy day up on the Blue Ridge Parkway in McDowell County, NC. We started the morning off at Heffner Gap, a known fall migrant trap. It was birdy from the moment we got out of the car. Tennessee Warblers were by far the most common warbler passing through the gap. Good numbers of Black-throated Green Warblers as well. An early highlight was a Wilson's Warbler that we all got brief but excellent looks at before it disappeared, continuing its journey south. A female Golden-winged Warbler darted through the midstory giving us all again, brief but good looks. As the morning continued on more waves of warblers continued to pass through. It wasn't until nearly 10:30 that things finally started to quiet down a bit. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Eastern Wood-Pee-wee were two species that were high in numbers throughout the morning. Before leaving Heffner Gap we turned our eyes to the heavens and had a quick flurry of raptor activity. A few Broad-winged Hawks as well as a Red-shouldered Hawk passed over. We then headed to the Orchard.

We arrived at the Orchard in the late morning and bird activity had really begun to slow. We still saw a nice mix of species once we walked into the woods including a Black-throated Blue Warbler, our 18th warbler species for the morning. Redstarts, Black-and-White, Magnolia, Worm-eating, and Chestnut-sided Warblers were other warbler species we happened upon in the mature deciduous forest bordering the historic apple orchard. We then returned to the main grounds of the orchard and broke for lunch. A random Rock Pigeon that appeared to be injured foraged nearby us as we enjoyed a nice lunch in the warm Autumn sun. Another great day in the Blue Ridge Mountains

Clifton Avery

Species List – 51 Species

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated
Hummingbird
Turkey Vulture
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Carolina Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
House Wren (Northern)
Carolina Wren
Gray Catbird
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Cedar Waxwing
American Goldfinch
Eastern Towhee
Worm-eating Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler

American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green
Warbler
Black-throated Blue
Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting