

Blue Ridge and Mt. Mitchell Trip Report

June 26, 2020

It was a beautiful day from the very start on this edition of the Blue Ridge and Mt. Mitchell daytrip. The weather was perfect all day long. We started the morning meeting at the Folk Art Center and travelled quickly to our first stop, the Tanbark tunnel and Bull Gap. The first bird heard out of the car was a CERULEAN WARBLER. These canopy foraging birds only gave us fleeting glimpses, but we were able to hear two separate birds. Our first of many awesome looks at INDIGO BUNTING came early. We also had great looks at RED-EYED VIREO, EASTERN WOOD PEWEE, and a vocal pair of HAIRY WOODPECKERS. A BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER chased off many birds in his territory right in front of us including a RED-EYED VIREO. It was a great start to the day.

We moved up in elevation a little to Bee Tree Gap just South of Craggy Gardens. There we were excited to hear our first VEERY of the day. A remarkably interesting encounter with a CHIMNEY SWIFT on the trail has us all scratching our heads. It flew through the forest banking around the trees right in front of us. A WINTER WREN gave us great looks singing its complex song. BLUE-HEADED VIREOS, DARK-EYED JUNCOS, and AMERICAN ROBINS were added to the list as well. The next stop was Walker Rock Knob. This is a great stop in the fall for migrating birds. We heard a BROWN CREEPER out of the car. Two ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS flew into view along with RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS, and CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER. The best sighting of the stop was a singing and perching BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER. It sat on a spruce tree for several minutes giving the whole group fantastic looks.

We had lunch at Ridge Junction at the foot of Mt. Mitchell. This scenic overlook peers over the Linville Gorge with good looks of Hawksbill Mountain. CEDAR WAXWINGS and HERMIT THRUSH accompanied us during our lunch. After lunch we headed up the Mt. Mitchell summit. We walked the short, but steep, trail up to the summit. A TURKEY VULTURE and COMMON RAVEN circled above us. The last new bird of the trip was a female YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER. This species is a very sporadic nester in the Southern Appalachians, so it is always great to see one this time of year.

We had a blast on this daytrip. The final species tally was 47 for the day. Please join us on one of our other daytrips to the special places in our area.

Kevin Burke

Birds seen or heard

Chimney Swift
Turkey Vulture
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
Common Raven
American Crow
Carolina Chickadee
Scarlet Tanager
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting

Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Winter Wren
Carolina Wren
Gray Catbird
Veery
Wood Thrush
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
American Goldfinch
Brown-headed Cowbird
Chipping Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco
Eastern Towhee
Cedar Waxwing
Ovenbird
Pine Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Hooded Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Green
Warbler