

Exploring the Spruce/Fir Forests of the Black Mountains
July 5, 2020

What a lovely day birding the Blue Ridge of North Carolina. It might be midsummer, but the birds were still quite active high up in the spruce/fir forest. We began our day birding at the highest elevations of the eastern United States. We quickly observed some of our target species, including a Winter Wren that was perched high on a conifer singing incessantly! We summited Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in the eastern US, and saw some more target species including Red-breasted Nuthatch and Slate-colored Junco. Winter Wrens and Indigo Buntings continued singing loudly throughout the area. Golden-crowned Kinglets softly sang high up in the dark forest while the Brown Creeper's high-pitched song echoed all around us. As we exited the forest the temperature noticeably rose about 10 degrees to a pleasant 75 degrees. We then turned our attention to some of the early successional specialists quickly spotting an Alder Flycatcher and Chestnut-sided Warbler that both allowed us excellent looks as they sang at their respective perches.

We then drove down to Balsam Gap and began hiking up the Mountains to Sea Trail hoping to find a nice spot for lunch. Lunch was momentarily forgotten as a mixed flock of warblers, nuthatches, chickadees, sparrows, and thrush engulfed us for about 15 minutes. We all had especially great looks at Canada and Blackburnian Warblers. We then broke out our lunch. Our walk back to the vehicles remained birdy as we saw 2 beautiful Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Upon returning to the cars Hermit Thrush beautiful song filled the humid forest as we all acknowledged what a lovely day we had just experienced in the mysterious Spruce/Fir Forest of Southern Appalachia.

Clifton Avery

Birds seen or heard

Ruffed Grouse	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Brown-headed Cowbird
Ruby-throated	Brown Creeper	Ovenbird
Hummingbird	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Canada Warbler
Chimney Swift	House Wren	Common Yellowthroat
Turkey Vulture	Winter Wren	Hooded Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Carolina Wren	Northern Parula
Downy Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Blackburnian Warbler
Hairy Woodpecker	Veery	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Alder Flycatcher	Wood Thrush	Black-throated Blue
Blue-headed Vireo	Hermit Thrush	Warbler
Red-eyed Vireo	American Robin	Black-throated Green
Common Raven	Song Sparrow	Warbler
American Crow	Dark-eyed Junco	Pine Warbler
Carolina Chickadee	Eastern Towhee	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
White-breasted Nuthatch	Cedar Waxwing	Indigo Bunting