

Blue Ridge – Craggy and Black Mountains Birding - Trip Report

June 20, 2020

Valley fog in Asheville did not impede us as we started driving up the Blue Ridge Parkway through the Craggy Mountains. Bird song was quite active, and we quickly heard one of our target species for the day, Cerulean Warbler. We found quite a few Ceruleans but none were giving us good looks. After a while of pursuing an individual we got brief but good views of a male Cerulean high in the canopy. Other early highlights to the day included a flyover Sharp-shinned Hawk and many obliging Scarlet Tanagers.

As we made our way higher up the Blue Ridge, we walked a short trail to look for Canada Warblers. Our persistence eventually paid off and we were delighted to get excellent views of a couple territorial males. As we drove up to the 5,000 feet elevation marker of the Craggys I heard a Chestnut-sided Warbler singing on the side of the parkway. We quickly pulled over and all got excellent looks at the noisy male that was singing on an emergent branch at an overlook. From here, we continued to rise in elevation and entered the Black Mountains, the highest mountain range in the eastern US. The habitat began to transition from northern hardwood to spruce fir forest. We turned our attention to Red Crossbills and heard one flying over Balsam Gap. We also observed Golden-crowned Kinglets, Veery, and Pine Siskin.

Upon reaching the road up to Mount Mitchell we were stopped by a State Park officer who told us they were only allowing a limited number of people up to Mount Mitchell because of Covid-19 and were at capacity. No worries at all! We adapted and went over to Ridge Junction where we broke out our picnic lunch and listened to Hermit Thrush, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Blackburnian Warblers singing around us. A lovely way to end our summer day trip high in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Clifton Avery

Birds seen or heard Species encountered: 50

Mourning Dove	Golden-crowned	Ovenbird
Chimney Swift	Kinglet	Worm-eating Warbler
Ruby-throated	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Black-and-white
Hummingbird	White-breasted	Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Nuthatch	Hooded Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Brown Creeper	Cerulean Warbler
Red-bellied	Carolina Wren	Blackburnian Warbler
Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Chestnut-sided
Downy Woodpecker	Veery	Warbler
Pileated Woodpecker	Hermit Thrush	Black-throated Blue
Northern Flicker	Wood Thrush	Warbler
Eastern Phoebe	American Robin	Pine Warbler
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Cedar Waxwing	Black-throated Green
Blue-headed Vireo	Red Crossbill	Warbler
Red-eyed Vireo	American Goldfinch	Canada Warbler
Blue Jay	Pine Siskin	Scarlet Tanager
American Crow	Dark-eyed Junco	Northern Cardinal
Common Raven	Eastern Towhee	Rose-breasted
Carolina Chickadee	Brown-headed	Grosbeak
Tufted Titmice	Cowbird	Indigo Bunting