

Northern Neck Master Naturalists - Field Trip November 7-10, 2018

“150 miles West of the Northern Neck – What’s Different, What’s the Same”

A Visit to the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Mountain Region

Bath County Virginia:

**The Nature Conservancy – Warm Springs Mountain Preserve (WSMP)
George Washington and Jefferson National Forest (GWJNF)
Douthat State Park (DSP) Optional trip**

Mountains mean scenic views and abundant outdoor adventure.
In Virginia, though, the mountains offer so much more. Discover scenic drives that connect charming towns and vibrant cities, each with its own genuine brand of local culture, historic sites and delicious food.

The Virginia Mountains Region includes the counties/cities of Highland County, Bath County, Alleghany County, Botetourt County, Craig County, Roanoke County, Bedford County, Franklin County, City of Covington, City of Salem, and Roanoke City.

VisitVaMountains.com

LEGEND

Appalachian Trail	Blueway or Water Trail
Blue Ridge Parkway	Canoe/Kayak Put-in Access Points
Bike Route 76	Visitor Centers
River/Stream	George Washington & Jefferson National Forest
Road	
Highway	

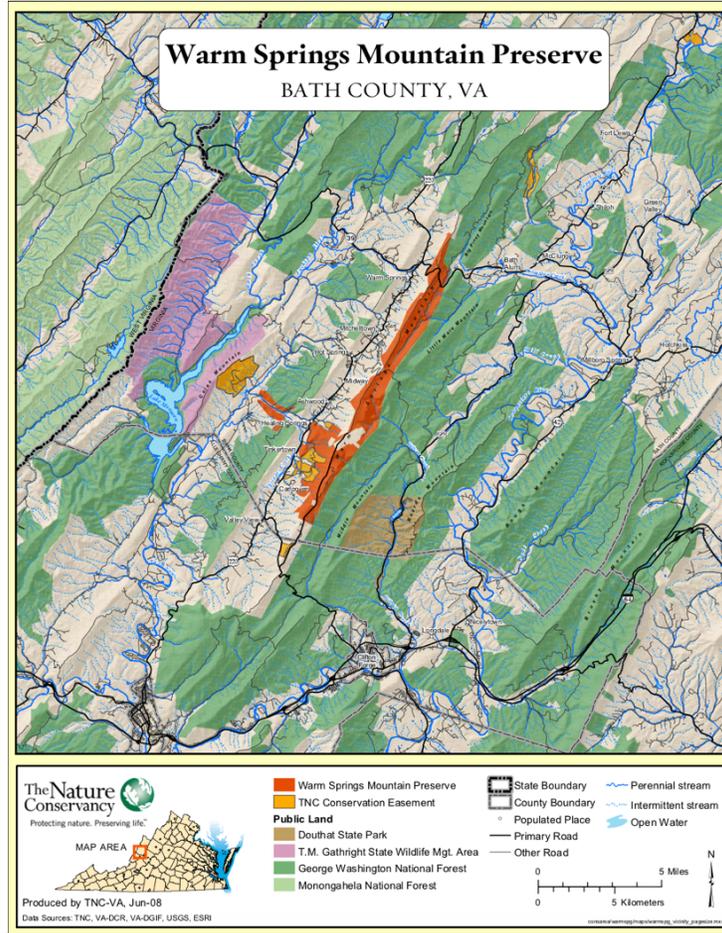
LEARNING THEMES

- Building and managing a network of resilient forest sites critical to the preservation of biodiversity within the Central Appalachians
- Collaboration of non-government organizations (NGO), federal and state agencies to restore the historic fire regime of fire-adapted and fire-dependent pine and oak forest communities
- Projected impact of climate change on species, habitats and migration routes within the Commonwealth of Virginia

OVERVIEW

- The trip is focused on the flora, fauna, geology, vernal pools, and geography of the mountains of Virginia. Bird watching and tree and habitat identification opportunities.
- Trip is limited to 16 NNMN in good standing.
- Bath County is rural and replete with mountains, streams, and forests. <https://discoverbath.com/online-visitors-guide/>
- Each day's itinerary involves outside experiences in mountainous areas. We will certainly not be at sea level. For instance, Warm Spring Mountain is 3596 feet.
- The trip is rigorous as there are multiple interpretive hikes each day to include moderate - and in a few segments - moderate to steep terrain associated with trails in forests, parks, and preserves. Some of the trails are part of DGIF's Birding and Wildlife Trails. Terrain and "footing" can be uneven along these trails. Trails are occasionally muddy and wet due to rain, streams, and paths along wetland areas. Individuals should be able to climb ten flights of stairs and walk on rocky and uneven terrain. Anticipate 5 to 8 miles of hiking most days of the trip. As these are interpretive hikes we will be stopping at many points along the trail to observe and discuss, take pictures, and assure that we are hydrated and nourished. *Hiking boots and a rain jacket are highly recommended.*
- Temps will range from the low 50s to the low 30s.
- As hunting is prevalent in Virginia and particularly in forested areas all attendees should bring and wear some blaze orange clothing items while we are on interpretive hikes. This is similar to precaution taken by many of us on the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula for bird walks, nature walks, and kayaking during deer, turkey, and other hunting seasons. A few loaner blaze orange vests and hats will be available.
- **Warm Spring Mountain Preserve** - The forests of The Nature Conservancy's Warm Springs Mountain Preserve provide habitat for wide-ranging black bears, bobcats and migratory songbirds, along with other wildlife such as wild turkey, ruffed grouse, timber rattlesnake, wood frog and red-spotted newt. Three rare plants, eight rare invertebrates and three rare natural communities, including a globally rare montane pine barren, occur here. The 9,269 acre preserve situated within a 77,000-acre unfragmented, largely roadless forest block, the preserve helps maintain healthy, breeding populations of

interior-forest-dwelling songbirds, provides key habitat for wide-ranging mammals, and protects headwater tributaries of both the Jackson and Cowpasture rivers.

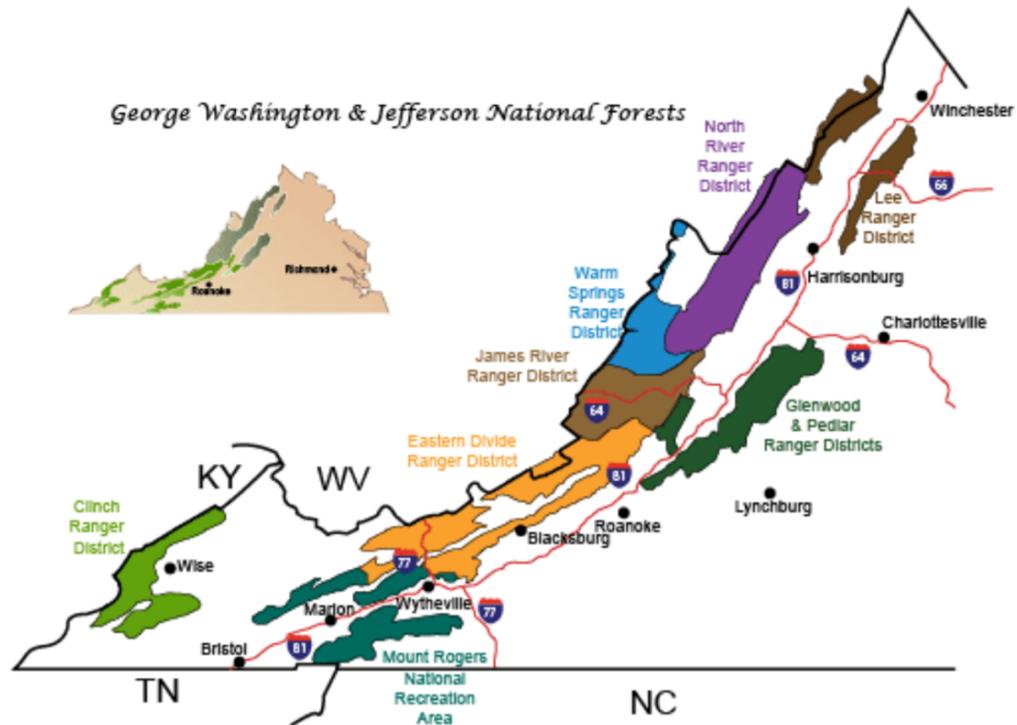


- **Douthat State Park** - Douthat is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for the role its design played in the development of parks nationwide. Amid some of Virginia's most breathtaking mountain scenery, visitors enjoy interpretive programs, four miles of stream fishing and a 50-acre lake stocked with trout.



- **George Washington National Forest and Jefferson National Forest**. The George Washington National Forest and Jefferson National Forest (GWJNF) were combined in 1995 and are now managed as one unit of the national forest system, with a whopping 1,664,110 acres in Virginia. These massive swaths of land stretch in parcels extending up the spine of the Appalachians, roughly from the Tennessee state line following the northwest Virginia boundary with Kentucky and West Virginia. They are also found along the Blue Ridge from Roanoke to Waynesboro, as well as a few small parcels in Kentucky and West Virginia. Virginia's GWJNF has a myriad of recreation opportunities – hiking, paddling, bicycling, camping, wildlife viewing, fishing, scenic driving, and more. GWJNF boasts over 2,300 miles of streams, over 40 species of trees, over 60 species of animals and over 50 endangered plant species. It is a land with around 200 recreation sites such as campgrounds and picnic areas. Over 2,200 miles of trails lace the GWJNF. There are 23

federally designated wildernesses within mountainous terrain ranging from 515 feet in elevation near the Shenandoah River all the way up to Virginia's highest point of 5,729 feet at Mount Rogers. We will be in the Warm Springs Ranger District depicted in blue on the map below.



- We will probably not have a single site for lodging. Participants are responsible for selecting, booking, and paying for their own lodging. We will provide a recommended list of lodging facilities that are in fairly close proximity to each other. You can pick from the bed and breakfasts and lodges in Warm Springs or the general area of Warm Springs and Hot Springs. Hot Springs is also the site of the Homestead Resort which has hotel style rooms available. The key thing is that we all have to gather as a group each morning at a specific time to convoy to the various locations. Request everyone find lodging where you can get breakfast and be able to meet in a central location in Warm Springs by 8:30AM each morning. Thus, Warm Springs lodging is optimal. But Hot Springs is only about a 10-minute drive from Warm Springs.
- **A list of recommended lodging will be provided to those signing up for the trip.**

- **Costs:** In addition to lodging \$100.00 is the approximate cost to cover two box lunches, a reception, and two dinners. Costs will be adjusted after food items are ordered. Alcoholic beverages at dinner may be a separate charge.

PROPOSED ITINERARY – Sequence of events and times may be adjusted based on weather and opportunities to adjust the scope of a particular event. All times are Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Wednesday 7 Nov 2018

2:00PM - Meet at the “Park and Ride” across from the Visitors Gazebo in Warm Springs Virginia and Convoy

2:30 to 5:15 PM - Orientation, Mini-hikes, and Reception at Trappers Lodge – WSMP



History

Trappers Lodge is a circa-1927 two-story log cabin built by the Ingalls Family, former owners of the Homestead Resort. Located in what is now The Nature Conservancy's Warm Springs Mountain Preserve, the lodge was initially occupied by a hunter/trapper and his family who supplied wild game to the Homestead through the late 1930's. In subsequent years, the site was host to dinner parties, social gatherings, and other events sponsored by the Homestead or community groups such as the Shriner's Club.

1920s rustic lodge in the heart of the Preserve is a unique spot. Connects to several USFS hiking trails.

5:30PM – Check into Bed & Breakfasts/ Lodging - TBD

6:00PM - Dinner in Warm Springs – TBD

7:30PM – Star Gazing and Identification Walk

Thursday 8 Nov

8:30AM - Meet in Warm Springs Virginia and Convoy

9:00 AM - Bear Loop Interpretive Hike – WSMP

This 3-mile loop trail has several overlooks with stunning panoramic views to the East and West. Interpretive signs highlight the mountain's diversity of wildlife species and habitats in addition to The Nature Conservancy's effort to restore the region's fire-adapted oak and pine forests.

Noon Box Lunch

12:30 to 4:30PM Collis-Warner Interpretive Hike – WSMP

Mountaintop pavilion offers near 360-degree views, great birdwatching and vistas. About a 60-minute walk with some short steep rocky sections to reach the pavilion.

6:00PM Dinner in Warm Springs - TBD

Friday 9 Nov

8:30AM Meet in Warm Springs Virginia and Convoy

9:30AM – 2:30 Hidden Valley Recreation Area Interpretive Hikes – GWJNF

Hidden Valley has trails through various habitats featuring old fields showcasing pollinators and early successional species as well as some of fire management work. Longer trails head through the forest and parallel the Jackson river.

Cobbler Mountain/Muddy Run/Jackson River Gorge Trail Circuit - This is a 5.1-mile moderate circuit that starts at the Cobbler Mountain Trail parking area. Some of the features of the hike include a single-track trail up a short climb to the

ridge of Cobbler Mountain, then ascend to a wooden bridge crossing Chimney Run, the trail winds along the bottom of Cobbler Mountain, passes through a small field with views of Warwickton and then along a wetland area before descending to Muddy Run Trail. The hike continues cross a small wooded footbridge over Muddy Run and then cross the Jackson River on the large suspension bridge and then follow the Jackson River Gorge Trail as it follows Jackson River downstream towards Warwickton, crosses a low water bridge over the river and continues back towards the Recreation Area entrance, and arrive back at the Cobbler Mountain Trail parking area. Picture of Suspension Bridge across the Jackson River.



Noon - Box Lunches

4:00 – Post Hike gathering - TBD

6:00PM Dinner - No Host - TBD

Saturday 10 Nov

Check out and Departure

No-Host **Options** en-route back to the Northern Neck

- Shopping in Warm Spring and Hot Springs
- Douthat State Park –
 - Blue Suck Falls Interpretive Hike - *This 3-mile moderate to difficult trail reaches Blue Suck Falls, a series of small cascades which gets their unusual name from the Appalachian term for a whirlpool or 'suck', which may be found at the base of the falls. At higher elevations beyond the falls, the trail features several east facing overlooks of the Allegheny Mountains, such as a Lookout Rock.*



- WSMP - Bald Knob Loop and Fire Tower
This is a really spectacular area-- the highest point in Bath county. Harsh conditions have stunted the Table Mountain and Pitch pine to create a neat natural bonsai like community. You can climb up several stories of the fire tower. This road is in ROUGH shape. Definitely accessible with good truck. Alternatively, you can hike in on the gated service road from the Sandy Gap Trailhead. One mile to the fire tower, then hike out the same direction.

- Visit to the Homestead Resort for Lunch or Coffee and tour of photograph displays. Other possible opportunities at the Homestead Resort.
 - Zip Line Tour
 - Falconry
 - Horse Back Ride
- Visit to Virginia Towns/Cities
 - Clifton Forge
 - Lexington
 - Staunton
 - Charlottesville

SIGNING UP FOR THE FIELD TRIP

- 1. Mail a check for \$100 dollars made out to Northern Neck Master Naturalists:**

**Northern Neck Master Naturalist
P.O. Box 673
Kilmarnock, VA 22482**

- 2. Send an e-mail to Jeff Wright at Pec11908@mac.com stating that you wish to attend the field trip and you have sent your check as in the instructions above.**

Jeff
Jeff Wright
703-801-0239