

Description: Just 11 miles east of Morgantown, this state forest offers spectacular views of the Cheat River Gorge and miles of hiking trails. It is home to a federally threatened species, the flat-spined three-toothed land snail.

Viewing Information: The flat-spined three-toothed land snail is found only in the Cheat River Gorge of West Virginia. There may be fewer than 500 of these 1-inch mollusks left. If you see fencing in the forest, please respect it; it is protecting important snail habitat.

Sixteen trails crisscross this state forest and the adjacent West Virginia University forest, offering wildlife viewers excellent access throughout the two forests. From one of the many Cheat River Gorge overlooks at midday, watch for hawks “kettling,” circling and soaring on columns of rising warm air.

The land surrounding the archery range is some of the best in the area for viewing songbirds and butterflies in summer. The Virgin Hemlock Trail, which starts at West Virginia State Route 73 leads viewers to a grove of hemlocks that is more than 300 years old. Some areas are open to hunting. Please check with the manager for seasons and affected areas.

Directions: From Morgantown, travel east on Interstate 68 for 11 miles to Exit 15. Turn right off the exit ramp and travel 0.3 mile into the park. Once in the park, follow



Ron Snow

A winter's walk in Coopers Rock State Forest will provide peace and solitude.

the road three miles to the overlook.

Ownership: West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (304) 594-1561

Size: 12,713 acres

Closest Town: Morgantown

This is an excerpt from WV Wildlife Viewing Guide by Mark Damian Duda. For a copy, call 304-637-0245.



Craig Stihler

The flat-spined three-toothed land snail is a federally threatened species.

Coopers Rock Trivia

- Coopers Rock State Forest gets its name from a legend about a fugitive who hid from the law near what is now the overlook. A cooper by trade, he resumed making barrels at his new mountain hideout, selling them to people in nearby communities. He lived and worked in the forest for many years.
- During the Depression, between 1936 and 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built numerous structures in the forest, often using durable American chestnut wood from trees that succumbed to a blight that nearly wiped out the species. Eleven of these structures, including the rustic picnic shelters near the overlook, have been included on the National Register of Historic Places.