

Field Trip Blackwater Falls State Park

Description: The centerpiece of this state park is the 62-foot-high Blackwater Falls, created as softer rock beneath the falls eroded faster than the harder caprock top, producing a ledge five stories high. The “blackwater” that flows over the falls and through the 8-mile-long, 525-foot-deep Blackwater Gorge, gets its amber color from leached tannic acids from fallen hemlock and red spruce needles. The diverse habitats here—northern coniferous forest, northern hardwood forest, and cranberry bogs—support numerous wildlife species.

Viewing Information: White-tailed deer are common and easily seen throughout the park. Other mammals here include black bears, seen between May and October in quieter sections of the park; striped skunks; gray and red foxes; woodland, meadow and southern red-backed voles; white-footed and deer mice; muskrats; beavers; woodchucks; eastern cottontails; and several species of squirrels, including the gray, fox and southern flying squirrel. Red squirrels, also known as fairy diddles, prefer coniferous forests and are usually heard before seen. Listen for their



Steve Shaluta

scolding ratchet-like chatter as you walk along a trail, and then search the lower branches of the tree. Fox squirrels are the largest of the tree squirrels and prefer mature hardwood forests. The smaller eastern gray squirrel has a bushy tail bordered with white-tipped hairs. The diminutive southern flying squirrel is nocturnal, usually appearing late in the evening, gliding from tree to tree.

Songbird viewing is excellent in the park, especially in summer when many species of warblers can be seen, such as the magnolia and the black-throated green. Solitary and red-eyed vireos are common during



Bruce Felton

The tufted titmouse is a year-round resident that can be viewed at Blackwater Falls.

the summer whereas black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice, eastern bluebirds, and golden-crowned kinglets are year-round residents.

Many small mammals and birds can be seen in the winter months as well. Blackwater Falls is an excellent place to snowshoe and cross-country ski—quiet ways to enjoy wildlife viewing.

Directions: From Davis, travel north on West Virginia State Route 32. Turn left off WV 32 onto County Route 29. Proceed south on CR 29 for 1 mile to park entrance.

Ownership: West Virginia Division of Natural Resources 304-259-5216

Size: 1,688 acres

Closest Town: Davis

Excerpt from the West Virginia Wildlife Viewing Guide by Mark Damian Duda. Call 304-637-0245 for a free copy.



Gray fox

Mark Shock