

Description: Beech Fork Lake opened for recreational activity in 1978. The area surrounding the 720-acre lake is a complex of federal and state lands. Beech Fork State Park, owned by the state, comprises 3,144 acres while the Beech Fork Lake Wildlife Management Area, leased by the state from the federal government, encompasses approximately 7,500 acres. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages a marina, visitor center, picnic area and campground near the dam. Although open water and shoreline dominate the landscape, other habitats include old farmlands, wetlands and oak-hickory-pine forests.

Directions: To visitor center: take Exit 8 off I-64 onto state Route 152 south and drive 5.3 miles. In Lavalette, at the sign for Beech Fork Lake, turn left onto county Route 13, and go east for 2.2 miles. To state park and WMA: take Exit 11 off I-64 and head south on state Route 10. Turn right onto Hughes Branch Road and follow road to park entrance or WMA access.

Ownership: West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. Beech Fork Lake WMA: (304) 675-0871. Beech Fork State Park (304) 528-5794. Lake & Dam: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (304) 525-4831.

Closest Town: Lavalette

Excerpt from West Virginia Wildlife Viewing Guide by Mark Damian Duda. For a free copy (plus shipping and handling), call 304-637-0245.



Great Blue Heron

Steve Shaluta



Steve Shaluta

Boating slowly on Beech Fork Lake affords opportunities for viewing a variety of wildlife.

Viewing Information: Several species of hawks can be seen year-round. In open areas and fields look for red-tailed and broad-winged hawks, and for red-shouldered hawks in the woodlands and along timbered wetlands. Listen for barred owls in wooded areas, calling “hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo; hoo hoo hoooo-aw.” The “aw” at the end is the signature sound.

In spring, look for wood ducks in small secluded ponds and wetlands around the lake, and in May search the lake for blue-winged teal. Also listen for the “drumming” of ruffed grouse as the male flaps his wings in search of a mate. April to early May is an excellent time to see ospreys near feeder streams and headwaters. Bald eagles have been observed the last two years near the state park office and boat ramp area. This is also an excellent time to listen for gobbling wild turkeys as they attempt to attract hens on miles of hardwood forest ridges. Green herons are sighted between April and October. Between July and September, numerous butterflies are present, including swallowtails, monarchs and skippers.



West Virginia DNR photo

Barred Owl

Large flocks of wild turkeys are commonly seen in fields during the fall and winter months. From August to April, great blue herons are present around the shoreline and along feeder streams.

Amphibians are abundant: spring peepers, American and Fowler's toads, gray tree frogs, mountain chorus frogs, wood frogs, pickerel frogs, and bullfrogs. Several species of snakes live on the area. Observant visitors might find an eastern box turtle on land, and red-ear sliders, eastern spiny softshell and snapping turtles in the water or sunning themselves on partially submerged logs.

Mammals include deer, squirrels, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, skunks, and flying squirrels. Several predators, including coyotes, red and gray foxes, and bobcats live on Beech Fork.

Beech Fork Wildlife Management Area is open to hunting and fishing. Special regulations geared toward older-aged deer management are in effect on the area. Please check with the area wildlife manager or the West Virginia hunting regulations booklet or on the DNR website to see when seasons are open.