



Steve Shaluta

Tree trunks form an arch over a side channel of the Greenbrier River.

Description: Sheltered on three sides by the Monongahela national Forest and the Calvin Price State Forest, Watoga was the first, and is the largest state park in West Virginia. This 10,100-acre park derives its name from the Cherokee word Watauga, which means “river of islands,” because of the numerous islands and sandbars in this wide, shallow stretch of the Greenbrier River. The river forms several miles of the park’s boundaries.

Directions: From Hillsboro, take U.S. Route 219 for 0.9 miles, then turn right onto county Route 27. Follow CR 27 for 2.3 miles to the park entrance. From state Route 39, turn onto county Route 21 and travel nine miles to the north entrance of the park.

Ownership: WV Division of Natural Resources. For more information on recreational facilities, call (304-799-4087) or 1-800-CALLWVA or visit www.watoga.com.

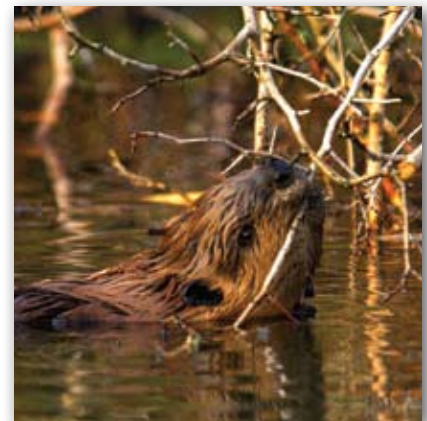
Excerpt from West Virginia Wildlife Viewing guide by Mark Damian Duda. For a free copy (plus shipping and handling), call 304-637-0245.

Wildlife Viewing Information: In summer, many excellent interpretive programs orient visitors the nature of Watoga. Beavers are sometimes seen during late evening in the spring, summer and fall. Look for beaver dams, which consist of large piles of sticks, twigs, mud and even small logs across streams, or large conical mounds of sticks and mud at the water’s edge. Beavers are easily distinguished from West Virginia’s other semiaquatic mammals – muskrat, mink and river otter – because of their large size (adults weigh between 30 and 60 pounds) and in their flat, paddle-shaped tails.

Wild turkeys are abundant here in the woods along the river to your right as you enter the park. Rare is the occasion when you visit Watoga and don’t see white-tailed deer; watch for them in the early morning or late evening in forest clearings. Raccoon, red and gray fox, squirrels and woodchuck are among the more common wild inhabitants.

In spring, listen for the drumming of the male ruffed grouse, as its wings rapidly beat the air. Chiefly a ground and understory bird, ruffed grouse grow “snowshoes” in the winter, rows of bristles on their goes that help them get around in the deep snows that blanket this area. This is one of the few areas where the mountain earth snake occurs.

A scenic 11-acre lake provides fishing for bass, catfish, bluegill and trout. A handicapped-accessible fishing pier is available.



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Beavers are one of the numerous wildlife species visitors can see at Watoga.