WV Master Naturalist Conference 2026
Class and Field Trip Descriptions

Note: Some instructors are recommending magnification. Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.

American Chestnut: Efforts to Return the "Redwood of the East" to North American Forests
Mark Double

This 3-hour class will consist of a 90-minute lecture and a field component. The lecture will cover the history of American Chestnut, the devastation caused by the chestnut blight fungus and the current efforts toward restoration of the species. The field component will be held in the Waddell Chestnut Orchard directly behind Preston High School. This 100-tree orchard was established in 2013 with 20 trees. There are different species of chestnut and speciation differences will be covered along with active chestnut blight cankers and a discussion about ink disease caused by Phytophthora spp. We will be looking at several species of chestnut and looking at chestnut blight cankers, Phytophthora issues, tree form, flowers, etc.

Group Size: 24	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Camp Dawson classroom and associated Waddell Chestnut Orchard	
Terrain: The chestnut orchard is on a slope behind the high school. Terrain can be uneven. The walk to the orchard is not far, and there will be minimal walking once in the orchard.	
Comment: Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.	

An Overview of Camp Dawson Conservation Initiatives: Native Grasses Field Trip
Rick Chaney & Ryan Snyder

A brief classroom presentation will provide an overview of Camp Dawson's conservation programs. The presentation will be followed by a field trip to a training area where we will discuss pond construction, pollinator plots, T & E management of a number of bat species and state species including Golden-Winged Warbler and Allegheny Wood Rat. We will travel to a thriving native grass field and discuss the establishment, maintenance with fire, wildlife habitat, and importance to military training.

Group Size: 24	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Car Pool: 6 Cars	
Location: Camp Dawson classroom and Briery Mountain Training Area	
Terrain: Mostly level	

Avian Conservation Up Close: The Work of the ACCA

Katie Fallon & Jesse Fallon

This course will introduce participants to current issues facing wild bird conservation in our region and to the work of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia (ACCA). It will include an interactive lecture by avian veterinarian Jesse Fallon, a training demonstration and meet-and-greet with some of the ACCA's education staff (human and bird!), and a tour around the enclosures housing the non-releasable birds in the ACCA's care, including bald eagles, vultures, hawks, falcons, owls, and more. Participants will also be able to closely observe the ACCA's native plant garden, which is home to vibrant insect life.

The class will be held at the ACCA's Outdoor Classroom at Ridge Way Farm in Cheat Lake. The classroom includes a covered pavilion, bathrooms, and electricity; participants should bring water, dress for the elements, and expect there to be bees, wasps, and other pollinators at work in the gardens.

Group Size: 30	
Location: ACCA Outdoor Classroom, 217 Morgan Hill Road, Morgantown, WV 26508	
Terrain: Mostly level	
Comment: The ACCA is funded through donations and fees. In this case, there will be a $5 fee at registration.	
Note: Please choose an afternoon class other than Snorkeling on the Cheat. There will not be enough time to make it to the carpool leaving Camp Dawson.	

Bird Conservation in West Virginia - Updates and Future Directions

Richard Bailey, Katie Garst & Casey Rucker

This presentation will provide an update on the current status of North American bird conservation, and the role that West Virginia plays within broader efforts. Topics will include an overview of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, the State Wildlife Action Plan and how state-level conservation is funded, trends in state bird populations past and present, key habitats and associated priority species, a summary of notable threats, a broad overview of existing and planned conservation actions, and opportunities for Citizen Scientists to become engaged in protecting the wildlife and habitats they love.

Group Size: 24
Location: Camp Dawson classroom

Birding the Cheat Canyon in Midsummer

Bob Dean

Exploring the challenges of birding in a wildlife management area in summer after most breeding is finished and leaf out is complete. Trail follows an old railroad grade into the Cheat Canyon. Depending on the water level, we may take a small side trail down to the river and examine different bird habitat on a floodplain.

Group Size: 18	
Comment: Binoculars is you have them.	
Clothing: Wear clothes that you would wear for hiking in the forecasted weather.	
Location: Cheat Canyon/Allegheny Trail at Beech Run Trailhead.	
Terrain: Trail has a little grade at the beginning, then fairly level but with deep ruts in some areas.	
Carpool: 7 cars	

Bug Walk at UpTop

David Davis, Tucker Cooley, & John Bocan

Join entomologist David Davis, Ph.D., for a guided "bug walk" at Uptop, a 123-acre mountain retreat located just off Salt Lick Road—five miles from Terra Alta and about 20 minutes from Camp Dawson. This diverse property includes historic and newly planted orchards, gardens, and a wide range of habitats that attract an impressive variety of insects and wildlife.

A highlight of the walk will be the 22-acre upland meadow enrolled in the USDA/NRCS Golden-winged Warbler Habitat Improvement Program. This actively managed area is undergoing restoration to remove invasive shrubs and reestablish native species, creating an exceptional haven for pollinators, birds, and other fauna. Participants will also enjoy 360-degree mountain views and learn how habitat management supports ecological health.

The property includes a renovated 1890s farmhouse and a modern lodge, offering a comfortable home base for exploration.

Group Size: 36	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Uptop retreat	
Terrain: Upland farm and wildlife areas	
Comment: Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.	

Cheat River Snorkeling and Fish Identification

Madison Ball & Lisa Maraffa

Participants will get to know the Cheat River first hand by taking an underwater look at the river and its inhabitants. Snorkels and masks will be provided for participant as well as introductory lesson into river snorkeling, its scientific and education uses, as well as basic fish identification. Friends of the Cheat staff will also teach the history of the Cheat River and its recent recover. The snorkeling location is on a world class section

of the Cheat River outside of Kingwood and will have plenty of safe areas for snorkeling for beginner and strong swimmers alike.

Friends of the Cheat will bring the necessary supplies. Folks are welcome to bring their own snorkel gear if they have it.

Group Size: 30	
Clothing: Water shoes, Bathing Suit/Swim clothes, Change of clothes, water shoes, towel, water, sunscreen.	
Location: Cheat River near Rowlesburg	
Terrain: Short walk (5 min or less) on uneven terrain down to the river. Rocks may be slippery in the river which could lead to slips trips or falls if not careful. Some level of swim ability is required although those who are not great swimmers will have ample opportunity to snorkel in shallow water (hip deep or less).	
Carpool: 12 cars	
Comment: For those that are willing and able, a donation to FOC of $5 per participant is suggested. Donations will help FOC provide snorkel programming to K-12 classrooms and school groups free of charge and help cover bussing costs to schools when travel funds are limiting factor in participation.	

Compass and Orienteering
Sheldon Owen & Ben Spong

Our compass and orienteering course is broken into two sections that will help participants become familiar with a compass and a topographic map. Section one gives a basic introduction to the parts of a compass, how a compass works and how to use a compass to determine direction of travel. There will be a hands-on field activity that will help participants get more comfortable using a compass (minimal walking in a small area). Section two will introduce topographic maps. In this section, participants will be introduced to the basics of a topographic map, how they can be used to better understand the lay of the land and how to use a compass and topographic map together.

Group Size: 25	
Clothing: Sturdy shoes	
Location: WVU Natural Resources Center, 1397 Chestnut Ridge Rd (73/1), classroom and field component	
Terrain: Short walks on mostly even terrain	

Dendrology Walk in the Woods
J. Mike Plevich

Join us for an immersive woodland walk focused on the art and science of identifying trees. This field-based session introduces participants to key dendrology skills including recognizing species by bark, leaves, buds, habitat and seasonal characteristics.

This relaxed, hands-on walk will deepen your understanding of forest diversity and sharpen your identification skills in the field.

Group Size: 10 (note: there are two groups)	
Clothing: Sturdy shoes	
Location: Old Hemlock Foundation near Bruceton Mills	
Terrain: Long walk, uneven terrain	

Early Morning Yoga
Jamie Chambers, RYT-200

This all-levels class is designed to gently wake up the body and mind through simple, functional movement and breath. No prior experience is needed—you don't need to touch your toes or know any poses.

We'll focus on movements that support everyday life—building mobility, balance, and awareness. Throughout class, you'll be encouraged to slow down, notice the small details, and reconnect with a sense of curiosity and presence.

Come as you are—this is a space to breathe, move, and begin your day grounded, refreshed, and energized.

Supplies : Please bring your yoga mat and blocks if you have them. A limited number of mats and blocks will be available.

ebird and iNaturalist: Amazing tools for developing naturalist skills, engaging others, and contributing to science.
Rodney Bartgis

eBird and iNaturalist are online tools that capture and archive information on birds (eBird) and all wild organisms (iNaturalist) provided by users. They have rapidly become major citizen science platforms contributing to thousands of research projects globally. Advances in technology have made them incredibly easy to use on a smartphone in the field with machine learning enhancements for identifying images or organisms (iNaturalist) and bird song (Merlin a sister project to eBird). This will not be a "how-to" class but one that explores how e Bird and iNaturalist can build the skills of both amateurs and experts and engage and excite "new" (especially younger) naturalists, build connected naturalist communities, and contribute to significant research. We will especially look at how the science from eBird and iNaturalist is quickly changing and improving our understanding of the natural world right here in West Virginia. Participants may wish to download the eBird and iNaturalist apps on their smartphones prior to the class.

Group Size: 24	*Location:* Camp Dawson classroom
Comment: Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.	

Flora of Cathedral Forest
John Burkhart

We will learn about the trees, shrubs, ferns, wildflowers, grasses, and mosses of Cathedral State Park which contains one of West Virginia's finest remnant old-growth forests. The forest here is dominated by the Eastern Hemlock and deep shade cast by these giants create unique conditions that foster the growth of plants that need cool, moist environments. We will explore how plant species in Cathedral are arranged in plant communities and the interacting climatic, environmental and ecological factors that shape these plant communities. We will discuss old growth forest dynamics and the challenges to forest health including invasive pests.

Group Size: 15	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Cathedral State Park	
Terrain: Moderate walk, up to two miles on the trails of Cathedral State Forest. No steep grades, but perhaps some uneven terrain and slippery surfaces.	
Car Pool: 8 cars continued from Cranesville	

Forest Stand Dynamics
Dave McGill

This three-hour field session will examine forest stand dynamics within the context of Cathedral State Park's natural history. Participants will review key factors that influence forest development, consider how "old-growth" is defined and recognized in the field, and discuss how individual trees are measured and how forests and tree communities are quantified. The session will also address how site quality influences stand development over time. The walk will focus on the four stages of stand development – stand initiation, stem exclusion, understory re-initiation, and the complex/old growth stage – and explore how these stages are expressed in the park's mixed-hemlock forest.

Group Size: 15	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Cathedral State Park	
Terrain: Fairly level, uneven terrain, outdoors under. trees	
Car Pool: 8 cars continue to Cranesville	

From Canopy to Cut: Exploring Old Hemlock's Wild Diversity
LeJay Grafious & Cheyenne Carter

Participants will take a guided bird and nature walk through the storied landscape of Old Hemlock once home to George Bird Evans – renowned artist, author, outdoorsman, and developer of the celebrated Old Hemlock line of English Setters – and his wife, Kathryn Harris Evans, editor and co-author of many of his works. The property, maintained in its natural state, is a living legacy of their devotion to wildlife, literature, and conservation. This course will be led by LeJay Graffious, Administrator of the Old Hemlock Foundation.

What to expect: A 1.5 mile walk through diverse habitats including virgin hemlock stands, 80-year-old successional forest, and a regenerating wildlife cut. A 400-foot change in elevation going down to the halfway point, offering changing ecological variety and birding opportunities throughout with LeJay's expert insight into seasonal migrants and resident species.

Group Size: 30	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Old Hemlock Foundation	
Terrain: The outing will be on woodland trails. The trails are mowed but unimproved. The walk will be approximately 1.5 miles loop trail with 400 feet change in elevation.	
Car Pool: 8 cars continue to Cranesville	
Comments: Attendees are invited to stay after the field trip ends at 10:30 AM for a tour of additional areas including the original **1815 log home** with discussion of dendrochronology of the **oak lo**gs used in the building.	

Geology and Paleontology of West Virginia

Elizabeth Rhenberg & Kenny Ashton

Learn about the geological history of West Virginia. What rocks are found here and how did they accumulate? Where did the Appalachian Mountains come from? What about features such as New River Gorge or Seneca Rocks? Fossils are found throughout the state, what are they and what can they tell us about our history? Learn about all of this and more as we do a dive into the deep history of our beautiful Mountain State.

Group Size: 25	
Location: Conference Room, West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey, 1 Mont Chateau Rd	
Comment: There is a small fossil museum on site	

Geology of Cooper's Rock

WV Geological and Economic Survey staff

Come learn about the geology of Coopers Rock and the Cheat Canyon. See beautiful vistas, observe interesting rock formations, and enjoy a short hike through the forest.

Group Size: 20	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes and prep for rain

Location: Cooper's Rock main parking area	
Terrain: Walking along hiking trails	

Geology Field Trip to Rowlesburg, WV
Claudette Simard

The trip begins on Route 72 near its intersection with Route 7 east of Kingwood. At this location there will be an orientation and introduction of the general geology of this part of the state. We will continue south on Route 72 to take a closer look at the rocks exposed in the beautiful Cheat River Narrows cut through the heart of Laurel Mountain where Rowlesburg resides. First, we will stop at mouth of Pringle Run to look at the effects of acid mine drainage as we test the water's acidity. As we continue through the Narrows, we will observe the effects of the different rock types on the river's width and roughness. The second stop is the former limestone quarry where participants can collect fossils as they determine what the ancient water level was when the sediments that are now rock were laid down about 340 million years ago. When we reach Rowlesburg, we will look at the record 1985 flood markers and either collect fossils as we visit at an old quarry there or continue to drive up Saltlick Creek for easy fossil access.

Group Size: 20	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes and prep for rain
Location: Along Rt 72, below Kingwood to Rowlesburg area	
Terrain: Short walks on even and uneven terrain.	
Carpool: 5 cars	

Geology of Coopers' Rock Area
Claudette Simard

Participants will meet in the parking lot of Tropics Restaurant on Cranberry Square Road, Cheat Lake area for an orientation and introduction to the general geology at this locale. In contrast to the Rowelsburg Field Trip, through the heart of Laurel Mountain, we will be focusing on the next ridge west, Chestnut Ridge, from its base to its crest at Coopers' Rock. Our first stop at nearby Ice's Ferry will show some of the effects of the Cheat River downstream from Rowlesburg. We will look at exposed rock layers here for clues to their ancient past as well as that of the Cheat River. For stop 2, we will drive east on I-68 to the Coopers' Rock exit and park at the overlook lot near the end of the main road. From there, our approximately ½ mile walk includes many features and fossils in the rocks we can use to decipher their ancient history. Unfortunately, we cannot collect any fossils but we can identify them. The overlook provides a great bird's eye view of the terrain and shows some of the rocks the Cheat carved through to create the gorge. Last, we will walk along the trail for more interesting features showcased at several sites.

Group Size: 20	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes

Location: Participants will meet in the parking lot of Tropics Restaurant on Cranberry Square Road, Cheat Lake area.
Terrain: Short walks on even and uneven terrain.

Hornyheads, Madtoms, and Darters: Narratives on Central Appalachian Fishes
Stuart Welsh, PhD, US Geological Survey, West Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; West Virginia University

A nature lover's paradise, Central Appalachia supports a diversity of life in an extensive network of waterways and is home to a dazzling array of fish species. This presentation will include stories from *Hornyheads, Madtoms, and Darters: Narratives on Central Appalachian Fishes*. The book is a collection of essays on nature, naturalists, and the natural history of fishes. A focus is not only on the fascinating things that fishes do in their natural habitats, but also on promoting public awareness of our fish fauna.

Location: Banquet area at Camp Dawson	

Hydrology of West Virginia
Bernie Howe

Everyone has heard the term "Watershed" but many do not know what it really means and the importance of managing it. This class will not only expose the various components of a watershed but provide the importance of managing these components.

We will have a PowerPoint presentation in the classroom for the first hour. Then drive to Alpine Lake Resort and see some of the components and how they affect the watershed. The Alpine Lake visit will feature multiple scheduled stops dedicated to ongoing instruction and addressing participant questions. There will be a short hike on one of the trails.

Ever seen an artesian well? Join us and you will get to see one.

Group Size: 20	
Clothing: Sturdy shoes. Appropriate dress for weather forecast and short trail walk.	
Location: Classroom and Alpine Lake Resort	
Terrain: The trail is level and easy to walk.	
Carpool: Carpooling required after arriving at Alpine Lake Resort.	
Comment: Bernie suggests attendees eat lunch at Alpine Lake Restaurant before heading home	

Introduction to West Virginia Moths
Tucker Cooley

Eastern North America is home to thousands of species of moths though most groups are underappreciated and rarely observed due to their nocturnal activity and alleged "drabness". However, what people do not realize is that moths far from being "dull" or "drab" actually exhibit an impressive variety of shapes, patterns, and colors. This

class focuses on the diversity of West Virginia moth species and emphasizes the importance of protecting and preserving native moth populations. Other topics discussed include identification tips, introductory moth anatomy, metamorphosis, phenology and environmental niches.

Group Size: 24	*Location:* Camp Dawson classroom
Comment: Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.	

Medicinal Plants I have Known and Loved
Rebecca Linger

Ethnopharmacology of Appalachia is the study of the biological and pharmacological effects of plants, fungi and microorganisms used by the peoples of Appalachia. Early settlers of this area confronted with illness and disease discovered a wealth of useful therapeutic herbals. The empirical knowledge of these medicinal substances and their toxic potential was passed on by oral tradition and sometimes recorded in herbals and other texts on materia medica. In this lecture, we will examine many of these remedies from the standpoints of medical efficacy and potential toxicities.

Group Size: 36	
Location: Camp Dawson classroom	

Mushrooms of West Virginia
Max Dubansky

We will visit Cathedral State Park, a mixed species old growth forest with newer early succession forest. The forest provides excellent habitat for mushroom foraging. The fungi are extremely diverse. The walk is on easy terrain.

Group Size: 15	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Cathedral State Park	
Terrain: Long walk, fairly flat ground, woodland trail with usual roots, rocks, and seeps.	

Natural Resources Conservation
Alex Lawson, Kyle Aldinger, & Tom Wilsoncroft

Natural resource-based course focused on soils, forest management, pollinators, early successional habitat, and wetlands. The plan includes a 4 foot soil test pit to demonstrate soil layers and factors involved in best land use recommendations.

Group Size: 24	
Clothing: We plan to move to the field, so field clothes are recommended (i.e. pants, boots).	

Location: Camp Dawson class and nearby field. Details will be finalized once site visit is conducted to choose field locations.
Terrain: Short walks, uneven terrain

Peatland Tour, Cranesville Swamp
EllaRose Warnick

Come explore West Virginia's first Nature Preserve, managed by The Nature Conservancy. Cranesville Swamp Preserve is a beautiful and rare landscape known as a "frost pocket", an area where the surrounding hills capture moisture and cold air that conspire to create a landscape reminiscent of habitat found much further north. Come explore this incredible ecosystem to learn about its history and land management, as well as the unique plant and animal species that call this environment home.

Group Size: 15 each for 2 groups	
Clothing: Sturdy shoes and prep for rain	
Location: Cranesville Swamp	
Terrain: We will be outside for the entire program, so come dressed and prepared for the weather. I recommend wearing comfortable, sturdy footwear (waterproof preferred). If sunny, wear or bring sunscreen, sunglasses, or a hat. Please bring a water bottle.	
Carpool: 6 cars	

Pollinator Diversity, Natural History, and Conservation
Grace Savoy-Burke

Pollinators are crucial not just to production of crops but also our natural terrestrial ecosystems. While many animals can provide pollination services, bees are some of the most efficient pollinators. There are 20,000 species of bees in North America and many of them have very different life histories and needs then European honey bees. In this course, you will learn about the major groups of native bees, their natural history and how to create habitats for pollinators of all kinds in your own garden. We will also explore the nearby arboretum to see what pollinators we can find and identify using the iNaturalist app.

Group Size: 20	
Clothing: Sturdy shoes	
Location: Preston County High School and associated arboretum area	
Terrain: Short walks on terraced terrain	

Small Mammal Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) Identification and Field Research
Mack Frantz

The lecture portion of this class will cover general ecology and identification for small mammals listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCNs) in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Skulls, pelts, literature, and study vouchers will be used with dissecting microscopes. Having your own hand lens would be handy but not required. We will cover lethal and non-lethal trapping and detection methodologies used for field conservation and research of specific species and families. For the field portion, rain or shine, we will visit on foot a live trap array near the camp (that was set the night previously) to see how traps are processed and determine any identifications or collect data in real-time.

Group Size: 24	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes
Location: Camp Dawson Classroom and walk to nearby area	
Terrain: Wooded area on Camp Dawson main site	
Carpool: May walk to trap site or take 7 cars, will update after site visit	

There is No Place Like Home? The Eastern Asian-Eastern North American Floristic Disjunction

Zachariah Fowler

This talk will focus on the interesting fact that there are several plant species that are native only to Eastern North America with closest "relatives" that are native only to Eastern Asia. These closely related yet distantly located plants often look nearly identical. In parts of China, Russia and Japan these plant species strangely look just like those in West Virginia. We will talk about some to these plants, discuss how this may have come to be and learn some of the implications of this floristic disjunction. We will also talk about the value of ginseng and mayapple in various parts of the world, invasive plant species with Asian names and introduced pathogens and herbivores that are all part of the story.

Location: Banquet area at Camp Dawson	

Tour of Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Systems

Brad Moore

A field review of Acid Mine Drainage and its cause. Topics include how Acid Mine drainage occurs, minerals that make up AMD and where they occur. The tour includes of various AMD water treatment systems used to treat AMD. This will provides observation of both Passive and Active systems and how they work.

I will include an historical review of how we got here treating all these darn sites. This includes a briefing on the history of past regulations regarding mine discharge, predictability requirements, bond release requirements.

Group Size: 20	*Clothing:* Sturdy shoes footwear

Location: Hallelujah Mine, T and T water treatment site, instream and or passive treatment site (to be determined)	
Carpool: 6 cars	*Terrain:* Easy

Tour of West Virginia Botanic Garden
Abigail Waugh & Leah Swift

Join Environmental Educators Abigail Waugh and Leah swift for a tour of the West Virginia Botanic Garden. Enjoy the beauty of West Virginia's Flagship garden and learn more about its history and operations. On the tour, participants will experience the 6 unique ecosystem system types the garden preserves and learn more about the plants and animals that live there. Following the tour, participants will have the opportunity to explore the garden on their own.

Group Size: 30	
Clothing: Please wear sturdy, closed toed shoes for a walk through the garden.	
Location: West Virginia Botanic Garden	
Terrain: The majority of the walking will be on level, ADA accessible trails, with minimal incline. The main loop is slightly less than a mile over primarily even terrain. Opportunities will be made to take small side stops to areas in the garden that will be over more uneven terrain such as in the forest and through the field. We will be moving through the garden through the 3 hour period.	
Comment: Mon Chapter member David Davis suggests staying for lunch at the café before heading home	

Tree Identification and Key Characteristics of Trees in the Cheat River Canyon.
Zach Fowler

We will hike into the Cheat River Canyon along an easy trail identifying trailside trees and discussing key characteristics of trees as we go. Please bring your copy of "Tree Finder: A Manual for the Identification of Trees by Their Leaves by May Theilgaard Watts and your loupe because we will practice using them on the walk. This hike will be an out and back hike along the same trail in both directions, and we can talk about plants and other parts of nature that are not trees, too. The trail that we will use is part of the Allegheny Trail.

Group Size: 20	
Remember: Bring your "Tree Finder: A Manual for the Identification of Trees by Their Leaves by May Theilgaard Watts and your loupe.	
Comment: Magnification is recommended. This could include a loupe, lens attachment for a smart phone, or a magnifying app.	
Clothing: Wear clothes that you would wear for hiking in the forecasted weather. Sturdy, closed toe shoes are recommended. Consider sun protection, rain gear, and insect/tick protection, too.	

Location: Cheat Canyon/Allegheny Trail at Beech Run Trailhead
Terrain: Trail has a little grade at the beginning, then fairly level but with deep ruts in some areas
Carpool: 7 cars

A Trip to Wonder Falls on Big Sandy Creek
Braden Meyer

Learn about one of the West Virginia Land Trust's newest preserves at Big Sandy Creek, including different methods of land protection and how we were able to come together to get the Big Sandy project across the finish line. Enjoy scenic Cheat Canyon views while learning about the on-the-ground land conservation work happening in your backyards and around the state!

It is contemplated that we will meet at the parking lot before doing introductions and discussing WVLT's land protection process and the particulars of the Big Sandy acquisitions. I envision this taking place in the parking lot or near/on the Rockville Bridge where we can enjoy the scenic Big Sandy views. Once we wrap up discussing I plan to lead a walk to Wonder Falls. This walk is approximately 1 mile each way for a round trip of 2 miles. We will travel on a gravel road to ensure everyone is able to reach the falls. Travelling to the falls from the other side of the river is more scenic but unfortunately entails rough terrain and scrambling up steep sections, not conducive for this event. WVLT will also own or be in the process of receiving a donated piece of property below Wonder Falls offering opportunities to explore past the falls.

Group Size: 15
Clothing: Sturdy shoes and prep for rain
Location: Friends of Cheat parking area at Rockville Bridge then walk to site
Terrain: This walk is approximately 1 mile each way for a round trip of 2 miles. We will travel on a gravel road to ensure everyone is able to reach the falls.
Carpool: Yes, will be determined during spring site visit
Comments: I will do my best to bring as many lawn chairs as possible in case anyone would like to sit while we discuss before embarking on our hike.

Trout: Who they are, what they eat and how fly fishers use that information.
Mike Vernon

Trout are one of the most commonly recognized gamefish in West Virginia. Their streamlined, fusiform bodies make them one of the fastest swimming fish in freshwater streams and lakes. They are mid-level pursuit predators that prey upon smaller aquatic animals that include terrestrial and aquatic insects, other fish and small mammals. Due to their aggressive predatory behavior trout are avidly sought after by fly fishers.

This presentation will review the anatomical characteristics of the various species of trout and describe their amazing life cycle and unique physiological adaptations. We will also examine the intricate lifecycles of the aquatic insects that represent their main

food source and review how fly fishers use this information to catch trout with artificial fly.

At the end of the presentation, there will be a demonstration of fly casting (weather permitting) followed by an opportunity for those interested to try their hand at fly casting. Extra rods, line and reels will be provided and no experience is needed.

Group Size: 24	
Location: Camp Dawson classroom then walk to the nearby pond for fly casting demonstration	

West Virginia Seed Saving Initiative
Christine Zawaski

Native plants are vital to healthy ecosystems, supporting pollinators, wildlife, and resilient landscapes across West Virginia. Conserving these plants begins with protecting their genetic diversity, and seed saving plays an important role in that effort.

This workshop focuses on native seed saving, storing, and growing. Participants will learn when and how to collect seeds responsibly, best practices for cleaning and storing seeds, and techniques for growing native plants from seed. The workshop will also explore how seed saving supports biodiversity and strengthens local ecosystems. Designed for Master Naturalists, this session combines ecological context with practical skills and highlights ways participants can support native plant conservation in their communities.

Group Size: 24	
Location: Camp Dawson classroom	

Zoophagous Insects: Predators, Parasites and Parasitoids
David Davis

This presentation will cover the insect groups that include predators, parasites and parasitoids. Some of the most unusual insect-host relationships involves these groups of insects. While predators are commonly understood, parasites contribute to human and animal diseases in many ways making coverage of this group timely. Parasitoids can have the most complex life histories and have evolved in many insect orders. Pulling them together into the group of Zoophagous insects distinguishes these insects from Herbivorous or Omnivorous types.

Group Size: 36	
Location: Camp Dawson classroom	