

Freeland Board Walk

Identification Guide

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BIRDS

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

Males are mostly black, with a white back and rump, and a yellow patch on their head. When they molt their breeding plumage, males will resemble females with a yellow belly, dark brown stripes on their head and back, and a pink beak. During the spring and early summer, males will give their flight displays by flying in a helicopter like pattern. Listen for their sharp *pink* call notes and find these ground nesting birds in open grasslands.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

Cedar waxwings have “masks” around their eyes, yellow belly and yellow tipped tail, brown head, gray back, and red wax secretions on the tips of their wings. Cedar waxwings lack sexual dimorphism, meaning males and females look the same. These birds are one of the few songbirds that can survive solely on fruit, such as dogwood and hawthorn berries.



Photo Credit: Kent Mason

Eastern King Bird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)

Eastern King Birds have a large head, white belly, and white tips on their tail. They are often confused with the Eastern Phoebe because they look similar and eat insects while flying. The difference between them is that Phoebes prefer open woodlands, whereas the King Bird prefers open grasslands and is darker in color. Eastern King Birds make an electric zapping sound.



Photo Credit: Kent Mason

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Mallards are the most familiar of waterfowl species. Males have a green head, while females do not. Both genders have large wings with a bright blue or purple patch with white bars on them. Mallard Ducks are known to hybridize with many other species of ducks. The infamous “quack” call heard on screen comes from the female mallard.

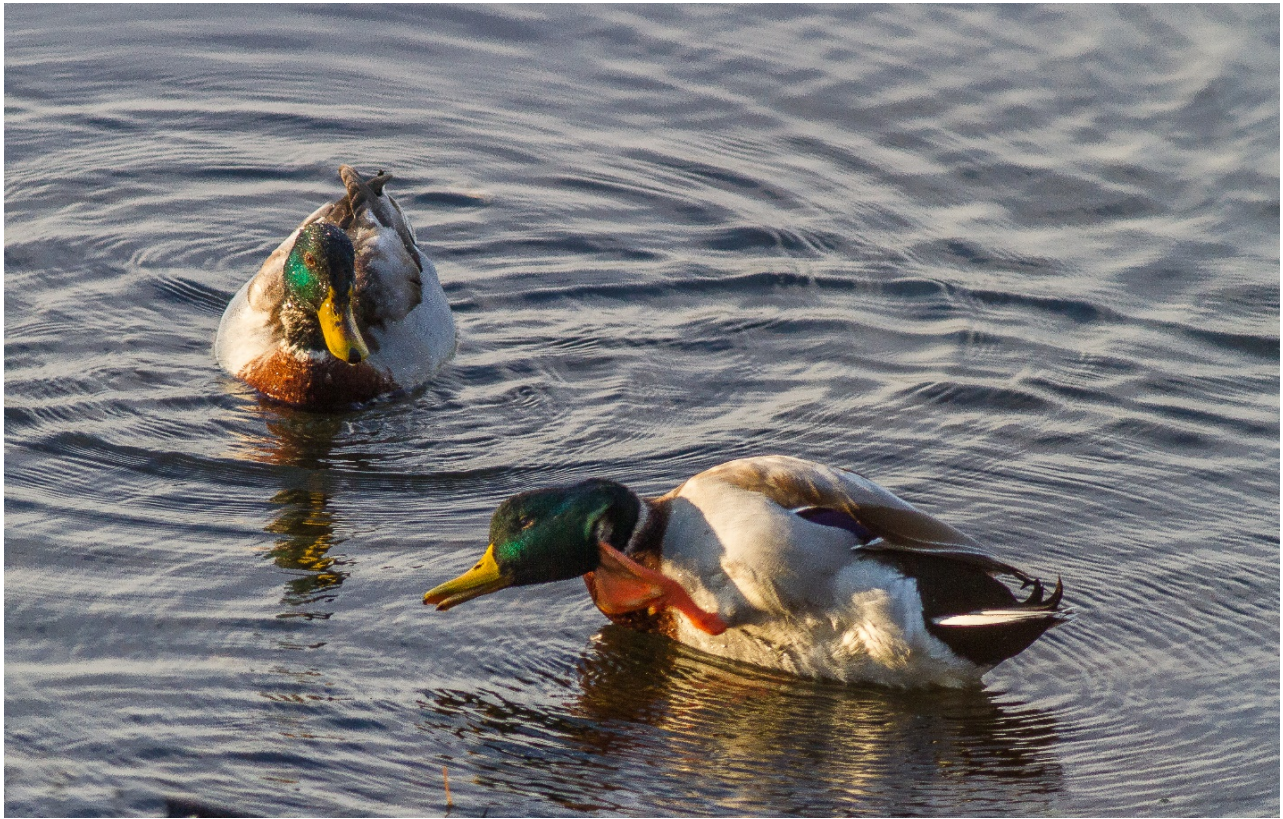


Photo Credit: Kent Mason

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Red-winged Blackbird males are black with red and yellow patches on their shoulders. Females are brown with streaks all over, almost resembling sparrows. They make a “*conk-a-lee!*” call and can be found sitting on cattails in wetlands.



Photo Credit: Kent Mason

GRASSES, RUSHES, SEDGES, FERNS, MOSSES

Soft Rush (*Juncus effuses*)

Soft Rush or common rush is a perennial plant that can be found in wetlands and meadows. From June to July, this plant may have flowers growing half way up the stem. It is also known as candlewick rush because early settlers used the pith inside as candlewicks.

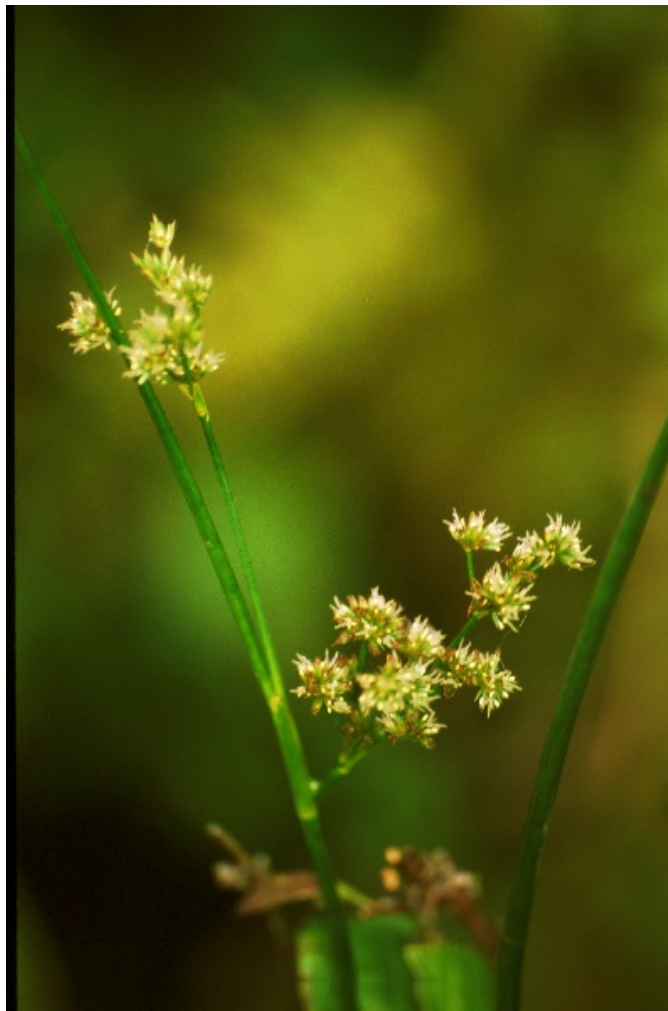


Photo Credit: USFWS

Bracken Fern (*Pteridium*)

Bracken Fern is the most widely distributed perennial fern. Compared to other species of fern such as cinnamon or hay-scented fern, you will normally find bracken growing by itself. This means that you will not find it growing in a circle of ferns. It is also an aggressive plant, as it can invade pastures and fields that are unfit for livestock.

*Leaves of bracken contain an array of poisonous and carcinogenic compounds.



Photo Credit: backyardnature

Haircap Moss (*Polytrichum commune*)

Haircap moss, also known as pigeon wheat, form wide beds in peat bogs. It can be found in regions with high humidity, rainfall, and acidic soil. It is an evergreen plant that does not flower. This moss resembles tiny pine trees!



Photo Credit: USFWS

Reindeer Moss (*Cladonia rangiferina*)

Reindeer moss is actually a lichen! There are 40 species of lichen that are called reindeer moss. This branchy lichen grows super slow and comes in a variety of colors. Because they are suited for colder conditions, they can resist wind and soil disturbances. This lichen is a good indicator of environmental quality because of its ability to survive by absorbing moisture and nutrients from the air through cells on its surface, due to its lack of roots.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Sphagnum Moss (*Sphagnum*)

If you find sphagnum moss, you're most likely in a bog. Sphagnum moss is interesting because it can hold 20x its weight in water. During the First World War, sphagnum was used as a wound dressing, for its absorbing and antiseptic purposes.



Photo Credit: USFWS

WILDFLOWERS

Asters (Symphyotrichum)

This flower is in the Daisy family. Blooming in late summer and autumn, these flowers can have colors ranging from white, blue, to purple. Asters are important flowers for pollination, as they are a late season supply of nectar for bees and butterflies.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*)

These herbaceous perennial wild flowers, with a yellow center and 4 lobes, bloom in the spring. You can often find Bluets as they grow in light blue patches.



Photo Credit: Nativeplantcenter

Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha palustris*)

A perennial flower that is in the buttercup family. With 5 petals and a “cup” in the center, you can find this plant in marshes, swamps, and ditches. This yellow flower is also an herb, and can be used medicinally for pain, bronchitis, and jaundice. Though used medicinally, handling the plant can cause irritation to the skin and can actually be toxic.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Goldenrod (*Solidago*)

If you're in a large field, you will most likely find Goldenrods. This herbaceous perennial gets its name from its golden flowers that attracts many pollinators. If you notice a gall in its stem (looks like a balloon), it is most from an insect that has laid its eggs in the plant.



Photo Credit: Ken Sturm

Pink Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*)

Pink Lady's Slippers are dark pink to whitish pink and grow between May and July. Their bright color and sweet scent, attract bees that are needed for pollination. The bees will climb into the pouch of the orchid, and will have to escape by going under a mass of pollen, and through an opening in the flower.



Photo Credit: USFWS

TREES AND SHRUBS

Spiraea (Spiraea)

Spiraea can be found throughout Canaan Valley. They are also known as meadowsweets or steeple bushes. These plants are very drought tolerant, very aggressive, and ranges in sizes, colors, and forms. They may not look like it when they lose their flowers, but Spiraea are part of the rose family.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Willow (*Salix*)

This tall deciduous tree can be identified from its long arching branches and slender oval shaped leaves swaying in the breeze. They grow in Europe, North and South America, and Asia. They like standing water, and their bark contains salicylic acid. Willows prefer habitats that provide moisture and direct sunlight. They are a symbol of immortality and rebirth in china.



Photo Credit: Pinterest

Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*)

This evergreen can be identified from its pyramid shape, but the best way to identify this tree is by looking at its needles. The needles are flat, skinny, and are roughly an inch long. The needles grow on 2 sides of the branch and have broad bases. These trees will produce cones that are 2-4 inches long and will often be used as Christmas trees.

In Canaan Valley, you will also find Canaan fir. A sub species of balsam fir and shares many similarities to both balsam and Fraser fir. You can find Canaan firs behind our visitor center



Photo Credit: Pauline Champlin

Hemlock (*Tsuga Canadensis*)

A coniferous evergreen tree that often gets mistaken for fir trees. Hemlock needles will be flat like the hem of a skirt and are less than an inch long. If you find winged seeds on the ground, more than likely it has come from the cones of a hemlock tree.



Photo Credit: Paul Smith's College VIC

Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*)

To identify a red spruce, you can take the needles and rub it between your fingers. The needles have 4 sides, making it easier to roll compared to a flat needle from a hemlock or fir. They are greenish and yellow in color and hard to the touch.

These evergreen conifer trees were victims of logging and are now scarce throughout Canaan Valley. They also provide habitat for Cheat Mountain salamanders as the tree provides plenty of shade and keeps the ground cool.



Photo Credit: Pauline Champlin