



ASNV Birding Hotspot Fact Sheet

SNICKERS GAP

LOCATION: Clarke County/Loudoun County line, Virginia.

DIRECTIONS: From Northern Virginia and the Washington, D.C. area, travel west on Virginia Route 7 to the intersection with Virginia Route 601. Make a left turn and an immediate right turn into the public commuter parking lot. From Winchester, travel east on Route 7 to the intersection with Route 601, make a right turn and an immediate right turn into the public commuter parking lot.

ACREAGE: Less than five acres, but Snickers Gap is a recognized Hawk Watch site.

HISTORY: Route 7 crosses the Blue Ridge Mountains at Snickers Gap. The Gap is a long-time transportation corridor for people and wildlife.

ECOSYSTEM TYPE, HABITATS, & ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE:

The Blue Ridge Mountains have a mixed hardwood and non-hardwood tree habitat that supports migratory and non-migratory bird, plant, and animal life.

BIRDS AND BIRDWATCHING: This site is primarily known as a Hawk Watch, is active as such from September to the end of November, and the daily count is reported to the Hawk Migration Association of North America. Volunteers are usually present daily from September 1-November 30. They count migrating eagles, hawks, and falcons and their reports usually note other species seen. Broad-winged Hawk migration kicks-off the hawk watch season in September, with daily totals climbing into the hundreds, sometimes thousands, just after mid-month and trailing off towards the end of the month. Other birds seen, and counted, at this site are Black and Turkey Vultures, Osprey, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed Hawks, the occasional Northern Goshawk and Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. In addition, migrating Chimney Swifts, Hummingbirds, Blue Jays, and Woodpeckers, including Red-headed, and various species of butterflies can be seen. Later in the fall, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls and

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Tundra Swans are often reported. The immediate area around the parking lot, including the brushy and forest edge area directly across Route 601, should be checked for migrating warblers. Canada, Tennessee, Magnolia, Wilson's, and American Redstarts are among the species seen here. The Appalachian Trail is accessible from the parking lot. A walk south along the Trail is always a delight and could be productive in terms of bird sightings. During fall migration, birdwatchers often combine a visit to Snickers Gap with one to SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK (a separate Fact Sheet) or vice versa. Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) members are among the volunteers participating in count activities. Also, ASNV usually sponsors one or more trips to this site during fall migration. Please check the ASNV Web site (www.audubonva.org) or call the ASNV office (703) 256-6895 for information about scheduled trips or helping with the count. The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) compiles hawk migration count information, and their Web site (www.hmana.org) provides detailed information on Snickers Gap and other participating hawk watches. Go to their Home Page, click on Hawk Count, click on Month or Day Summary, go to Select Count Site, scroll down to Snickers Gap, and click on the Go to Site button.

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES: The continuing development of open fields along the migration route that includes Snickers Gap will continue to be of concern. Also, there are concerns about the overall health of habitat in the nesting areas of the birds that use this route when migrating.

CONSERVATION WORK AT THE SITE: None

CONTACT INFORMATION: None

FEES AND HOURS OF OPERATION: There is no fee for this site and no formal hours of operation for bird watching.

FACILITIES: There is ample parking but no restroom facilities. The nearest restroom and food facilities are about four miles east on Route 7 in Round Hill, Virginia. The Hill High Orchard store (no endorsement intended), located on Route 7 between Snickers Gap and Round Hill, is a bit closer. Most people who plan on spending any time at this site usually bring their own food, water, and a chair.