

Biotic Inventory of the Herbert & Patricia Wagers Devil's Backbone Park

Report to Preble County Park District

20 October 2023

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Purpose and Scope

Our primary aim in this project was to catalogue familiar flora and fauna occurring within the Herbert & Patricia Wagers Devil's Backbone Park. We intended to establish a partial baseline inventory that might assist Preble County Park District in developing a sound plan for conserving and managing this unique property. The resultant database may also benefit a broader audience, including administrators, conservation groups, researchers, land managers, and others who desire to document and conserve the biological diversity of the local landscape.

Methodology

From August 2022 through early October 2023, we conducted a series of surveys which allowed us to identify and catalogue some of the Park's key biota. Coverage was biased toward areas nearest the trails, but we also searched creek beds, hillsides, and other areas. We made a total of 16 visits to the Park and spent a cumulative 64 field hours conducting the surveys. Two of our colleagues aided our efforts on a few occasions.

Much of our work was devoted to cataloguing the Park's diverse plant life. However, we also marked a single specimen representing many of the trees and a few notable shrubs by affixing a serially-numbered tag with an aluminum nail or wire. In selecting these specimens, we sought mature individuals that exhibited the species' particular characteristics and could be easily observed from an existing trail. A key at the end of this report provides each marked specimen's identity, tag ID number, diameter at breast height, and GPS coordinates; the accompanying map indicates their approximate locations. If desired, Park staff or volunteers could relocate these specimens, mount interpretive signage, affix identification plaques, etc.

We spent relatively little time searching for animals; however, we recorded the amphibians and reptiles that we opportunistically encountered, and we intensively surveyed the avifauna by sight and sound. Birds were inventoried in all seasons to ensure that we detected migrants as well as breeding residents. Our records, and those of four other birders, were entered into

eBird, a citizen-science platform that organizes occurrence and abundance information by location. We petitioned eBird officials for the Park (as well as Garber Forest) to become an “eBird Hotspot” so that, over time, the efforts of visiting birders will build out this database. An up-to-date Field Checklist for this location is here:

<https://ebird.org/printableList?regionCode=L20470456&yr=all&m=>

The following tables present the biota that we identified with reasonable certainty during the project period. We elected to use common names that are most familiar to us or that have been used locally, and Latin epithets that have general acceptance and/or historical usage.

FLORA

We identified at least 178 different taxa of plants. These we categorized as ferns and mosses; grasses and other graminoids; forbs; vines; brambles; small trees and shrubs; trees; and invasive plants.

Ferns and Mosses (5)

Maidenhair fern	<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>	Scouring rush	<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>
Rattlesnake fern	<i>Botrypus virginianus</i>	Star moss	<i>Syntrichia ruralis</i>
Lowland brittle fern	<i>Cystopteris protrusa</i>		

Grasses and other Graminoids (9)

Eastern woodland sedge	<i>Carex blanda</i>	Silky wild rye	<i>Elymus villosus</i>
Fragrant flatsedge	<i>Cyperus odoratus</i>	Whitegrass	<i>Leersia virginica</i>
	<i>Dichanthelium</i>		
Deer-tongue	<i>clandestinum</i>	Foxtail	<i>Setaria sp.</i>
Barnyardgrass	<i>Echinochloa crus-galli</i>	Purpletop	<i>Tridens flavus</i>
Bottlebrush grass	<i>Elymus hystrix</i>		

Forbs (100)

Black cohosh	<i>Actaea racemosa</i>	Sweet cicely	<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>
White snakeroot	<i>Ageratina altissima</i>	Tall rattlesnakeroot	<i>Nabalus altissimus</i>
		Three-leaved	
Woodland agrimony	<i>Agrimonia rostellata</i>	rattlesnakeroot	<i>Nabalus trifoliolatus</i>
Carpet bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Daffodil	<i>Narcissus sp.</i>

		Common evening-primrose	<i>Oenothera biennis</i>
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Common Yellow woodsorrel	<i>Oxalis stricta</i>
Meadow garlic	<i>Allium canadense</i>	Golden ragwort	<i>Packera aurea</i>
Small white leek	<i>Allium tricoccum</i>	Butterweed	<i>Packera glabella</i>
Pigweed	<i>Amaranthus sp.</i>	Roundleaf ragwort	<i>Packera obovata</i>
Giant ragweed	<i>Ambrosia trifida</i>	Woodland phlox	<i>Phlox divaricata</i>
Thimbleweed	<i>Anemone cylindrica</i>	Ground cherry	<i>Physalis sp.</i>
Pussytoes	<i>Antennaria sp.</i>	Pokeweed	<i>Phytolacca americana</i>
Jack-in-the-pulpit	<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	Clearweed	<i>Pilea pumila</i>
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Lance-leaved plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Wild ginger	<i>Asarum canadense</i>	Mayapple	<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>
Large-leaved aster	<i>Aster macrophyllus</i>	Solomon's seal	<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>
Smooth rock cress	<i>Boechera laevigata</i>	Smartweed	<i>Polygonum sp.</i>
False nettle	<i>Boehmeria cylindrica</i>		
	Cardamine		
Cutleaf toothwort	<i>concatenata</i>	Whiteflower leafcup	<i>Polymnia canadensis</i>
	<i>Chaerophyllum</i>	White	
Southern chervil	<i>tainturieri</i>	rattlesnakeroot	<i>Prenanthes alba</i>
Lambsquarter	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Small-flowered buttercup	<i>Ranunculus abortivus</i>
Common chickory	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Brown-eyed susan	<i>Rudbeckia triloba</i>
Spring beauty	<i>Claytonia virginica</i>	Bitter dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Mullein foxglove	<i>Dasistoma macrophylla</i>	Bloodroot	<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>
Wild carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Common soapwort	<i>Saponaria officinalis</i>
Squirrel corn	<i>Dicentra canadensis</i>	Stringy stonecrop	<i>Sedum sarmentosum</i>
Dutchman's breeches	<i>Dicentra cucullaria</i>	Woodland stonecrop	<i>Sedum ternatum</i>
False rue-anoneme	<i>Enemion biternatum</i>	Leafcup	<i>Smallanthus uvedalius</i>
Cutleaf burnweed	<i>Erechtites glomeratus</i>	Blue-stemmed goldenrod	<i>Solidago caesia</i>
Harbinger of Spring	<i>Erigenia bulbosa</i>	Canada goldenrod	<i>Solidago canadensis</i>
Robin's plantain	<i>Erigeron pulchellus</i>	Zigzag goldenrod	<i>Solidago flexicaulis</i>
	<i>Erythronium</i>		
Yellow trout-lily	<i>americanum</i>	Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
	<i>Eupatorium</i>		
Boneset	<i>perfoliatum</i>	Star chickweed	<i>Stellaria pubera</i>

Joe pye weed	<i>Eutrochium</i> sp.	New England aster	<i>Sympyotrichum</i>
Catchweed bedstraw	<i>Galium aparine</i>	Frost aster	<i>novae-angliae</i>
Fragrant bedstraw	<i>Galium triflorum</i>	Short's aster	<i>Sympyotrichum</i>
Wild geranium	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	Early meadow rue	<i>pilosum</i>
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Rue anemone	<i>shortii</i>
Stickseed	<i>Hackelia virginiana</i>	Nodding trillium	<i>Thalictrum dioicum</i>
Common sneeze weed	<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Large-flowered trillium	<i>Thalictrum</i>
Prairie alum root	<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i>	Sessile trillium	<i>Trillium grandiflorum</i>
Wild hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> <i>Hydrophyllum</i>	Orange fruited horse gentian	<i>Trillium sessile</i>
Broadleaf waterleaf	<i>canadense</i>	Moth mullein	<i>Triosteum aurantiacum</i>
Jewelweed	<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	Mullein	<i>Verbascum blattaria</i>
Yellow jewelweed	<i>Impatiens pallida</i>	Wingstem	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Two-flower dwarf dandelion	<i>Krigia biflora</i>	American Speedwell	<i>Verbesina alternifolia</i>
Wild lettuce	<i>Lactuca virosa</i>	Downy yellow violet	<i>Veronica americana</i>
Purple deadnettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	Common blue violet	<i>Viola pubescens</i>
Great blue lobelia	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Striped cream violet	<i>Viola sororia</i>
Heath wood-rush	<i>Luzula multiflora</i>	Barren strawberry	<i>Viola striata</i>
Water mint	<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Cocklebur	<i>Waldsteinia ternata</i>
			<i>Xanthium strumarium</i>

Vines (6)

Common moonseed	<i>Menispermum canadense</i>	Poison ivy	<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>
Virginia creeper	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Riverbank grape	<i>Vitis riparia</i>
Common greenbrier	<i>Smilax rotundifolia</i>	Frost grape	<i>Vitis vulpina</i>

Brambles (4)

Prickly gooseberry	<i>Ribes cynosbati</i>	Blackberry	<i>Rubus allegheniensis</i>
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Multiflora rose *Rosa multiflora* Black raspberry *Rubus occidentalis*

Small Trees and Shrubs (9)

			<i>Euonymus</i>
Pawpaw	<i>Asimina triloba</i>	Eastern wahoo	<i>atropurpureus</i>
Eastern redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Hop-hornbeam	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>
Roughleaf Dogwood	<i>Cornus drummondii</i>	Arrowwood	
Flowering dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>	viburnum	<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus sp.</i>	Black-haw viburnum	<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>

Trees (32)

Box elder	<i>Acer negundo</i>	White mulberry	<i>Morus alba</i>
Black maple	<i>Acer nigrum</i>	Red mulberry	<i>Morus rubra</i>
Red maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Black gum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>
Sugar maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>	American sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>
Ohio buckeye	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>	Cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoides</i>
Bitternut hickory	<i>Carya cordiformis</i>	Osage orange	<i>Maclura pomifera</i>
Pignut hickory	<i>Carya glabra</i>	Black cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>
Shagbark hickory	<i>Carya ovata</i>	White oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>
Southern catalpa	<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>	Bur oak	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>
White ash	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	Chinquapin oak	<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>
	<i>Fraxinus</i>		
Blue ash	<i>quadriangulata</i>	Shumard oak	<i>Quercus shumardii</i>
	<i>Gleditsia</i>		
Honey locust	<i>triacanthos</i>	Black oak	<i>Quercus velutina</i>
Kentucky coffeetree	<i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i>	Black locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>
Black walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>	Basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>
Eastern red cedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	American elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>
	<i>Liriodendron</i>		
Yellow poplar	<i>tulipifera</i>	Red elm	<i>Ulmus rubra</i>

Invasive plants (13)

Tree of Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Privet	<i>Ligustrum sp.</i>
Asiatic dayflower	<i>Commelina communis</i>	Amur honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera maackii</i>
Poison hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Moneywort	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>
Common teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Japanese stiltgrass	<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>

Cutleaf teasel	<i>Dipsacus laciniatus</i>	Wild parsnip	<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>
Autumn olive	<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>	Callery pear	<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>
Burning bush	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>		

Many other species of invasive or noxious plants undoubtedly occur within the Park. In considering factors such as abundance, spatial distribution, and invasive potential, those currently posing the most serious environmental threat are Tree of Heaven, Amur honeysuckle, and Japanese stiltgrass.

FAUNA

Amphibians (4)

Northern cricket frog	<i>Acris crepitans</i>	Spring peeper	<i>Pseudacris crucifer</i>
Fowler's toad	<i>Bufo fowleri</i>	Green frog	<i>Rana clamitans</i>

Other amphibians that probably are present include streamside salamander (*Ambystoma barbouri*), American toad (*Bufo americanus*), two-lined salamander (*Eurycea bislineata*), long-tailed salamander (*Eurycea longicauda*), Cope's grey treefrog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*), and red-backed salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*).

Reptiles (1)

Queen snake	<i>Regina septemvittata</i>
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Other reptiles that probably are present include spiny softshell (*Apalone spinifer*), racer (*Coluber constrictor*), ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*), eastern hog-nosed snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*), northern watersnake (*Nerodia sipedon*), ratsnake (*Pantherophis spiloides*), eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*), and gartersnake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*).

Birds (76)

Waterfowl		Martins and Swallows	
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i>
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>		
Grouse, Quail & Allies		Nuthatches	
		Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>

<i>Wild Turkey</i>	<i>Carya cordiformis</i>	<i>White-breasted Nuthatch</i>	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>
Pigeons & Doves		Treecreepers	
<i>Rock Pigeon</i>	<i>Columba livia</i>	<i>Brown Creeper</i>	<i>Certhia americana</i>
<i>Mourning Dove</i>	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		
Cuckoos		Gnatcatchers	
<i>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</i>	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	<i>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</i>	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>
Swifts			
<i>Chimney swift</i>	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Wrens	
Hummingbirds		<i>House Wren</i>	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
<i>Rubythroated hummingbird</i>	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>	<i>Carolina Wren</i>	<i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>
Cranes			
<i>Sandhill Crane</i>	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	Mimics	
Shorebirds		<i>Gray Catbird</i>	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
<i>Killdeer</i>	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	<i>Brown Thrasher</i>	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>
Herons, Ibis & Allies		<i>Northern Mockingbird</i>	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>
<i>Great Blue Heron</i>	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Thrushes	
Vultures, Hawks & Allies		<i>Eastern Bluebird</i>	<i>Sialia sialis</i>
<i>Black Vulture</i>	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	<i>Swainson's Thrush</i>	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	<i>Wood Thrush</i>	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>
<i>Red-shouldered Hawk</i>	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	<i>American Robin</i>	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
<i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Waxwings	
		<i>Cedar Waxwing</i>	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>
		Old World Sparrows	
		<i>House Sparrow</i>	<i>Passer domesticus</i>

			<i>Finches, Euphonias & Allies</i>
Kingfishers			
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>		American Goldfinch <i>Spinus tristis</i>
Woodpeckers			New World Sparrows
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>
Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
Red-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	Eastern Towhee	<i>Pipilo erythrrophthalmus</i>
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>	Blackbirds	
Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>
		Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
Tyrant Flycatchers		Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>
Acadian Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax virescens</i>	Wood-Warblers	
Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	Kentucky Warbler	<i>Geothlypis formosa</i>
Great Crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Vireos		Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>
White-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo griseus</i>	Magnolia Warbler	<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>
Yellow-throated Vireo	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	Bay-breasted Warbler	<i>Setophaga castanea</i>
Blue-headed Vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>	Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Yellow-throated Warbler	<i>Setophaga dominica</i>
White-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo griseus</i>	Black-throated Green Warble	<i>Setophaga virens</i>

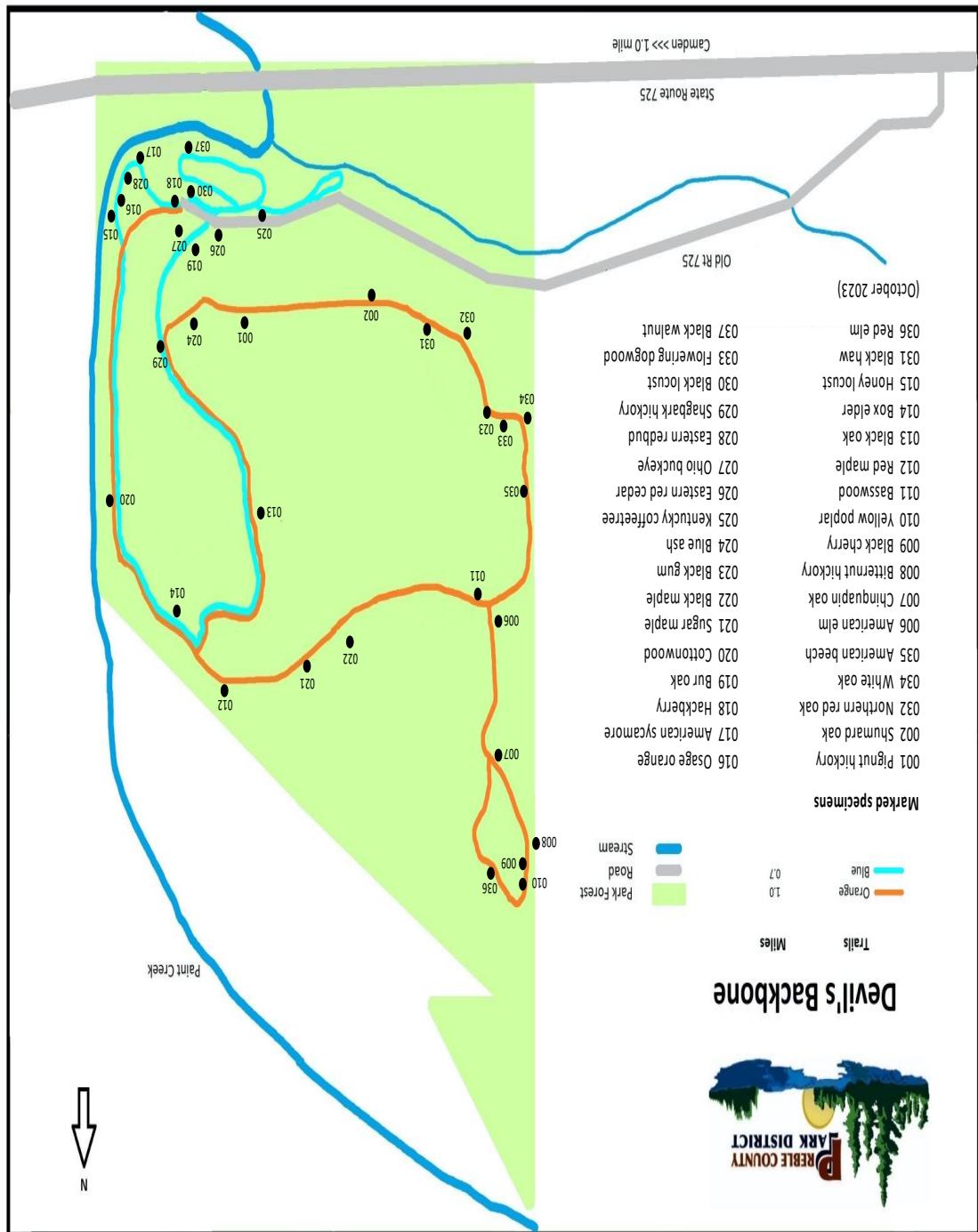
<i>Yellow-throated Vireo</i>	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	<i>Cardinals, Grosbeaks & Allies</i>
<i>Jays and Crows</i>		
<i>Blue Jay</i>	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	<i>Summer Tanager</i> <i>Piranga rubra</i>
<i>American Crow</i>	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	<i>Scarlet Tanager</i> <i>Piranga olivacea</i>
<i>Tits, Chickadees & Titmice</i>		<i>Northern Cardinal</i> <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
<i>Carolina Chickadee</i>	<i>Poecile carolinensis</i>	<i>Indigo Bunting</i> <i>Passerina cyanea</i>
<i>Tufted Titmouse</i>	<i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	

This inventory was curated from 24 complete eBird checklists submitted during the period 8 August 2022 to 3 October 2023.

Marked Trees and Shrubs (33)

Species	Tag No.	DBH (in.)	Longitude	Latitude
Pignut hickory	001	15	39° 37' 37.4"	84° 39' 57.2"
Shumard oak	002	23	39° 37' 37.0"	84° 39' 59.0"
American elm	006	20	39° 37' 40.0"	84° 40' 2.0"
Chinquapin oak	007	26	39° 37' 43.7"	84° 39' 58.5"
Bitternut hickory	008	25	39° 37' 44.0"	84° 40' 2.1"
Black cherry	009	13	39° 37' 43.9"	84° 40' 2.9"
Yellow poplar	010	24	39° 37' 45.5"	84° 40' 3.2"
Basswood	011	13	39° 37' 39.9"	84° 40' 1.0"
Red maple	012	13	39° 37' 41.3"	84° 39' 54.6"
Black oak	013	30	39° 37' 32.4"	84° 39' 55.9"
Box elder	014	7	39° 37' 39.3"	84° 39' 52.3"
Honey locust	015	23	39° 37' 37.9"	84° 39' 50.6"
Osage orange	016	22	39° 37' 36.1"	84° 39' 51.3"
American sycamore	017	18	39° 37' 35.8"	84° 39' 50.7"
Hackberry	018	13	39° 37' 36.2"	84° 39' 51.5"
Bur oak	019	21	39° 37' 37.3"	84° 39' 54.1"
Cottonwood	020	21	39° 37' 40.6"	84° 39' 52.1"
Sugar maple	021	15	39° 37' 38.8"	84° 39' 56.6"
Black maple	022	21	39° 37' 40.7"	84° 39' 56.5"
Black gum	023	11	39° 37' 38.6"	84° 40' 00.5"
Blue ash	024	19	39° 37' 37.4"	84° 39' 57.1"
Kentucky coffeetree	025	6	39° 37' 36.3"	84° 39' 56.0"
Eastern red cedar	026	10	39° 37' 36.1"	84° 39' 53.8"
Ohio buckeye	027	9	39° 37' 37.0"	84° 39' 53.8"
Eastern redbud	028	6	39° 37' 35.7"	84° 39' 51.4"
Shagbark hickory	029	15	39° 37' 37.6"	84° 39' 56.1"
Black locust	030	11	39° 37' 35.4"	84° 39' 53.9"
Blackhaw viburnum	031	2.5	39° 37' 37.1"	84° 39' 59.8"
Northern red oak	032	18	39° 37' 36.8"	84° 39' 59.7"
Flowering dogwood	033	3.5	39° 37' 38.1"	84° 40' 1.3"
White oak	034	30	39° 37' 37.9"	84° 40' 2.1"
Beech	035	25	39° 37' 39.6"	84° 40' 2.8"
Red elm	036	11	39° 37' 46.2"	84° 40' 2.4"
Black walnut	037	16	39° 37' 34.9"	84° 39' 53.0"

A suitable specimen of white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) could not be located.
Map attached shows the approximate location of marked specimens along trails.





Jon and Amy Costanzo surveying plants
at Devil's Backbone Park in April 2023.
Photo by M. F. Wright