

## Blue Ridge Parkway Field Trip for Naturalists September 24, 2016

*Submitted by Dennis Burnette, Trip Leader*

On Saturday, September 24, 20 folks gathered at the Blue Ridge Music Center on the Parkway for a nature field trip. This was a joint trip hosted by the Piedmont Bird Club, T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society, Carolina Butterfly Society, and N.C. Native Plant Society. In addition, members of Forsyth Audubon joined us, so we had lots of knowledgeable people to help identify critters and wildflowers.

This has been an annual field trip for naturalists of all kinds. We chose the date because it's near the peak of migration for hawks. We didn't see any large kettles of hawks, but we did see several Broad-winged Hawks overhead. Birders in the group were pleased to see a number of warblers and other migrants.

This date also is prime time for Monarch Butterfly migration. These butterflies tend to follow the Parkway on their journey south to Mexico. We didn't see a huge number this time, but we did see two adults and four caterpillars. We saw about 16 species of butterflies in all.

After exploring the music center, we had a picnic in a nearby meadow and then proceeded south of the Blue Ridge Parkway for a few miles. The early autumn wildflowers were blooming in profusion. As hoped, there was something to see for just about everyone on this beautiful, sunny, cool fall day.