

**Pocahontas County West Virginia Birding Trails
Gaudineer Knob and Scenic Area**



County Region- Northern

Ownership- USDA Forest Service,

Management- Monongahela National Forest- **Telephone-** 304-456-3335

Habitat and Site description- Red Spruce and mixed Red Spruce/northern hardwood forest, nearby high elevation wetland with Balsam Fir. At an elevation of 4,445 feet above sea level, Gaudineer Knob, the highest elevation of Shavers Mountain, a ridge of the Alleghenies, is comprised of nearly pure stands of Red Spruce offering habitat to many boreal forest birds. The Gaudineer Scenic Area has an area of 140 Acres and an elevation of about 4000 feet was preserved as a result of a surveying error. This area supports habitat for an exceptionally diverse array of boreal forest birds, with 66 breeding species observed with a total species count of about 186 over the years. This general area is one of just a few in North America where four species of Brown-backed Thrush breed. Most species listed can regularly be expected in breeding season. Those labeled with an asterisk inhabit this area, but may take considerable effort to be observed.

While not visible to most visitors, this area is the home of the endangered Cheat Mountain salamander, one of the rare endemic species of the southern Appalachians. The small salamander, black with gold flecking, is found only in these parts of the Allegheny Highlands. Black bear and the nocturnal West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel also call this high elevation spruce forest their home.

Point of Reference- Gaudineer Knob Scenic Area parking lot. (Bathrooms and picnic tables are available) N79.50.37.502/W-38.36.55.747N. **Scenic Area Elevation** - about 4000 feet.

Directions to the Trail Head Parking Area

Gaudineer Knob N79.50.37.502/W- 38.36.55.747N. From Durbin, take US 250 North to the top of Back Alleghany Mountain and turn right on CR 27. Bare left at the fork and proceed to the Gaudineer Knob Scenic Area parking area. From Huttonsville, take US250 South to CR27 and turn left.

Gaudineer Interpretive/Virgin Spruce Trail N79.50.37.28/W- 38.37.44.489N. Return to the fork on CR27 and turn left and proceed to the Virgin Timber parking area on the right.

Alleghany Trail- One can access the Allegheny Trail, which runs nearly 300 miles in West Virginia, at the Virgin Spruce Timber Area by hiking counter-clock wise around the loop trail and turning south/right. The southern trailhead of this section, 79.50.19.518W- 38.35.49.098N, can be accessed from Durbin by driving North on US 250 to the top of Back Alleghany Mountain and turn right after a few miles on CR250/1. Follow this short distance to where the Allegheny Trail crosses CR250/1. Take the trail west which is left.

Trail descriptions-

Gaudineer Knob Trail is a loop trail about 0.3-miles and an easy walk through a Red Spruce Forest.

Gaudineer Interpretive/Virgin Spruce Trail loops 0.2-miles through the 50-acre virgin forest. It takes moderate effort. The Red Spruce range up to 40 inches in diameter at chest height and some are nearly 300 years old. As the virgin trees die out, red and sugar maple, yellow birch and beech are moving into the area.

Alleghany Trail from the Virgin Spruce area to US250 is a strenuous 5.6 mile mountain trail.