

Virginia Grasslands to Visit
Alaina Krakowiak - February 2026

Blackwater Ecological Preserve

Access: By arrangement with Old Dominion University. Short, flat hike.

Type: Longleaf pine savanna

Location: Isle of Wight Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/blackwater>

Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve

Access: Open to the public. Steep, 2+ mile hike.

Type: High elevation outcrop barren

Location: Floyd Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/buffalo>

The Cedars Natural Area Preserve

Access: Must be arranged with steward. Can hike varying distances into the site.

Type: Limestone woodlands and barrens

Location: Lee Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/thecedars>

Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve

Access: Open to the public, but some off-trail hiking is required to get to the barren. Would be better accessed with a guide. Relatively steep hike, 1-2 mi.

Type: Dolomite barrens

Location: Russell Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/cleveland>

Cowbane Prairie Natural Area Preserve

Access: Must be arranged with steward. Short, flat hike.

Type: Wet meadow, calcareous spring marsh

Location: Bath Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/cowbane>

Dense Blazing Star Field

Access: USFS. Roadside access.

Type: Mesic meadow

Location: Montgomery Co., VA

Link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/regions/southern/DenseBlazingStarField/index.shtml>

Douthat State Park

Access: Short hike up Beard's Gap Trail behind visitor center; the shale barren is extremely steep with unstable soils.

Type: Shale barren

Location: Bath Co., VA

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/douthat>

False Cape State Park

Access: Open to the public. Short, flat walk.

Type: Dune grasslands

Location: City of Virginia Beach

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/false-cape>

First Landing State Park

Access: Open to the public. Short, flat walk.

Type: Dune grasslands

Location: City of Virginia Beach

Link: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/first-landing>

Maple Flat Sinkhole Ponds

Access: USFS. Flat, could hike anywhere between 0.3-1 mi.

Type: Shenandoah Valley sinkhole ponds

Location: Augusta Co., VA

Link: <https://birdingvirginia.org/augusta/hotspots/maple-flat-ponds>

Maury Monument

Access: Essentially roadside access, with options to explore along creek.

Type: River scour

Location: Rockbridge Co., VA

Link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Ek6RjFkfJ6rBHioJ7>

Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield

Access: Open to the public. Short, flat hike.

Type: Piedmont prairie

Location: Spotsylvania Co., VA

Link: <https://www.nps.gov/frsp/planyourvisit/spotsyvanibattlefield.htm>

White Top Mountain

Access: USFS. Summit sometimes accessible via rough gravel road; road subject to closures.

Type: Southern Appalachian Grassy Bald

Location: Grayson Co., VA

Link: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/sites/whitetop-mountain/>