

Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism WG  
Attending: 23+

Agenda:

- Call to order, introductions, and review of agenda
- 2024 Grant Updates: Implementing Recommendations from the Wildlife Viewer Survey: Inclusion in Wildlife Viewing for People with Disabilities.
  - Working with VTech on this grant
  - Report available online
  - Literature review about disability prevalence, wildlife viewing, accessible trail design, accessible programs, accessible interpretation signs, partnering with disabled wildlife viewers.
  - Performed focus groups in all 4 AFWA regions; 32 disabled and/or neurodivergent wildlife viewers; asked them what they need:
    - To access trails?
    - To feel included in programming?
    - From state agencies who want to partner effectively?
  - Tasks completed: analyze the focus groups responses; co-production workshop with state agency staff
  - Deliverables coming soon: host public webinar to share findings and recommendations (spring 2025); publish report of findings and recommendations (spring 2025)
  - Not only looking at what you can do, but the scalability of those implementation actions (what you can do with the budget you have)
  - Resources available at <https://viewing.fishwild.vt.edu/>
- 2025 Grant Updates: Supporting inclusion of disabled wildlife viewers in state agency programs by conducting and sharing findings from case studies.
  - Contracted with VTech on this grant
  - Wildlife viewing: closely observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife; visiting parks or natural areas to observe, feed, or photograph wildlife and maintaining planting and natural areas for the benefit of wildlife.
  - 57% of people participate in wildlife viewing
  - 1 in 4 Americans have a disability; 39% of wildlife viewers reported having some sort of disability that is a barrier to participating in wildlife viewing.
  - It's the law that people have access to the outdoors (ADA).
    - Architectural barriers act, 1968
    - American with Disabilities Act, 1990
  - Develop detailed case study reports of successful projects for states to model in their state.
  - Case study research: accessible wildlife viewing location; wildlife viewing program; loaner adaptive equipment program; effective engagement with a local disability community.

- Each case study will include: in-depth interviews, photos, supporting resources (budgets, design plans, outreach emails, liability forms, marketing copy).
  - Sharing deliverables: reports, webinars, WVNT toolkit, conferences
  - Aim: compliance with ADA laws
  - Which accessible programs should we approach?
    1. Run by a wildlife agency, or in partnership with a local organization;
    2. Designed intentionally to be accessible for disabled wildlife viewers
  - American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is currently doing this type of work with birding; looking for state partnerships to expand this work.
- Check out <https://viewing.fishwild.vt.edu/>
- 2025 Spring/Fall Webinar Series Update
  - Topics came from the 2024 WVNT Academy
  - **Webinar: Wild Bird Feeding and Best Management Practices: Finding Common Ground**  
 Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern  
 Presented by: Stephen Living, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
  - **Webinar: Inner Workings of a Cost-Recovery Wildlife Viewing Program**  
 Date: Thursday, April 3, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern  
 Presented by: Jeff Meyers, Wildlife Viewing Program Manager, and Cheyenne Towne, Wildlife Viewing Program Coordinator, Arizona Game and Fish Department
  - **Webinar: Shaping the Future of Wildlife Recreation: Insights from the Next Generation and Global Conservation**  
 Date: Thursday, May 1, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern  
 Presented by: Richard von Furstenberg, Postdoctoral Research Associate, and Kushagra Meshram, Doctoral Fellow, Larson Lab, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University
- Fall webinar schedule
  - **Webinar: Expanding the Roost: explorations in community-based engagement through the lens of bat conservation**  
 Date: Thursday, September 4, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern
  - **Webinar: Handing over the controls: New Applications of Wildlife Viewing Camps Can More Actively Engage your Audiences**  
 Date: Thursday, October 2, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern
  - **Webinar: Living with Black Bears: A Collaborative Outreach Project**
  - Date: Thursday, November 6, 2025  
 Time: 2-3pm Eastern
- 6th Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy: Seattle, Washington
  - [www.wvntacademy.com](http://www.wvntacademy.com)
  - Request for Proposals discussion and invitation
    - Focal areas

1. Information and education
  2. Human dimensions of wildlife viewing
  3. Connecting with your community
  4. Environmental ethics and responsible recreation
  5. Marketing, advertising, and tourism
  6. Wearing many hats: performing other duties as assigned.
- Deadline for submissions is June 16, 2025
  - WNVN Academy: February 16-20, 2026, at Cedarbrook Lodge, Seattle, Washington
  - Sponsorship opportunities available – will help to defray cost of registration for attendees
- Ongoing communication tools
    - Webinars, Facebook Group, Monthly Calls
      - Facebook Group – **Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Working Group**
      - Monthly calls –to be added, email Shelly [shelly.plante@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:shelly.plante@tpwd.texas.gov)
  - WVNT Updates from States/Organizations – Roundtable Discussion
    - Come prepared to share any milestones, successes, innovative projects, or questions your organization wants to share or discuss with colleagues from other states/provinces
    - TX – Birding Classic Contest
      - 1400 birders birding during the contest – goal is outreach, not \$\$
    - NE & VA also doing similar contests
    - PA – Philadelphia Flower show
      - 250000 people attend show
      - Secured booth at show and engaged with thousands of individuals
    - ID – Pocket Guide Books
      - Tying back to species in SWAP
      - Owls, bats, raptors, ungulates
      - Dragonflies in the pipeline
    - ID – Working with Boise Hawks (minor league baseball) on implementing a live camera on an Osprey nest that is situated within the stadium
      - Reaching a new audience of baseball fans
    - OH – Field Guide Series
      - Launch field guides at Diversity Conference
    - OH – Trails added to an app that can be searched by users
    - TX – working on online store thru TX Foundation
    - NE – EDU and planning divisions working on field guide/trail map with viewing info that ties back to SWAP (Cowboy Trail)
  - ADJOURNED