

## Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group

March 26, 2024

Attendees: 22

### Agenda:

Call to order, introductions, and review of agenda

2023 MSCG: Implementing recommendations from the Wildlife Viewer Survey: Enhancing relevancy and engaging support from a broader constituency

- How can we have a better conversation with wildlife viewers
- Wildlife viewing: closely observing, feeding and photography of wildlife
- 4K+ respondents to wildlife viewer survey
- Wildlife viewers mostly participated in Feeding wildlife birds
- 54% of respondents were only wildlife viewers in the survey
- 75% of wildlife viewers participated in viewing on their own home or property; 52% participated on state-managed lands
- 61% of wildlife viewers were beginners or novices
- What do wildlife viewers want to support their viewing?
  - More info on state wildlife (41%)
  - More info about where to see wildlife (40%)
  - Access to more places to view wildlife (35%)
- How do wildlife viewers like to support conservation financially
  - Purchasing products that benefit wildlife (62%)
  - Donating money to support wildlife conservation (56%)
- Wildlife viewers will increase contributions if they know where the funds go
- Co-production workshop generated 5 recommendations:
  - Develop programs for an engage with wildlife viewers
  - Broaden constituency to wildlife viewers
  - Develop opportunities for viewers to financially support agencies
  - Support agencies in implementing results
  - Conduct future research
  - Why use a CoP for wildlife viewing?
    - State agency staff stated that they would greatly benefit from dedicated, structured support for implementing new projects based on survey recommendations and access to a central source of inspiring case studies.
- Wildlife Viewing Toolkit now available on website: <https://viewing.fishwild.vt.edu>
  - Website includes: research (by state), case studies (how wildlife viewers spend their time and money), resources (examples of good wildlife viewing webpages, etc)
  - Website storymap available
- 14 State agency wildlife viewing projects

2024 Grant: Implementing Recommendations from the Wildlife Viewer Survey: Inclusion in Wildlife Viewing for People with Disabilities.

- Learn about this new project
- Upcoming webinars on disability and wildlife recreation

Thursday 12-1pm EST Webinar to learn about urban wildlife viewers

Now on phase 3. **Inclusion of viewers with disabilities**

- 1 in 4 people have disabilities (physical and mental)
- More wildlife viewers identified as having a disability than the general population
- 39% of wildlife viewers experience somewhat, quite a bit, or a great deal of accessibility challenges when wildlife viewing
- **Project Goal: Develop a menu of research-based options for state agencies to use to increase the accessibility of wildlife viewing.**
- Review of words to use and not to use\*
- Doing literature to add to the list
- List of resources to help\*
- If agency has an ADA coordinator please reach out to Shelly
- Emily: [sinkular@vt.edu](mailto:sinkular@vt.edu)

Universal Design – Accessible design, parameters. Ex. Instead of building steps and stairs, just build ramp and all can use.

Neurodiversity- question regarding the extent of neurodiversity in accessibility work.

Buckets Neurodivergent / vision, hearing, speaking / mobility

Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy: Duck, North Carolina

- [www.wvntacademy.com](http://www.wvntacademy.com)

Post-Academy updates

- Sponsors to run academy every two years since 2016
- Organizations across the sectors represented
- 3-day conference
- Share Fair – great for finding new ideas. (shared swag, brochures, stickers, etc)
- GooseChase App

What do attendees want? (Ask to share contacts and resources if your agency has any)

- Viewing program info on more than birds (ie butterflies, etc)
- More birding / wildlife train info/sharintg
- More wildlife viewer data and research from more sources
- Presentations from broad array of professional
- Tips and tricks
- Best practices and replicable viewing programs
- Social media and communication best practices
- Improving diversity and inclusion in wildlife viewing

**Save the Date** - 2026 Wildlife Viewing Academy

WVNTAcademy.com Feb 16-20, 2026 Washington State

Request from proposals next March – all kinds of presenters. (not just birding)

Working Group Communications

- Webinars
- Facebook group (Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Working Group)
- Monthly calls – 30-40ish people Reach out to Shelly if you want to be added to list

- Academy (every two years)
- AFWA and NA Annual Meetings

Link to YouTube Channel on AFWA WVNT Working Group Committee Page

#### 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
- Birding Bowl – First Weekend of May, (Nebraska)
- Viewing Blinds (Nebraska)
- Nebraska has a Birding Month (May) drew in a lot of novices.
- Bird City Programs – under the umbrella of ABC
- ABC has a website to help set up a Bird City Program [birdcity.org](http://birdcity.org)
- Kansas City Birding Trails
- Florida: Partnering with Centers (autism, etc)
- Utilizing GooseChase
- Neurodiversity (ABC) – Neurodiversity bird trails
- Wildlife Viewing Cam Programs

#### Ongoing communication tools

- Webinars, Facebook Group, Monthly Calls

Adjourned – 2:31 pm

[\\*See PowerPoint for specifics: Click HERE.](#)