

Accessible wildlife viewing locations



In 2024, we held focus groups with 32 disabled and neurodivergent wildlife viewers from across the United States, and asked them, “What physical features make it easier for you to participate in wildlife viewing?” and “What changes to wildlife viewing locations would improve your experience?” This is what they told us.

Parking and driving

Ample parking

Van accessible parking



Auto routes through wildlife locations

More benches!

In the shade

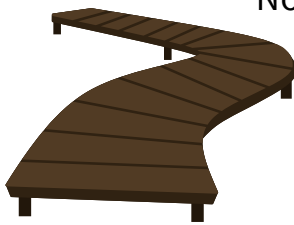
With back support



Bench alternatives
e.g. picnic tables, rocks, logs

Trails

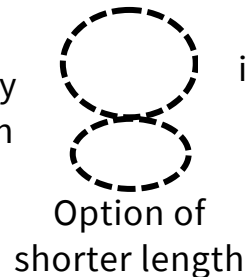
Firm and stable surfaces



No steps

Safety barriers

Detailed accessibility information (see over for more)



Wayfinding and interpretive signs



Amenities

Accessible bathrooms



Weather mitigation stations



Shade, fans, drinking water...

Tactile interpretive signs



Observation blinds and platforms (with no steps)

Questions? Freya McGregor: freyamcgregor@vt.edu

For more info visit viewing.fishwild.vt.edu/disabled-wildlife-viewers

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Providing detailed information for all wildlife viewing locations

In 2024, we held focus groups with 32 disabled and neurodivergent wildlife viewers from across the United States, and asked them about inclusive wildlife viewing locations. Overwhelmingly, a lack of detailed information about wildlife viewing locations was a barrier for them. This is the information they need to know ahead of time for all locations.

Arrival information

☐ Number of van accessible and reserved accessible parking spaces



☐ Bathroom information.
Are they ADA compliant?



Trail information

☐ Trail type, e.g. out-and-back, loop

☐ Distance. Is this one way, or back to the trailhead?



☐ Trail surface(s) and conditions, such as the presence of cracks

☐ Gradient in percentage, and the distance this lasts



☐ Elevation: at the trailhead and changes along trail



☐ Overall level of difficulty

Environmental conditions

☐ Habitats the trail travels through

☐ Shade available



☐ Likely sensory input e.g. nearby noise from a busy road



☐ Potential irritations e.g. mosquitos

Access features

☐ Benches: number, locations, and are they shaded?



☐ Location and type of shelters

☐ Any hand railings or safety barriers?

☐ Any observation decks or towers?

☐ Are there any interpretive signs? Wayfinding signs?



☐ Any obstacles, e.g. a step up onto the boardwalk, a log over the trail, or damage to the roof over the observation deck.

☐ Are there any steps? If yes:

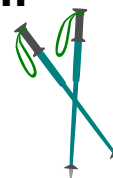


☐ How far down the trail?

☐ Is there a ramp to avoid them?

Additional information

☐ Is any loaner mobility equipment available? How does someone obtain it?



☐ Contact person for questions: phone number and email address