Birdability Week 2021

Monday 18th – Sunday 24th October, 2021

Birdability Week is a celebration of birders with disabilities and other health concerns, and an opportunity to share resources and ideas to help the birding community be accessible, inclusive and welcoming to everybody and every body! An annual event held in October and supported by National Audubon, it was inspired by #BlackBirdersWeek, Latino Conservation Week and Let’s Go Birding Together.

The first Birdability Week, held during October 2020, launched Birdability into becoming a nonprofit organization. This year, we are excited to celebrate inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in the birding community and the outdoors through online workshops, panels and interactive activities, and we want your Audubon chapter, bird club or nature center to get involved!

Who?
An individual, local Audubon chapter, young birder's club chapter, a bird banding station, a group of friends, families... Anyone can host an accessible bird outing. These outings are designed intentionally for birders (and beginner birders) who experience an accessibility challenge as a result of a disability or other health concern. (That's 1 in 4 Americans, according to the US Census Bureau in 2020.) Read on to find out how easy it is, and check out the Birdability Guidance Documents at birdability.org to help as you plan your event.

What?
An accessible and inclusive birding outing. Check out Writing Bird Outing Event Descriptions when drafting the write-up of your outing.

Where?
Deciding where to hold an accessible outing can be tricky if you’re not sure where to start. Read about Access Considerations for folks with disabilities and other health concerns, then Contribute to the Birdability Map by submitting a Birdability Site Review for your location so potential attendees can find out important information ahead of time.

When?
Any time during October. Birdability Week is October 18th-24th, but we are encouraging everyone to host accessible outings all month long! Ideally, accessible, inclusive outings will become a regular part of your field trip calendar – we hope that helping us celebrate Birdability Week will be the push you needed to start holding them monthly.
Why?
Because birding is for everybody! But not everybody knows that. Creating outings that are designed for folks who may need to go slower, take rests or who need some additional time and understanding to get on to a bird helps more people feel welcome and included in the birding community. With 25% of us having some kind of disability, and the vast majority of us experiencing an accessibility challenge at some point in our lives (perhaps just by virtue of getting older and slowing down), it's in all of our best interests. We hope you'll help us celebrate Birdability Week 2021 by hosting an accessible outing in your community.

How?
You may find it helpful to read the Steps to Implement Accessible Bird Outings. It's one thing to think, ‘Build it and they will come’, but it's a very different thing to be invited to participate. Make sure you reach out to folks with access challenges in your local community and invite them to come birding with you – they may not have realized they could be a birder. There are lots of ideas in the above Guidance Document for different community groups you might try and connect with and invite on your outing.

Once it's planned, use the form on the Birdability Week 2021 webpage to let us know about your event so we can share about it and help celebrate the work you're doing to ensure that birding truly is for everybody and every body!

More resources that may be useful:
• Read some ideas for welcoming and inclusive birders (these suggestions are particularly important for bird outing leaders);
• Learn about inclusive language use if you're not sure where to start;
• Check out some actions that inclusive organizations can take;
• Sign up to receive the Birdability newsletter to keep up to date with new resources, events and more; and
• Follow Birdability on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @birdability.

Unfortunately, we do have to ask you not to call your event a “Birdability outing” (or similar), as we've been informed this could create liability issues for Birdability (the organization). Instead, calling it an accessible, inclusive outing (or something else entirely) works!

Don't forget to share about Birdability and Birdability Week in your newsletter and on social media – you're always invited to link to the Birdability website or share or repost any of our social media posts. And keep amplifying and uplifting birders in your community who experience accessibility challenges, and keep holding accessible outings. Together we can ensure that birding truly is for everybody and every body!