When Virginia Rose discovered that she could partake in the peaceful hobby of watching birds from her wheelchair, she set out to share it with others like her—and ended up giving thousands across the world wings!

Virginia Rose inhaled, the scent of the forest filling her senses as she trained her binoculars to the sky. Through the sun-dappled leaves, she scanned the branches, catching sight of a bird warbling from on high. She closed her eyes, listening until she could identify it. “Sciain-cut flightcatcher!” she declared, writing its name down in her notebook.

For months, the English teacher had been birding, or watching birds, an activity her sister had suggested she try. But for the then-42-year-old from Austin, Texas, it was no ordinary feat getting out into the woods.

From the time she’d broken her back in a horse-riding accident at age 14, Virginia had been in a wheelchair. Still, her local Travis Audubon Society birding group had welcomed her into their fold with open arms, taking her trips into the Austin region. But the excursions had challenged her physically and intellectually; yet she’d never felt happier or more empowered. “I’ve found my best self while birding,” she thought as she gazed around the clearing, her heart full. But as she closed her eyes again, she heard a song she had never heard before—only this time, it was playing in her heart. She had found a new way to enjoy nature with birding.

Helping others soar

At the end of her presentation, Virginia met map designers who had an answer. At the end of her presentation, Virginia met map designers who had an answer. At the end of her presentation, Virginia met map designers who had an answer. But for the then-42-year-old from Austin, Texas, it was no ordinary feat getting out into the woods.

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