Leading Accessible and Inclusive Bird Outings

Birdability's Mission: To share the joys of birding with people who have access challenges and ensure that birding locations and birding communities are accessible to everybody.

Planning Your Outing

1. **Engage with Participants:**
   - Gather input from individuals with disabilities and health concerns.
   - Understand various access features that aid in inclusivity, beyond physical access.
   - Familiarize yourself with equity and inclusion principles.

2. **Location Selection:**
   - Choose accessible locations with flat terrain, sit spots, and rest areas.
   - Ensure the area is welcoming and free from historical safety concerns.

3. **Detailed Information:**
   - Provide comprehensive details about the outing, including physical terrain, potential hazards, and amenities.
   - Use inclusive language and accessible communication methods.

During the Outing

1. **Welcoming Environment:**
   - Share pronouns and welcome access needs.
   - Make a welcoming statement, acknowledging Indigenous lands and caretakers.
   - Set community agreements on language and interactions.

2. **Pacing and Participation:**
   - Move at the pace of the slowest participant and take regular breaks.
   - Offer assistance only when requested, and respect individual needs.
   - Ensure everyone knows that bird identification is a group activity and not the primary goal.

3. **Inclusivity in Action:**
   - Provide quiet or sensory-specific spaces.
   - Have adaptive equipment on hand (binoculars, monoculars, portable stools, etc.).
Include and support caregivers, as desired.

After the Event

1. Reflect and Process:
   ○ Spend 15-30 minutes after the outing for participants to journal or document their experience creatively.
   ○ Gather feedback in various forms (written, verbal, anonymous) and respond with intention.

2. Continuous Improvement:
   ○ Regularly plan accessible and inclusive outings.
   ○ Seek feedback from individuals with diverse access needs to enhance future outings.
   ○ Commit to ongoing learning about inclusivity and equity.

Types of Accessible Outings

- Flat and Easy Terrain: Regular sit spots and benches for breaks.
- Car Birding: Birding from a vehicle or caravan.
- Stationary Events: A big sit event, or use of a central point with short out-and-back trips.
- Indoor Birding: Utilizing nature centers, indoor bird blinds, or window views with bird feeders.

Resources for Further Learning

- Birdability Website Documents:
  ○ Access Considerations
  ○ Inclusive Language
  ○ Writing Event Descriptions
  ○ Welcoming and Inclusive Birders
  ○ Steps to Inclusive Outings
  ○ Interacting with Wheelchair Users
  ○ Understanding Neurodiversity
  ○ Adaptive Birding Equipment

- Other Recommended Resources:
  ○ Mass Audubon’s All Persons Trail Guides
  ○ Feminist Bird Club’s Principles
  ○ Katrina Clark’s Pedagogy of a Bird Walk video
  ○ ABA’s Code of Ethics for Birders
  ○ Right to Be’s Resources on Interrupting harassment and abuse
  ○ Field Inclusive’s Checklist for Accessible Fieldwork

For more information, visit Birdability.