

Birdability

2021 Annual Report





THIS PORTION
IS NOT ADA
COMPLIANT

A power wheelchair user on an accessible bird outing co-hosted by Alabama Audubon and Birdability isn't sure what to make of this sign. Detailed trail information (including surface, gradient, and width) is much more useful information to provide on a trail sign. Photo: Freya McGregor.

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Photo on front cover taken during an accessible bird outing hosted by Birdability at the Southeastern Arizona Birding Festival, August 2021. Photo: Freya McGregor.

From our Founder

Sitting entirely alone tucked tightly into a springtime, aromatic East Texas forest, I was spellbound by birdsong. The ethereal fluted tones of spring migrants were everywhere, and I was stunned to realize I was meeting my best self, and happier than I'd ever been.

In 1973, I was fourteen years old and riding my horse when, startled, he bolted. Minutes later, I was on the ground as he cantered away, leaving me paralyzed. I have used a wheelchair ever since.

In 2003, at age 44, I discovered birding and life changed! Being in nature and birding in a wheelchair presents its own kinds of challenges and uncertainties: hills, ruts, roots, rocks, mud, cactus, sand, puddles...

Then there is the importance of being *unattended* in nature. When I am alone in nature, I show up because I have to: no one else is there! Perhaps it is even more important for people with access challenges to be safely unattended in nature because they may often encounter barriers to nature, and barriers to being alone in a healthy way.

Finally, there is the importance of being *with* people in nature. The sense of community, friendships that transcend bird outings, feeling like part of a whole.

The more birding I did, the more I understood my own abilities, physical and otherwise. The more I embraced difficulties and uncertainty, the more I understood that empowerment and joy awaited. I became convinced that the best each of us can be is waiting for us in nature. Won't you join us?



Virginia Rose

Virginia Rose
(She/her)

Birdability Founder and Chair of the Board

From our Coordinator

Wow. What a year! Virginia and I started 2021 still on a high from all the encouragement we'd received after National Audubon helped us host [Birdability Week 2020](#). I hadn't expected to plan and coordinate that event as a full time volunteer, but it was great success. The volume of excitement and engagement we received prompted me to suggest to Virginia that we turn her good idea to share the joys of birding with people who have mobility challenges into a nonprofit, and expand it to include all access challenges. We could have more impact that way. On January 15, 2021, Travis Audubon Society's Board of Directors voted to take us on under a fiscal sponsorship agreement. We were off!

Preparing this report has given me the opportunity to reflect on all the achievements we've had in our first year of operations. As a birder and an occupational therapist, I still find it hard to believe that I created my dream job. A year ago I didn't have much knowledge about establishing and running a nonprofit, but these are things you can learn. Being the only staff person at Birdability has been so rewarding, but also a challenge – setting healthy work/life boundaries is difficult when your job is your passion!

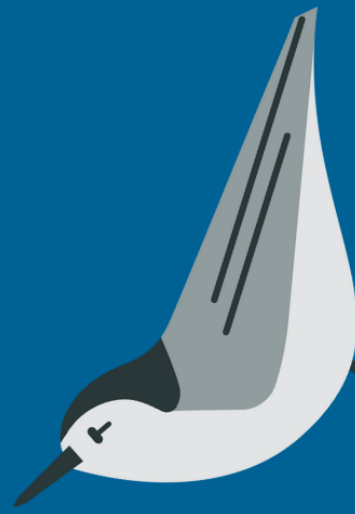
Thank you for your support this year, in whatever shape it has taken. If you've liked a social media post, if you've hosted an accessible bird outing, if you've attended a presentation, and if you've donated: thank you. We've got a lot more ahead of us, but it's such exciting, important work, and it feels so good to do. I'm glad you're part of Birdability!



Freya McGregor, OTR/L, CIG
(She/her)
Birdability Coordinator



No one can
predict
what an
individual
with an
accessibility
challenge
can or
cannot do.



Virginia Rose
Birder with a spinal cord injury,
wheelchair user
and founder of Birdability

About Birdability

Our Vision

Birding truly is for everybody and every body, regardless of disability or other health concerns.

Our Mission

To share the joys of birding with people who have disabilities, and to ensure birding is accessible for everybody.

Through **education, outreach** and **advocacy**, Birdability works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are **welcoming, inclusive, safe** and **accessible** for everybody.

We focus on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and those who are neurodivergent, deaf or hard of hearing or who have other health concerns.

In addition to current birders, we strive to introduce birding to people with disabilities and other health concerns who are not yet birders so they too can **experience the joys of birding.**



Highlights of 2021

January

- Became incorporated as a Texas nonprofit; signed a fiscal sponsorship agreement with Travis Audubon Society and began operating as a nonprofit with Freya McGregor as a full-time independent contractor.
- Held our first [virtual accessible field trip with Georgia Audubon](#).

February

- First guest [Birdability Blog](#) post shared. (For more, see p. 14.)

March

- Birdability Founders Circle campaign launched.

May

- Presented virtually at the Biggest Week in American Birding festival.

June

- Birdability founder [Virginia Rose](#) featured on [CNN](#) and [NPR](#).



July

- Launched the updated, expanded [Birdability Site Review](#), which populates the Birdability Map, to include information relevant to a broad group of birders with various disabilities, in partnership with National Audubon.

August

- Hosted outings and a workshop at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, held by Tucson Audubon Society: our first in-person event as a nonprofit!
- Presented at the American Ornithological Society's Annual Conference.

September

- Grant received from National Audubon to assist with becoming a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

I feel so fortunate to be able to learn how I can support inclusion, diversity, equity, and access both in my favorite hobby, and in the wider world as a whole. I want to make this world a better place than I found it, and I truly feel that Birdability is going to be a catalyst for me to do so. It has already helped me change my perspectives on a variety of important issues simply from what I have learned from others thus far!

Bridget O'Riordan

Birdability Captain who has multiple access challenges related to chronic respiratory issues, heat sensitivity, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and depression.

- Submitted Form 1023 to the IRS to be recognized as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. With gratitude, terminated the fiscal sponsorship agreement with Travis Audubon Society and began operating as a 501(c)3.

October

- Launched [Birdability Birders: Conversations about Birding with Access Challenges interview series](#) with American Bird Conservancy.
- Bird Collective released a t-shirt and tote to fundraise for Birdability.
- Held [Birdability Week 2021](#) in partnership with National Audubon, reaching more than 17,000 people around the world through virtual events.

November

- Launched the first edition of the Birdability Captains Handbook (see p. 19).

December

- [Christmas Bird Count \(CBC\) collaboration](#) launched in partnership with National Audubon to support partly accessible CBCs in future.

Birdability's communications reach in 2021



Instagram:
4,100+ followers



Facebook:
2,000+ followers



Twitter:
1,500+ followers



YouTube:
125 subscribers



Newsletter:
2,000+ subscribers



Accessible outing hosted by Birdability at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival. Photo courtesy of Freya McGregor.

Birdability's organizational structure

Birdability is structured like most other non-profits in the US. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors, with one staff member executing the day-to-day activities, and a large group of volunteers. It is worth noting that by the time this Annual Report was published in August 2022, we have added a second staff person and the Board composition has changed. However, this document will only report on 2021.

The Board of Directors

Responsible for overall policy and direction of the organization; delegates responsibility of day-to-day operations to staff and committees. Currently includes five members, and we are seeking additional members with specific skills and experience. Board Members are all volunteers. For more information on our current Board of Directors, see p.25.

Staff

We have one staff person: Birdability Coordinator and occupational therapist Freya McGregor. With a clinical background in blindness and low vision services, she is responsible for resource creation, programming, communications, fundraising, administration, and operations.



Virginia Rose and Freya McGregor, birding at Lake Creek Trail, Austin, Texas. Photo by Wayne Jeansonne.

Volunteers

- **Birdability Captains:** Our international network of passionate champions for inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in birding and the outdoors!
- **Birdability Captains Coordinator:** Provides administrative support to Birdability Captains, including the on-boarding process, meetings, revision of the Birdability Captains' Handbook, and other work as needed. This role is a two-year duration, and tied to a position on the Birdability Board of Directors. We are grateful to Michael Hurben for taking on this role.

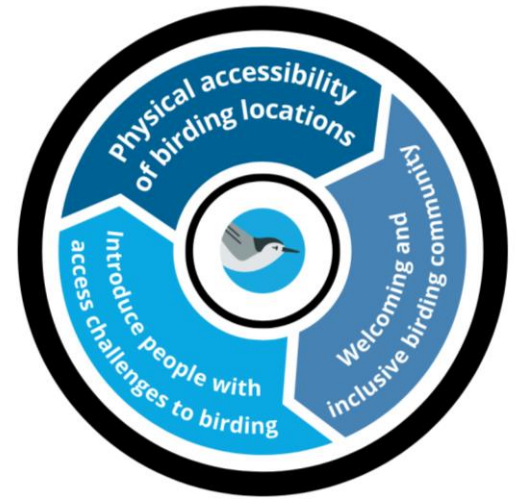
The three spokes of Birdability's work

There are three spokes that make up Birdability's work. Rather than columns or pillars – which run parallel to each other – these spokes are part of a wheelchair's wheel, and they feed into each other as the wheel keeps on rolling forwards.

Improve the physical accessibility of birding locations.

This includes trails, bird blinds, observation platforms, feeder stations and car birding routes. Our [Access Considerations Guidance Document](#) shares, in detail, what features make up a truly accessible birding location. The [Birdability Map](#) is a crowd-sourced map sharing detailed accessibility information for reasonably accessible birding locations, so folks can find out ahead of time the information they may need to plan a successful outing.

Three spokes of Birdability's work



Empower a welcoming and inclusive birding community.

This covers everything from how an outing leader can promote friendliness and an encouraging atmosphere on a bird outing, to recommendations to organizations about basic disability access needs they can address on an organization-wide level. Check out our Guidance Documents (particularly [Welcoming and Inclusive Birders](#) and [Inclusive Organizations](#)) for more!

Introduce people with access challenges to birding.

Now it's your turn! Birdability encourages bird clubs, nature centers, Audubon chapters, state and local parks and everyone else to intentionally reach out to local disability support groups and other organizations and actively invite folks with disabilities and other health concerns to come and share the joys of birding with you! Our [Steps to Implement Accessible and Inclusive Birding](#) Guidance Document is the place to start.

We work on these three spokes simultaneously to help ensure that birding truly is for every body. Where will you start?

Birdability Founders Circle

Throughout 2021 we connected with individuals and organizations who wanted to help us fledge as a nonprofit and provide crucial support in the earliest days of our organization. We are so grateful to the following for believing in our work and helping us fly in our first year as a nonprofit. Thank you for being part of the Birdability Founders Circle!

Platinum members: Gifts of \$10,000+



Audubon



TRAVIS
A U D U B O N
Listen. Look. And Learn.

Gold members: Gifts of \$7,500+

Brian Snape



Silver members: Gifts of \$5,000+

El Segundo
L₂
Ranch

Bronze members: Gifts of \$2,500+

Grohne Family Foundation

Jim Hassinger

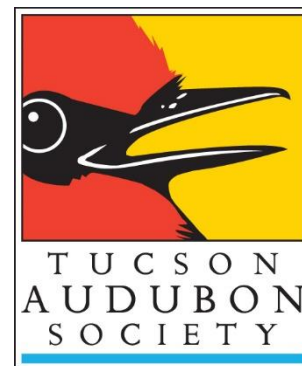
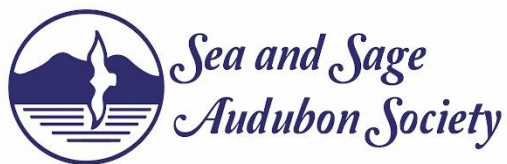
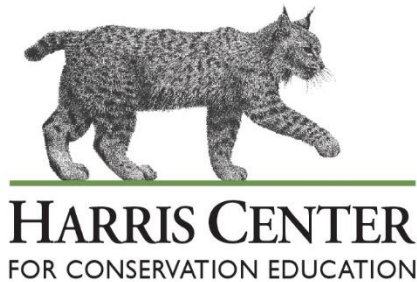
Charlise Hill-Larson & Peter Larson

Michael Hurben and Claire Strohmeier

Ann and Bruce McGregor

Cathryn and Maya Rose and Judy Kinne

The Hanson Family



Individual members: Gifts of \$1,000+

Anonymous

Anonymous

Anonymous

Jayna Adams

Judith Bailey

Karen Bartoletti

Carol Bennett and Jo Wilson

Jeffrey C. Blalock

Elizabeth Brewer Chouinard

Frances Cerbins

Connie Erskine

Kathy E. Doisy and Matt Knowlton

Kathryn and Vincent G. Heintz

Tom and Patsy Inglet

Diane C. Louie

Sara Minton

Dr John Perry

Richard Steel

Jamie Strusz

Liz Urban

Vargo-Fine Family

Dwain and Rabia Vaughns II

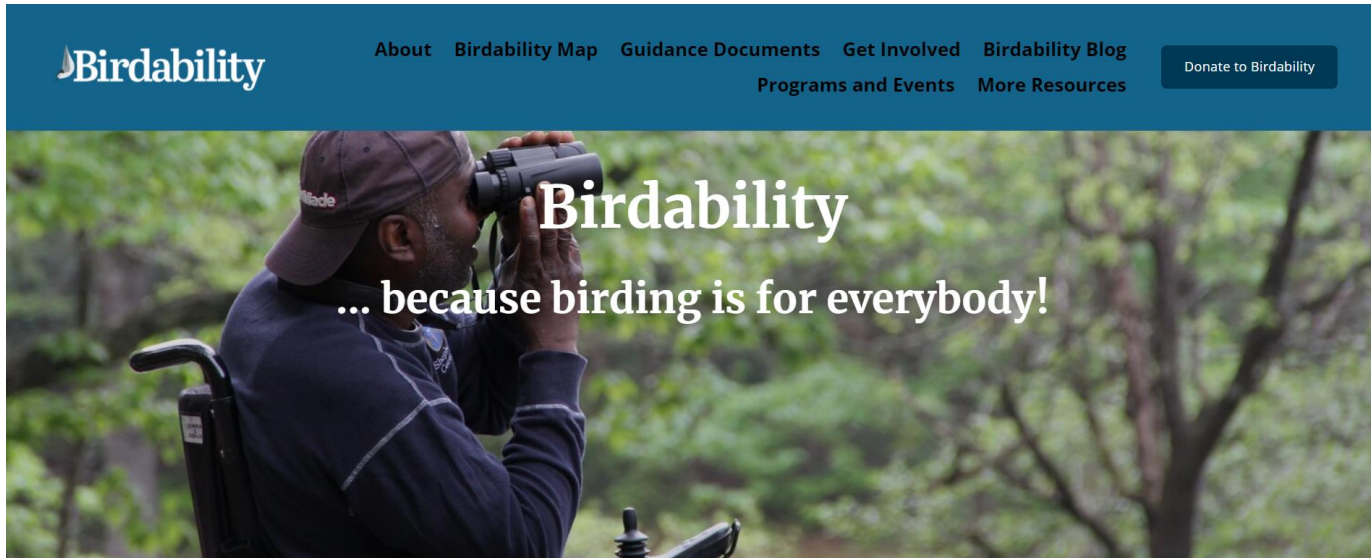
Laura D. Williams



Birdability founder Virginia Rose (seated in her wheelchair) and her sister Cathy celebrate after tracking down a Swainson's Warbler in East Texas. Photo courtesy of Virginia Rose.

The Birdability website: birdability.org

Sharing information and resources helps empower birders with access challenges and supports and equips organizations and individuals to make changes in their communities. We do this most often through our website.



Throughout 2021 we developed many resources, and we're looking forward to creating more in 2022 and beyond! Check out our website to link to the [Birdability Map](#) and learn more about [What we do](#), [Press and Publicity](#), [Access Considerations of Birding Locations](#), [Steps to Implement Accessible Outings](#), [Welcoming and Inclusive Birders](#), [Adaptive Birding Equipment](#) and much more.

Find links to the events of [Birdability Week 2020](#) and [Birdability Week 2021](#), [Birdability Birders interview series with American Bird Conservancy](#), and [Georgia Audubon and Birdability Virtual Accessible Field Trips](#). [Read](#) more about disability, access and inclusion in birding and the outdoors, and learn more about [Mindful Birding](#) and [Racism in Birding](#).

Don't forget to explore the Birdability Blog!

The resources provided freely by Birdability for any individual or organization to use to be more inclusive of people with disabilities and other health concerns, and the panel discussion from Birdability Week was life-changing for me. Sharing your stories, perspectives, and knowledge gave me incredible insights that equip me to more robustly ground my work in equity, and hold institutions accountable to do the same. I simply cannot thank you enough.

Corina Newsome

Co-organizer of #BlackBirdersWeek and
Community Engagement Manager at Georgia Audubon

Birdability Blog

The original blog found at birdability.com was used by Birdability founder Virginia Rose to share about her birding adventures and alert birders with mobility challenges in Austin, Texas about upcoming accessible bird outings.

In 2021, Virginia's blog posts were imported to birdability.org, and the Birdability Blog is used for two new purposes.

Guest contributors are invited to share their experiences of birding with a disability or other health concern, for which an honorarium was provided. Amplifying the experiences of birders with access challenges, these guest Birdability Blog posts provide much needed representation and a possible resource for others with similar access challenges. They also allow nondisabled birders to 'meet' birders with various disabilities and learn more about how someone's access challenge/s may impact their ability to go birding.



Simulated image of looking at Hoatzins (birds from South America) with retinitis pigmentosa, from the guest Birdability Blog post by Michael Hurben. Image courtesy of Michael Hurben.

The Birdability Blog was also used to provide supplemental information on inclusion, diversity, equity and access in birding, or as a reflection on Birdability happenings.

Guest Birdability Blog posts published in 2021 include [Disability need not stop the pursuit of an obsession: Legally blind birding](#), by Michael Hurben; [When I hit the ground, I knew my life would never be the same: How birding \(and Birdability\) became key to my healing](#), by Sara Newman; [Snow Geese, headphones and birding with autism](#), by Nicole Neigel; [Organizing an inclusive Big Sit: Lessons and reflections to help make yours a success!](#) by Meghadeepa Maity; and [How birds inspired me to advocate for my hearing loss](#), by Kevin Lester.

Being autistic has shaped my birding identity and experience much differently than the way most others experience birding. Being an autistic birder can be both a blessing and a curse. For example, I struggle to go birding in busy places, observe noisy birds, travel far from home, and go birding in a group with other birders. However, being autistic gives me certain strengths as well. My sensory sensitivities might make it difficult to go birding in overwhelming environments, but it also means I can be a great spotter: I often notice birds well before others because my hearing and eyesight are so sensitive.

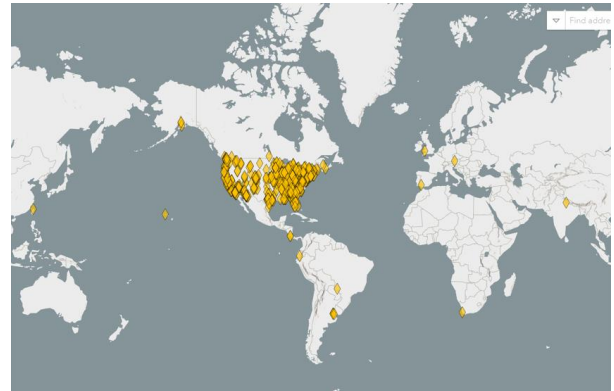
Nicole Neigel

Birdability Captain who is autistic, via her guest post on the Birdability Blog

Birdability Map

The [Birdability Map](#) is a crowdsourced map that describes the accessibility features of birding locations all over the world. This allows people with access challenges to find out in advance if a birding location is one they would like to visit. Built by GIS staff at National Audubon on an ArcGIS StoryMap platform, it is part of the ongoing partnership Birdability has with National Audubon.

In 2021, we undertook a huge project to update and expand the Birdability Site Review – the questions that are asked of contributors who want to add to the Birdability Map. Working with National Audubon GIS staff to modify how the questions were entered into the database will allow us to add features such as filters and search options in future.



The Birdability Map as of December 2021.

The original Birdability Site Review questions were developed based on Virginia Rose’s experiences as a manual wheelchair user when determining if a birding location was one she could visit. In consultation with birders with all kinds of accessibility challenges, and collated

through an occupational therapy lens, the updated Birdability Site Review was launched in July 2021.

Birdability Site Review Checklist

Thank you for completing a Birdability Site Review to submit to the Birdability Map. Documenting the physical accessibility of birding locations helps ensure that birding truly is for everybody and every body! **Once complete, please visit [birdability.org/map](#) to submit.**

Question numbers on this checklist correspond to the question numbers in the online Birdability Site Review; not all questions in Part 1 are included on this printable checklist.

Part 1: General Information	Part 2: Birding Location Accessibility Criteria
1. a) Trail/bird blind name:	1. Parking
1. b) Location name (park or area):	<input type="checkbox"/> No parking area
4) Good car birding site? Describe if so:	<input type="checkbox"/> Pull-off areas (for car birding)
6) Length of trail:	<input type="checkbox"/> Signed accessible parking spaces. Number:
7) Type of trail:	<input type="checkbox"/> Van accessible parking spaces. Parking space is 132 in. (3.3m) wide, with extra 60 in. (1.5m) wide aisle/side space for a ramp. Number:
8. a) Entrance fee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Curb cuts present from parking lot to sidewalk/trail
8. b) Parking fee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Surface is paved
9) Nearby public transit information, including route numbers, stop names:	<input type="checkbox"/> Surface is gravel
10) Walking or biking access from residential areas:	<input type="checkbox"/> Surface has many potholes/bumps
	<input type="checkbox"/> Parking on unmanageable slope
	Comments:
	2. Services available at this location
	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor center
	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff or volunteers
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interpretive programs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible tram or motorized tour
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gated areas (for example, drive-up bird blinds) accessible if arranged ahead of time
	<input type="checkbox"/> Meals available
	<input type="checkbox"/> Water fountains outside buildings
	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible water fountains, no higher than 36 in. (91 cm) from the ground, outside buildings
	Comments, including visitor center hours:

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© 2021 Birdability

Birdability Site Review Checklist
To learn more about access considerations and our work, visit [birdability.org](#)

The printable Birdability Site Review Checklist. Access it via [birdability.org](#)

There are now 19 access considerations addressed in the Birdability Site Review from trail surface type to amount of shade, and potential safety concerns. Questions have been developed to be as objective as possible.

Working with Birdability Captain Lauren Smith, a printable Birdability Site Review Checklist was created, which is also screen-reader accessible. Birdability Captain Marina Fisher-Phelps continues to make any requested edits. We are excited to continue to work with Ryan Hobbs and the National Audubon GIS team to continue to make this resource as helpful as possible!

Birdability Week 2021

Inspired by #BlackBirdersWeek, Birdability Week 2020 jump-started our journey to become a nonprofit. In October 2021, with support from National Audubon, Birdability held the second Birdability Week.

Virtual events focused on amplifying birders with access challenges, educating the birding community on the features that make up a truly accessible birding location, and how intersectionality combines to create multiple layers of oppression for disabled, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ birders.

Social media prompts related to the day's theme, with the #ImABirder hashtag and accompanying graphics being most popular. Backyard birding crafts, a virtual Birdability Big Sit, and a Slow Birding™ workshop rounded out the week.



The graphic is a blue rectangular poster for Birdability Week 2021. At the top left is a small white bird icon. The title 'Birdability Week 2021' is in large white font. Below it, 'October' is written in white. To the right, the hashtag '#BirdabilityWeek2021' and the website 'birdability.org' are listed. The main body of the poster is a list of events from Monday to Sunday, each with a date, a hashtag, and a brief description of the event. On the right side of the poster, there is a stylized white bird with a black beak and a white sail-like shape behind it, flying upwards.

Day	Event
Mon 18	#ImABirder
Tue 19	#BirdabilityBirders Empowering exploration: Going birding with an access challenge panel, 7-8:30 p.m. ET
Wed 20	#AccessibilityForMe Accessibility for me: What makes a birding location truly accessible? webinar, 4-5 p.m. ET
Thu 21	#WelcomingAndInclusiveBirders A Good IDEA for Birding panel, 7-8:30 p.m. ET
Fri 22	Welcoming birds to your backyard craft workshop, 12 p.m. ET
Sat 23	#TeamNuthatch Birdability Big Sit
Sun 24	Slow birding workshop, 10 a.m. ET

Audubon chapters, bird clubs, nature centers, state parks and other nature-based organizations were invited to hold accessible bird outings throughout October to help celebrate Birdability Week. For more on the success of this, see p.20.

Generous artists donated 50% of the proceeds from one of their items during Birdability Week, and pledges from the Birdability Big Sit combined to fundraise more money in one seven-day period than in any other month throughout the year.

17,115+ people connected with and learned about Birdability through Birdability Week events. For more information on the events and to watch the recordings, please visit birdability.org/birdability-week-2021.

Three Birdability Captains worked closely with the Birdability Coordinator in the Birdability Week Planning Committee (thank you Emerson, Kari and Becca!). Along with the support of National Audubon, their ideas and work made this event possible. We are looking forward to Birdability Week 2022. Mark your calendars for October 17 – 23, 2022!

Birdability Captains

Birdability Captains are engaged and committed volunteers who work in their local communities to support inclusion and access for birders (and potential future birders) with disabilities and other health concerns. Since 2018, after Audubon published [an article about Birdability founder Virginia Rose](#), interested folks had been reaching out to Virginia to learn what they could do in their area. After an hour phone conversation, Virginia would designate them a “Birdability Captain”, but no further engagement or infrastructure was in place to support their efforts.

In 2021 we welcomed on board 29 new Birdability Captains, taking our volunteer count to 60, with three international Captains (from Argentina, Chile and Canada).

Increased support for Birdability Captains

Monthly Zoom meetings were implemented, where we create community among our Captains, share information and upcoming opportunities to get involved in new ways, and invite questions and collective problem-solving for any unexpected or challenging situations Captains have faced.

In September, Birdability Captain Michael Hurben stepped into the volunteer role of Captains Coordinator – a position tied to the Board of Directors – to allow increased engagement and support for Captains.



Birdability Captain Emerson Milam grins at the camera as her friend John, using a wheelchair, looks through a scope on a lowered tripod. Photo courtesy of Emerson Milam.

My position as Birdability Captain has opened many doors in terms of promoting accessible birding. With the support of Birdability I joined my local Audubon Chapter and created the Accessibility Committee. We have completed over ten Birdability Site Reviews, created an Accessible Birding webpage, and conducted birding trips for people with mobility challenges. I was also asked to join the Outreach Committee for a local birding club, with a focus on promoting inclusive practices and identify accessible birding locations. Finally, I have been able to share my adaptive optics designs through the Birdability website and continue to help build custom optics for mobility challenged birders.

Paul Miller

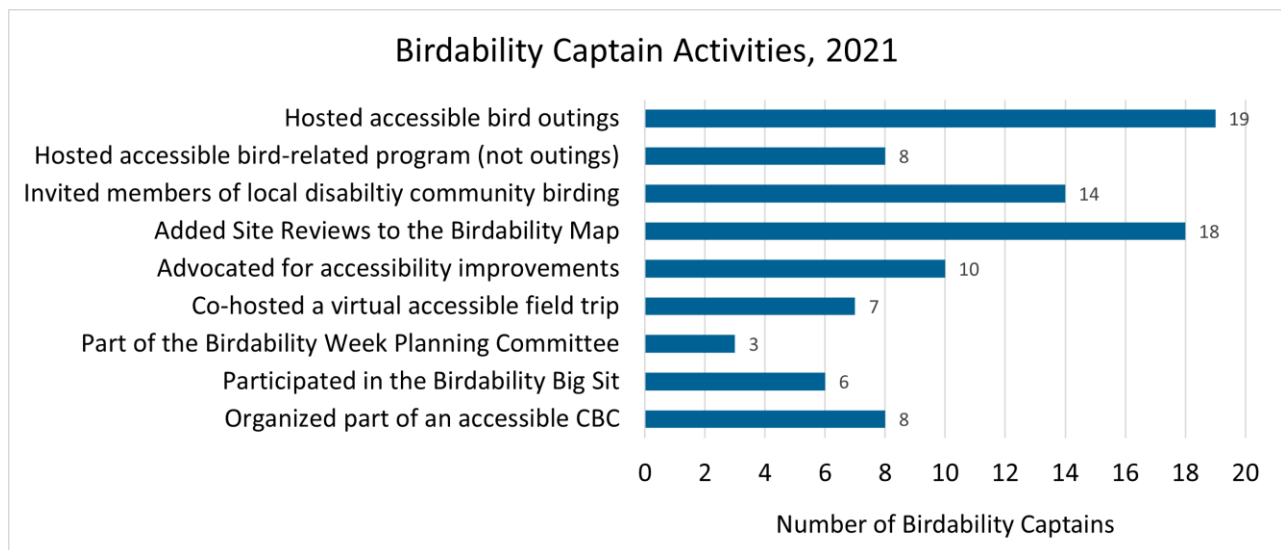
Birdability Captain who has FSHD Muscular Dystrophy

Birdability Captains get involved

During 2021, 36 Birdability Captains gave more than 1320 hours of their time working towards inclusion and access for people with disabilities and other health concerns in birding and the outdoors. Wow!

In 2021, 70% of our Birdability Captains experienced an accessibility challenge; in fact, 40% experienced more than one. The other 30% of Captains did not, which helps demonstrate how valuable allyship is in creating change.

The primary aim of Birdability Captains is to hold intentionally accessible and inclusive bird outings, and to reach out to their local disability community and invite folks with various access challenges to come birding. More than 19 accessible bird outings were held during 2019 by Birdability Captains, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic impacting plans for many in-person events. We are excited to help enable more accessible bird outings in 2022!



As well as holding accessible bird outings and the various other activities Birdability Captains can get involved in, some Captains offered up their specific skills:

- Lauren Smith, who had recently learnt about creating screen-reader accessible .pdf documents, helped create the Birdability Site Review printable checklist.
- Marina Fisher-Phelps, who has a background in GIS, reviews new submissions to the Birdability Map and integrates any edit requests.
- Julio Llanos, who's a native Spanish speaker, is translating the entire Birdability website into Spanish. (Ready for launch in mid-2022!)

- As part of the Birdability Week Planning Committee, which also included Kari Sasportas, using their kid-friendly skills and experience Emerson Milam and Becca Mathews created craft activities for one of the Birdability Week events.
- Nicole Neigel has been involved in Christmas Bird Counts and helped create the [Holding a partly-accessible Christmas Bird Count Guidance Document](#).

Birdability Captains Handbook

In November the first edition of the Birdability Captains Handbook was launched. Across 36 pages, background information, on-boarding training, clear roles and responsibilities, a Birdability Captains Code of Conduct, links to additional resources, and frequently asked questions are provided.

This screen-reader accessible reference will help equip and empower more than 60 engaged and motivated individuals to connect to their local disability community and invite them birding, and will be updated every year or two as we continue to grow and expand. We received very positive responses from Birdability Captains, including this from Birdability Captain Emerson Milam, who has ADHD and chronic Lyme disease:

*"The Birdability Captain Handbook..... WOW 🙌!!
What an excellent resource for us Captains. It is clear that you put a lot of work into this document and for me that pays off in terms of readability (something that I struggle with because of my Dyslexia and ADHD) and really clearly states what the expectations are (also something that my neurodivergent brain appreciates). Thanks for making this!"*



Handbook for Birdability Captains

1st edition, 2021

To learn more, visit birdability.org

I enjoy the palpable energy and passion emitting from every one of my fellow Captains. Everyone is fighting for a more accessible and inclusive birder-sphere and given this, we will achieve much of our agenda by relying on one another and our vast-knowledges and lived experiences. It feels like an inevitable movement given the context of the pandemic, and this kind of open-source collaboration of diverse peoples will yield creative solutions to access problems within ornithology and the greater political/social world.

Sam Newkirk

Birdability Captain who has ADHD and red-green color deficiency, and who works at a nature center implementing accessible and inclusive bird-related programs.

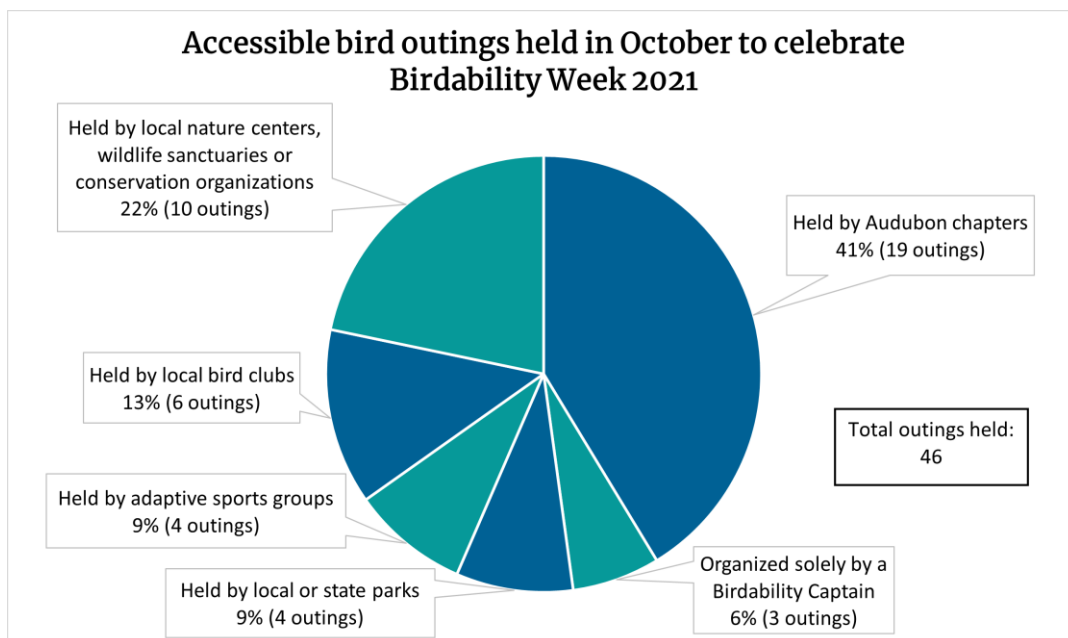
Accessible bird outings

Holding accessible bird-relating programming is something we strongly encourage any bird or nature-related organization to do. We believe that without regular opportunities to engage in community-based birding, many people with access challenges will not have the opportunity to discover the joys of birding.

Accessible outings in celebration of Birdability Week 2021

To help us celebrate Birdability Week 2021, we invited Birdability Captains, Audubon chapters, bird clubs, nature centers, state parks and other nature-based organizations to hold an accessible bird outing during October.

46 outings were held across 22 US states, and one in Canada. A total of 425 participants attended these events, with 97% of hosts reporting that they plan to continue holding regular accessible outings outside of October. We look forward to helping share the joys of birding with even more people in 2022 and beyond!



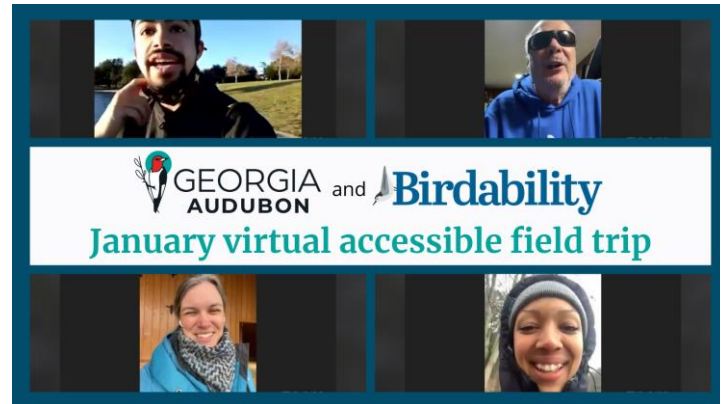
Seriously thank you! As my mobility has declined over the years, watching wildlife and birds in my backyard has become a real source of joy. At the moment my own home is not fully wheelchair accessible nor is my car. The last few months have been especially challenging for me with illness, loss of my pet, and injury. I dream all the time of someone sitting on my patio and just watching the birds with me. Thanks to you, today that happened! #HappyTears

Participant of the Birdability Big Sit Instagram Live events
held during Birdability Week 2021

Virtual accessible field trips

In partnership with Georgia Audubon, in 2021 we held five virtual accessible field trips via Zoom. They were hosted by Georgia Audubon's Community Engagement Manager Corina Newsome, either Birdability founder Virginia Rose or Birdability Coordinator Freya McGregor, and two guest co-hosts with access challenges.

Birding from four different states at once from four different accessible birding locations, we amplified the experiences of birders with disabilities and other health concerns, educated about features that make up an accessible birding location, and created community through the interactive chat. And we brought birds – virtually – into the homes of birders with access challenges who may not be able to get outside easily.



Though live Zoom sessions and streaming via the Georgia Audubon Facebook page, these events reached more than 13,485 people.



Participants on an accessible bird outing held by the Shepherd Center and Georgia Audubon, and led by Georgia Audubon's Education Director and Birdability Captain Melanie Furr (seen standing at the back of the group). Photo: Freya McGregor.

Birdability Birders: Conversations about Birding with Access Challenges

Birdability partnered with American Bird Conservancy (ABC) to host monthly in-depth interviews via Zoom with birders who experience access challenges. These interviews were free to attend, and an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter and closed captions were provided. Guests represented a range of disabilities and other health concerns, and multiple historically marginalized identities.

[Episode 1: Virginia Rose](#), Birdability founder, shared her experiences as a birder with a spinal cord injury who uses a manual wheelchair.

Birdability Birders

Conversations about Birding with Access Challenges

Episode 1: Virginia Rose
Birding in a manual wheelchair
Tuesday, October 5th | 6:00pm ET

Co-hosted by



Birdability Birders

Conversations about Birding with Access Challenges

Episode 2: Jerry Berrier
Tuesday, November 2nd | 6:00pm ET

Co-hosted by



[Episode 2: Jerry Berrier](#) discussed how, as someone who has been totally blind since birth, birding by ear brings him so much joy.

[Episode 3: Letícia Soares](#), a Latinx ornithologist with fibromyalgia and Long Covid, shared how multiple chronic illnesses impact her ability to go birding and work in her profession.

More than 1,550 people registered to attend these webinars. An additional three episodes are planned for the first three months of 2022, and recordings will be available at birdability.org/birdability-birders-interview-series-with-abc and on the Birdability YouTube channel at youtube.com/c/birdability

Birdability Birders:

Conversations about Birding with Access Challenges

Episode 3: Birding and Long Covid with Leticia Soares

Co-hosted by



Bird festivals

One of our goals at Birdability is to see accessible and inclusive outings held at every bird festival, with at least one option each day. (After all, at major bird festivals nondisabled attendees have lots of choices of where and when to bird, so why shouldn't someone with an access challenge?)

In August 2021, Birdability founder Virginia Rose and Birdability Coordinator Freya McGregor attended Birdability's first in-person bird festival as a nonprofit. We lead three accessible outings, facilitated a roundtable discussion on inclusion and access in birding and the outdoors, and shared about our work at our booth in the Nature Expo. Exhilarating and exhausting, collaborating with Tucson Audubon was a wonderful example of what allyship can look like, and we're excited to be back in Tucson in August 2022!



Birdability founder Virginia Rose and Birdability Coordinator Freya McGregor, in-person at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, 2021. Photo: Rich Moncrief.



The Birdability booth ready for visits at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, 2021. Photo: Freya McGregor.

Through the wonders of virtual presentations, Birdability presented at the following bird festivals in 2021:

- Migratory Bird Fest, Mitchell Lake Audubon/Bexar County Audubon, Texas;
- Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, Alaska;
- Biggest Week in American Birding, Ohio; and
- Puget Sound Bird Fest, Washington.

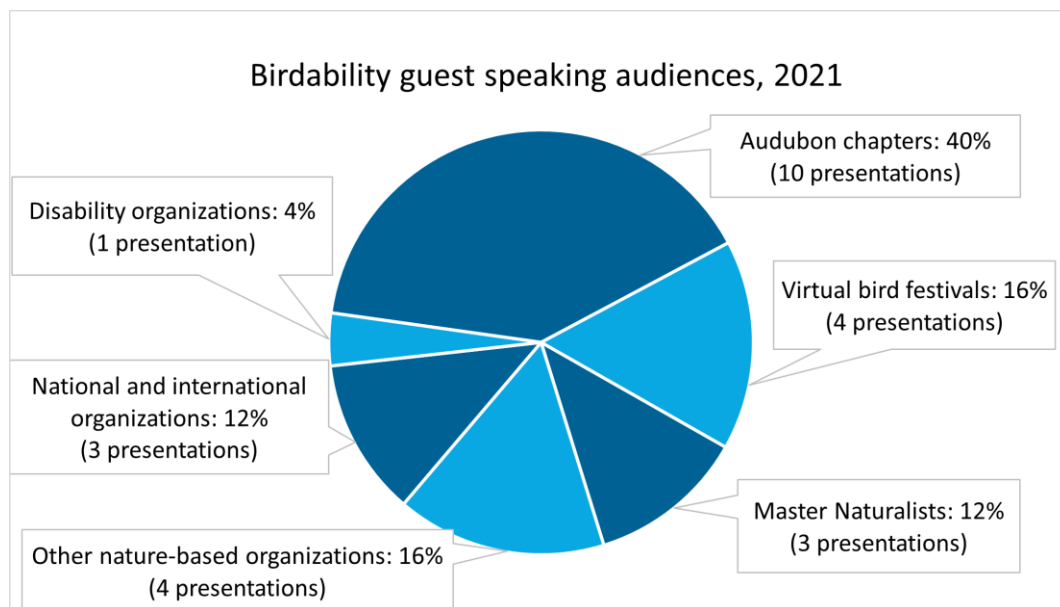
In 2022 we will be holding accessible outings, running a workshop and presenting a keynote speech at the San

Diego Bird Festival in February, and hosting outings and a workshop at the Biggest Week in American Birding and Cape May's Spring Festival in May. Certainly, Birdability does not need to be the only folks hosting accessible outings at bird festivals, but we sure do love the opportunity!

Guest speaking

Educating, advocating and inspiring change – we get to all that via guest speaking. We presented directly to over 2,600 people in 2021: birders, naturalists and outdoor lovers with and without access challenges, park managers, research scientists and people around the world.

With a suggested donation of \$200 for guest speaking, we also fundraise to support our work and role model the importance of providing honorariums. In 2021, we presented to 18 organizations, and already have many booked in for 2022.



Birdability presentations to national and international organizations in 2021:

- North American Natural Resources Conference.
- American Ornithological Society (AOS)/Society of Canadian Ornithologists–Soci t  de Ornithologistes du Canada (SCO–SOC) virtual conference.
- Learn-the-Birds, which included audience members from eight countries.

I've recently joined the Texas Master Naturalist program and I was watching your presentation, and I just wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being so inclusive. I am autistic and non-binary (they/them) and it brought me to tears hearing not only the compassion about being out in nature but also about making nature more accessible for people like me. Thank you, thank you, thank you! You give me hope for future naturalist and birders in states like mine that aren't necessarily known for their inclusiveness especially when it comes to people who are LGBTQ+.

Keely O'Connor

Birder who is autistic and nonbinary
after a presentation by Birdability Coordinator Freya McGregor

Board of Directors

Members of the Birdability Board of Directors during 2021:

Virginia Rose, Chair. Appointed January 2021.

Virginia (she/her) has used a wheelchair since the age of 14. She is passionate about bringing the same joy, empowerment and community she found in birding and nature to others who have mobility or other accessibility challenges.

Joe Watts, Vice Chair. Appointed January 2021.

Joe (he/him) is a birder and has worked on many statewide tourism projects, including the Alabama Birding Trails project. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Alabama Audubon and National Audubon Society.

Kimberly Kaufman. Appointed February 2021; retired December 2021.

Kimberly (she/her) is Executive Director at Black Swamp Bird Observatory and helped found The Biggest Week In American Birding. In 2015, Kimberly received the American Birding Association's prestigious Chandler Robbins Award in recognition of her contributions to bird education and conservation.

Freya McGregor, Secretary; Treasurer. Appointed February 2021; retired December 2021.

Freya (she/her) applies her occupational therapy background and her passion for social and disability justice as Birdability's only staff member. Originally from Australia, her 'dodgy' knee impacts her ability to go birding as she would like.

Michael Hurben, Treasurer. Appointed September 2021.

Michael (he/him) became obsessed with birds in his mid-20s. Within a year, he began losing his eyesight due to retinitis pigmentosa; now only about 2% of his visual field remains. He is nearing his goal to see or hear half the world's species (5,500) and hopes to help others with disabilities benefit from birding like he has.

Karen Bartolleti. Appointed November 2021.

Karen (she/her) is a birder and a retired business lawyer with experience representing for-profit and not-for-profit entities. She has served on the Travis Audubon Society Board of Directors for the past five years.

Jordan Rutter, Secretary. Appointed December 2021.

Jordan Rutter (she/her) is American Bird Conservancy's Director of Public Relations and the co-founder of Bird Names for Birds, an initiative advocating that eponymous common bird names be changed to include all community members.

Financial Report

Birdability is thankful for the generous support of many donors and organizations in our first year of operations. We would particularly like to thank Travis Audubon Society for being our fiscal sponsor until September 30, 2021 when we fledged the nest. National Audubon Society provided substantial support to Birdability to undertake the many tasks associated with beginning a new nonprofit organization, including \$75,000 recorded as revenue in 2021 but intended to cover certain 2022 expenses. We are most grateful for this assistance from both organizations.

The financial summaries presented in this report represent an aggregation of financial information compiled by Travis Audubon, Birdability's fiscal sponsor for the first three quarters of 2021, and by Birdability, an independent 501(c)3 organization for the last quarter of 2021. Please note that at the time of production these figures have not been reviewed by an accounting firm and are subject to change.

Summary Statement of Activities for 2021

Revenue	
Grant Support	\$180,933
Donations	\$92,042
Other Revenue	\$17,029
Total Revenue	\$290,004
Expenditures	
Overhead	\$15,583
Program and Personnel Related	\$93,550
Total Expense	\$109,133
Net Revenue	\$180,871

Summary Statement of Financial Position

as of December 31, 2021

Assets

Bank Account	\$99,906
Accounts Receivable	\$75,933
Other Assets	\$5,437
Total Assets	\$181,276

Liabilities and Equity

Accounts Payable	\$404
Total Liabilities	\$404
Total Equity	\$180,872
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$181,276

Being a Birdability Captain has given me community in a time where it was desperately needed for my mental health. I found Birdability while in a depressive episode, and joining the Birdability Captains was the pivoting point to get me out. My passion for birding broke through the heavy blanket of numbness and sadness, and I was invigorated to get engaged. I've developed wonderful friendships, I've learned new things about birding, I've gained a community that supports and welcomes me and my disabilities and the accommodations that can help me. It is truly a wonderful feeling to not only be a part of a group like this, but to work together to foster the same welcoming and inclusive culture in birding.

Emerson Milam

Birdability Captain who has ADHD, chronic Lyme disease and depression.



Accessible bird outing at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, August 2021. Photo courtesy of Freya McGregor.

Looking forwards...

Wow! We had a busy, encouraging, and successful first year as a nonprofit. Thank you for being part of the Birdability community, in whatever way you are. Thank you for interacting with us on social media and sharing our posts, for holding accessible bird outings in your community, for advocating for change, and for being a welcoming and inclusive birder. Special thanks to our Birdability Captains for volunteering their time to create birding opportunities for folks with access challenges!

A heartfelt thanks to all the members of the Birdability Founders Circle (see p.10 for more) and to our generous donors. We are so grateful for your practical support in helping us share the joys of birding with people who have disabilities and other health concerns. After all: **Birding is for everybody and every body!**



A tablet adaptor for a scope allows many people, especially wheelchair users, to see birds through the scope more easily. For more ideas, visit birdability.org/adaptive-birding-equipment
Photo: Freya McGregor.



 **Birdability**

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