



FALL 2023

**3****COMMUNITY EVENTS****42****ATTENDEES****18****PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS  
ENGAGED**

## Upham Woods Accessible Bird Events: Increasing Inclusion in the Outdoors

Outdoor spaces provide many benefits, including increased life satisfaction and improved physical and mental health. However, many individuals with disabilities experience barriers to accessing outdoor spaces and programming. Since 1941, Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center has provided young people with educational opportunities focused on environmental and leadership education.

In 2022, UW-Madison Extension worked with 18 partner organizations to host three workshops to prepare practitioners to deliver accessible outdoor experiences for their communities. Workshops included a panel discussion with disabled outdoor enthusiasts, a presentation on universal design developed with the McBurney Disability Resource Center, and a discussion utilizing inclusion planning prompts. Sixty-one practitioners attend these workshops.



*Three people enjoy the trails and the fall colors at Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center thanks to an outdoor wheelchair provided by Access Ability Wisconsin.*

After these workshops, Extension hosted accessible bird observing events in three locations across the state where community members were able to look for birds through scopes and binoculars. Forty-two community members attended these events.



Participants of an accessible birding event spot birds on Barker's Island in Superior, Wisconsin.

The vast majority of participants reported that they feel confident in their ability to facilitate accessible programming. One participant “really appreciated one of the panelists sharing an emotional story about an experience that made them feel excluded and then included during a birding event. It really helped to illustrate the impact of inaccessible activities and the importance of bringing people in.”

Another participant shared, “This training planted a very important seed that cannot be uprooted – I will plan and program differently now.”

Additionally, over 80% of community members who attended these events shared that the events greatly increased their confidence and ability to explore the outdoors. One attendee, Donna, a wheelchair user, shared, “We’ve been friends for over 10 years, and this was the first time we could explore the woods together like this.”



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