



CONSERVATION IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Guidance for habitat, species and education activities with limited or no access to facilities and sites



Conservation in a time of crisis

Guidance for activities with limited or no site access

While the rest of the world is on pause, habitats grow and species flourish during spring and summer months, making it the best time for monitoring and management. But how do you continue conservation activities if your site has limited or no access?

We're here to help

This guide offers advice on how to continue habitat, species and conservation education initiatives on sites where there continues to be access (however limited), or if no access exists at all. Activities should only be implemented with the safety and health of employees and community partners as the primary considerations.

The activities in this guide can be implemented for any size and type of project. For projects outside the U.S., research alignments at the [U.N. Sustainable Development Goals](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/) website, as well as initiatives and priority actions at the country, state/provincial, and local levels.

Contact WHC Consulting to discuss projects in more detail: whcconsulting@wildlifehc.org. In addition, WHC Conservation Certification® has implemented COVID-19 accommodations to help navigate the application process. Visit our [website](#) for more information.

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AVIAN PROJECTS



As birds make their seasonal migrations to spring and summertime breeding grounds, avian projects and their target species are often at the height of activity in May, June and July. Continuing maintenance and monitoring activities is ideal but not necessary to the improvement and management of the project.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Monitor at the same frequency as normal (at least once a week is recommended) recording the number of adults, eggs, fledglings, etc., as appropriate.
- Monitor at a reduced rate (e.g., once every other week or once a month), or consider installing a nest camera trained on the box or platform to document activity in and out of the nest.
- If avian project does not involve providing structures for breeding efforts (bird counts/surveys), proceed with at least one count conducted at some point this year. This could be a single person with avian expertise who does the survey on their own.
- Identify maintenance issues and determine if one or two people can safely do the maintenance relatively far apart (e.g., reattach predator baffles on separate boxes). Make repairs as needed but with minimal disturbance to active nests. If the activity needs 3+ people working together in close concert, postpone the maintenance.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Build additional nest boxes or platforms from home for placement later.
- Reach out to local experts or conduct independent research to verify that the project is on track with best management practices.
- Review monitoring data from previous years to see if goals are being achieved. If results are on track with the goals: identify project expansion ideas on- or off-site once access is regained; invite and onboard other employees or partners to build the team, and ensure long term success. If results do not match desired goals, create next steps for how to get the project back on track.
- Invite and onboard other employees or partners to build the team.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to avian conservation
- [Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plan](#)

BIRD CONSERVATION AT HOME

Turn out the lights! Light pollution can disrupt birds as they migrate and can lead to unnecessary bird deaths.

Found a nest in your yard? Report updates like nest building, egg laying, egg hatching, and fledging to [NestWatch](#).

BAT PROJECTS



Despite many misconceptions, bats are unique mammals that play a vital role in natural ecosystems. They are important in seed dispersal and pollination of both wild and agricultural plants, and are a major predator of night-flying insects, including mosquitoes. Monitoring of the habitat, if possible, is the best tactic to support bat populations during this time.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Continue monitoring at the same frequency as usual (once per month is recommended), recording the number of adults and pups and the internal temperature of the bat houses. Alternatively, consider installing an acoustic monitoring device or night vision game camera to monitor the bat population.
- Install additional bat houses or tree roosting structures.
- Identify maintenance issues that can be performed by one or two people safely and make repairs as needed. If the activity needs 3+ people working together in close concert, then postpone the activity.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Construct bat houses from home for placement later.
- Reach out to local experts or conduct independent research to verify that the project is on track with best management practices.
- Begin planning outreach events for [Bat Week](#) in October.
- Review monitoring data from previous years to see if goals are being achieved. If results are on track with the goals, identify ways to expand the project once access is regained. If results do not match desired goals, create next steps for how to get the project back on track.
- Invite and onboard other employees or partners to build the team.
- Consider hosting an internal online presentation about your project.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to bat conservation
- [Bat Conservation International's Strategic Plan](#)

BAT CONSERVATION AT HOME

Take a bat walk around your neighborhood at dusk and report bat sightings to [ProjectNoah](#).

Turn out the lights! Light pollution affects insect populations, disrupts bats as they migrate, and deters sensitive bat species.

Plant a bat-friendly garden that will attract insect populations to support the feeding habits of bats.

EDUCATION PROJECTS



Education projects, including awareness, community engagement and formal learning projects, utilize the corporate habitat to target a wide variety of learners of all ages. When groups cannot meet in the habitat, education projects can shift to virtual learning.

Remote learning can be used as a way to create a sense of community, share information and foster academic growth among students, employees and community groups.

Virtual learning activities

- Host a virtual lunch-and-learn with employees, where project team members can actively recruit new volunteers as well as inform employees about conservation and environmental education activities on-site.
- Conduct virtual tours of habitat and species projects at the facility using pictures and videos.
- Present a lecture on an environmental topic, such as pollinators, for a local school or community group.
- Launch a campaign to encourage employees to grow native plants at home and share their images and videos of their growth on the company's Intranet, social media or other shared online medium, such as Dropbox.
- Host a home environmental scavenger hunt by encouraging employees to find native plants and wildlife in their backyard.

Post-event evaluation

- Evaluation of education projects is important to ensure success of the project.
- Typically, this can be a simple online survey after the event that evaluates the activity logistics (e.g., online method of learning, materials, etc.) and the impact achieved (e.g., how much was learned).

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL EVENT

Communicate with educators frequently before your remote event to ensure activities and lectures align with a learning standard, such as Common Core.

Visit [Wildlife Habitat Council Resources for Kids and Parents](#), where you'll find a variety of wildlife and habitat information and activities, including WHC Kid-Friendly Webinars.

FOREST PROJECTS



Forests contain approximately 80% of the world's plant biomass, sequestering carbon while providing essential habitat to a wide variety of species such as mammals, raptors, cavity-nesting birds, snakes, salamanders and toads. The spring and summer months bring the highest level of activity both for wildlife and plants, providing the best opportunity to assess habitat needs.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Identify the common plant and tree species that make up the forest habitat as the leaves and flowers emerge.
- Identify any invasive species presence and mark or take note of the area for future removal and/or invasion tracking.
- Survey the health/growth of the forest by measuring identified trees for the diameter at breast height (DBH), survivorship of planted trees, presence/absence of dead or damaged branches, and/or identify and count the wildlife species that use the forest habitat.
- If maintenance is needed in the forest (e.g., invasive species removal, trail clearing, tree planting, fallen tree clean-up, or structure installations), determine the number of individuals needed to complete the task and if the task can be achieved using safe distance and a small number of people. Postpone the maintenance if safety precautions cannot be met.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Collect all previous season's habitat maintenance, monitoring, and management planning documents and create an online location for the habitat team to access and add documents.

- Create and share a map that can be used for identifying the positive habitat footprint, as well as pinpointing areas for future plantings, invasive species removal, tree pruning, etc.
- Analyze trends in habitat growth/health or wildlife use and use the data to make informed management decisions.
- Establish next steps for the habitat and conduct the research needed for implementation (e.g., creation of a walking trail will require research of collaborative trail clearing methods, trail design, and continuous upkeep).
- Construct or order structures to install for forest wildlife, like a vernal pool or coverboards to help increase amphibian habitat, woodland bird houses, or bat boxes.
- Investigate the local and regional forest management guidance and best practices; adapt management as needed to align to the professional recommendations.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to forest restoration or preservation
- Forest initiatives at the larger regional level, e.g., [Longleaf Pine initiative](#)

FOREST CONSERVATION AT HOME

Use the **i-Tree tool** to track a wide array of factors for your backyard trees, such as canopy cover, carbon sequestration, and pollution removal and human health impacts.

GRASSLANDS PROJECTS



Native grasses are some of the first green to pop in the springtime, providing food to grazers like deer and leaf-eating insects and shelter for small mammals and grassland birds. The spring and summer months bring the highest level of activity both for wildlife and plants, providing the best opportunity to assess habitat needs.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Spend about 10 minutes in the grassland area as the growing season progresses, and count and identify the wildlife that you see using the area. The presence of more wildlife like birds and butterflies can signify a healthy grassland.
- Track the estimated percent cover of flowering plants throughout the growing season, building a timetable for when there is nectar available for pollinators (e.g., May 8th. Butterfly milkweed blooming. 12% estimated cover).
- Identify any invasive or weed species growing and mark or take note of the area for future removal and reseeding and/or invasion tracking.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Create a grassland assessment by using all known plant species listed in the habitat to look up the typical blooming time and the ways that animal species benefit from the plant (nectar source, berry/seed source, larval host plant, etc.).
- Identify the benefits to wildlife the grassland is not currently providing and plan to fill gaps in future management activities (e.g., a meadow that consists of only springtime flowering nectar plants could use an addition of native grasses and plants that bloom in the summer and fall).

- Research and incorporate ongoing cooperation with an existing grassland conservation initiative or local or regional conservation plan.
- If the habitat is located where employees or the community normally have access, design installations for the grassland, like educational signage or photo stations that can be installed later.
- Supplement the native vegetation by building or ordering bluebird or purple martin boxes to be placed later.
- Invite and onboard other employees or partners to build the team.
- Consider hosting an internal online presentation about your project.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to grassland restoration or preservation
- Grassland initiatives at the regional level: e.g., [Southeastern Grasslands Initiative](#); [NRCS Northern Bobwhite Projects](#); [NRCS Northern Plains Grassland](#)

GRASSLANDS CONSERVATION AT HOME

Convert a small portion of your garden or yard to native bunching grasses and wildflowers.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PROJECTS



Non-native, invasive species are those that do not occur naturally in a given area, compete with native species for resources, and degrade native ecosystems. Invasive species can come in all forms, including plants, terrestrial and aquatic animals, and insects. Efforts to control and monitor invasive species are critically important to restoring and maintaining healthy native habitats.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Identify and mark any invasive species that may be emerging or greening up.
- Continue monitoring current outbreaks of invasive species and past removal sites at the same frequency as usual.
- Monitor all treated areas for regrowth at least once in the spring, summer and fall.
- Identify invasive species treatment or removal that can be performed by one or two people safely (e.g., removal in different areas). If the activity requires multiple people working together in close concert then postpone the activity.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Consider remote methods of monitoring invasive species such as drones or aerial photos.
- Map priorities of what areas need treatments as soon as they are accessible and identify what can be done later.
- Research post control plans to identify what steps need to be taken once the invasive species

is under control, such as replacement plantings or stockings.

- Reach out to local experts to verify that their project is on track with best management practices.
- Review monitoring data from previous years to see if goals are being achieved. If results are on track with the goals, identify ways to expand the project once access is regained. If results do not match desired goals, create next steps for how to get the project back on track.
- Invite and onboard other employees or partners to build the team.
- Consider hosting an internal online presentation about your project.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan and State Invasive Species Management Plans: actions related to invasive species control

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL AT HOME

Report any invasive species to track a wide array of factors. Report any invasive species in your neighborhood on [iNaturalist](#) or [EDDMapS](#).

LANDSCAPED PROJECTS



Native landscaping is a small scale, yet accessible and highly impactful way to contribute to conservation. Springtime is a particularly important time of year for native landscaped areas because they provide essential food and energy sources for migratory birds and butterflies.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- If you have not recently conducted an inventory of the landscaped plants, identify all the plant species that are growing and determine if they are native or invasive.
- Take 5-10 minutes to survey each species of plants and record information about their health. Some health indicators could be plant height/width, presence/absence of flowers, dead branches, leaf damage, or the number of species of pollinators and birds seen near, or using, the plants.
- Identify any invasive or weed species presence and mark or take note of the area covered for future removal and replacement with native species.
- If transplanting or planting maintenance is planned, conduct a site analysis that evaluates soil, sunlight, blooming time spread, etc., to provide information to help guide plant selection.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Create a habitat assessment. Use the known plant species list and research the typical blooming times and the ways in which animal species benefit from the plant (nectar source, berry source, larval host plant, etc.).

- Assess the benefits to wildlife the garden is not currently providing. Plan for improvements with future plantings or management activities (e.g., a habitat that consists of only springtime flowering nectar plants could use an addition of plants that bloom in the summer and fall).
- Research local and regional conservation plans that incorporate recommendations for landscaped areas and align your management and monitoring to the advice. Alignments turn small projects into a large patchwork of cohesive conservation efforts.
- If your native garden is located in a high foot traffic area, design an educational sign to install later, teaching others the benefits of going native.
- Consider hosting an internal online presentation about your project.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to native plant restoration
- State or local native plant society initiatives

LANDSCAPING CONSERVATION AT HOME

Download the [Budburst app](#) on your phone and from your backyard, report the different stages of life your plants experience throughout the growing season, providing valuable plant data directly to scientists.

POLLINATOR PROJECTS



When the weather warms and flowers begin to bloom in the spring, pollinators start their life cycles looking for pollen and nectar sources. These warm-weather months bring the highest level of activity both for wildlife and plants, providing the best opportunity to assess habitat needs.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Continue monitoring at the same frequency as usual or conduct a springtime monitoring session, followed by a mid-summer, late summer, and fall monitoring session that focuses directly on the pollinators and the plants they visit.
- Spend at least 10 minutes each monitoring session (on a sunny and windless day) observing the pollinator habitat and document the pollinator species and the plants they visit. In addition, monitor for caterpillars as well as their host plants.
- Take photos of the pollinators observed when possible, particularly when positive identification cannot be made in the field.
- If maintenance is needed (e.g., insect hotels, bee blocks, or other pollinator structures), determine the number of individuals needed to complete the task and if the task can be achieved using safe distance and a small number of people. Postpone the maintenance if safety precautions cannot be met.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Construct insect hotels or bee blocks at home for placement later.
- Reach out to local experts to verify that the project is on track with best management practices.
- Research pollinator-friendly practices the facility can implement in the future, such as going pesticide and herbicide free.
- Begin planning for [Pollinator Week](#), June 22-28.
- Review monitoring data from previous years to see if goals are being achieved. If results are on track with the goals, identify ways to expand the project once access is regained. If results do not match desired goals, create next steps for how to get project back on track.
- Consider hosting an internal online presentation about your project.

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to pollinator conservation, such as monarchs, native bees, hummingbirds and bats
- [National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators](#)

POLLINATOR CONSERVATION AT HOME

Report pollinator sightings in your neighborhood to [ProjectNoah](#) or [iNaturalist](#).

WETLANDS AND WATER BODIES PROJECTS



Wetland and water body projects come alive during the spring months when water begins to flow again and wildlife dependent on these water features come out of hibernation. These warm-weather months bring the highest level of activity both for wildlife and plants, providing the best opportunity to assess habitat needs.

Activities for project areas that are accessible

- Continue monitoring at the same frequency as usual or conduct a springtime monitoring session, followed at least by a mid-summer, late summer, and fall monitoring session (wildlife or vegetation).
- Identify any plant species that did not survive the dormant season. Grasses and forbs should start to emerge and woody plants will start to develop buds (can range from black/brown to purple to red or green in color).
- Depending on the species, identify and mark any invasive species that may be emerging or greening up.
- Identify maintenance issues and determine the number of individuals needed to complete the task and if the task can be achieved using safe distance and a small number of people. Postpone the maintenance if safety precautions cannot be met.

Activities for project areas that are NOT accessible

- Map priorities of activities that need to be done as soon as access is regained (e.g., flagging of invasive species), as well as those activities that can be done later.

- Reach out to local experts to verify that the project is on track with best management practices.
- Review monitoring data from previous years (e.g., frog call surveys) to see if goals are being achieved. If results are on track with the goals, identify ways to expand the project once access is regained. If results do not match desired goals, create next steps for how to get project back on track.
- Establish partnerships with local NGOs and government agencies that can help increase the success of your project.
- Research grant funding and other opportunities for support, including the [NFWF Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant](#).

Alignments to research

- State Wildlife Action Plan: actions related to water feature conservation (wetlands, rivers, lakes, etc.)
- Local watershed action plan

WETLANDS CONSERVATION AT HOME

Report waterfowl and wading birds observed at water features in your neighborhood on [eBird](#).