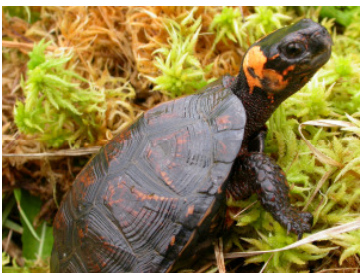


# BEST PRACTICE: North Carolina's Wildlife Viewing Field Trips for Media



**BACKGROUND:** As of January, 2007, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, called Wildlife Action Plans, have been created and approved for all 56 states and territories in the U.S. These plans identify wildlife species and habitats of greatest conservation need, and prescribe strategies to preserve them for future generations of Americans. The plans were created by state fish and wildlife agencies together with a variety of local stakeholders including wildlife enthusiasts, scientists, environmental organizations, landowners and other members of the community. The challenge is that while we have these proactive, cost-effective plans, not everyone knows about them. Wildlife Action Plans are a tremendous resource for organizations and agencies who work on natural resource issues. Wildlife Viewing Field Trips for the media are an excellent way to get the word out to those who can benefit most!

**ACTION:** The North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF), together with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) have organized a series of wildlife viewing field trips for the media. Three trips have been organized to date, focusing on Species of Greatest Conservation Need described in the NC Wildlife Action Plan. Field trips are focused on wildlife and wildlife habitat, which provide a natural opportunity to address the media about State Wildlife Action Plans. As a result, articles referencing the Wildlife Action Plan and the NC Teaming with Wildlife Coalition have reached over 700,000 readers across the state! Details about successful planning tactics follow on the next page.



Bog Turtle



Green Salamander



Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel



Urban Wildlife Project

For success stories about each of these animals and programs in North Carolina, visit:

<http://statewildlife.nwf.org/NC>

# BEST PRACTICE: North Carolina's Wildlife Viewing Field Trips For Media

**PLANNING PROCESS:** Field trips are planned approximately 1 month in advance. Trips are scheduled around holidays and hunting seasons as well as availability of key media targets and availability of wildlife for viewing. The NCWRC and the NCWF led planning efforts.

- ❖ At least one NCWRC biologist was present to lead each field trip and to provide background information about the individual wildlife species that was the focus of the field trip.
- ❖ Focal species were selected based on their inclusion in the NC Wildlife Action Plan.
- ❖ Once in the field, the trips usually lasted 2-3 hours.

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Outdoor writers for local, regional, and statewide newspapers were invited to attend. Citizen volunteers were also invited, as well as local Teaming with Wildlife Coalition organizations. Participants were recruited via phone and email. These events are generally small, with approximately 10-12 participants on average.

**MESSAGING AGENDA:** NCWRC biologists present information on the species of focus and transition to the State Wildlife Action Plan which outlines strategies necessary for conservation of North Carolina's wildlife. Once the tour group is on location, members of the media can photograph wildlife in their natural surroundings and watch biologists carry out monitoring tasks (such as weighing and measuring). The NCWF's role is to provide information about the North Carolina Teaming with Wildlife Coalition and the importance of the Wildlife Action Plan to organizations who use it as a tool for natural resources conservation. Key messages:

- ❖ The National Teaming with Wildlife Coalition is made up of over 5,000 organizations working together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. It is the largest coalition in conservation history.
- ❖ Teaming with Wildlife is organized at the state level. Member groups support increased federal and state funding for wildlife conservation and the implementation of the State Wildlife Action Plans.
- ❖ State Wildlife Action Plans allow for cost effective conservation by outlining actions necessary to conserve wildlife before they become endangered and more costly to protect. These proactive plans also provide strategic, on-the-ground conservation strategies to help assure a wildlife legacy for our children's future.
- ❖ Because State Wildlife Action Plans have been completed in every state, the North Carolina plan is part of a new, national conservation agenda for wildlife. This represents a landmark in our state's, and our country's, history.

**COST:** Total cost per field trip was less than \$200. The only costs incurred were NCWF's travel costs. Invited media representatives received no payment; cost was kept very low.

**OUTCOMES:** As a result of the 3 trips organized to date, 7 participating reporters have generated articles that have run in 7 newspapers across the state with a total circulation of well over half a million readers per week. For very little investment, these field trips have generated significant visibility of the NC Wildlife Action Plan and an outreach to a very broad audience. Additionally, these field trips have led to the development of a citizen volunteer network to assist biologists in achieving monitoring and survey goals described in the Wildlife Action Plan.

**FOLLOW UP:** Ongoing wildlife viewing tours are being planned for media and citizen volunteers around the state as part of NCWF's outreach effort.

**For more on NC's Volunteer Network:**  
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**For more on other Best Practices:**  
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