

# Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail Visitor Information For Bed and Breakfast Operators

## Visitor Demographics

- Couples in their 50's & 60's (65% > 45 years old) 2003 VTC study
- Retired or close to retirement
- Kids gone, Empty-nesters
- College Educated
- Very Internet Literate (shop/travel planning)
- Average Annual Income: 78% > \$50K/yr, 54% > \$75K/yr. (2001 USFWS survey of hunting, fish and wildlife watching)
- 61% stay 2-6 nights, 18% > than 6 nights
- \$566 Mean Spending per travel party

### **They want:**

- Hotels and Motels (59% of trip expenditures go towards food and lodging)
- 6% stay in B&B's (compared to 1.5% of all travelers)
- Clean Modern Bathrooms
- Restaurants (Local places better than chains)
- Information/Attractions dealing with local history and culture

## Additional Information: (All stats are compared to the average Virginia visitor)

- Birders are more likely to Travel in Spring before summer vacation season
- Birders average a higher rate of repeat visitation by 4%
- Birders, on average, spend two more nights on trips
- Birders are more than twice as likely to take extended stays in VA
- Birders spend nearly 50% fewer nights in hotel/motels
- Nearly 18% of Birders spend over \$1000 on a trip, compared to less than 10% of average visitors
- Birders are twice as likely to use the Virginia Travel Guide and three times as likely to use the VTC web site
- Birders are three times as likely to use visitor information centers

Top 15 states of origin are:

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Virginia       | 9. Kentucky        |
| 2. North Carolina | 10. California     |
| 3. Maryland       | 11. South Carolina |
| 4. New Jersey     | 12. Tennessee      |
| 5. Pennsylvania   | 13. Delaware       |
| 6. Ohio           | 14. Georgia        |
| 7. New York       | 15. Texas          |
| 8. Florida        |                    |

## One Possible Day in the life of a birdwatching guest

1 hour before sunrise – Leave for birding site

(They would generally like juice, coffee, muffins, bottled water – DO NOT HOLD THEM UP FOR A FULL BREAKFAST!! *This comment from several birdwatchers!*)

As of April 11, 2006 Sunrise ~6:30am

5:30am – 6:30am	Out the door
6:30am – 10am	Birdwatching
10am – Noon	Look for a place to eat lunch, possibly return to room to freshen up/ask for directions/etc.
1-3pm	Come back in to rest, shower, relax
3-6pm	Go out to look at local attractions
6-8pm	Dinner or dinner theatre
8-9pm	Shop, sit and chat
9pm	Off to bed!

### Things to Consider:

- This group is looking for easy solutions, consider package deals with local restaurants and attractions and offer a complete package highlighting local food, culture, history, and/or artisans.

### Since breakfast is not an option:

- Offer self-serve muffins, coffee and fruit set up the night before
- Put small coffee makers in each room so they can make their own
- Provide a bag lunch ready to go in the morning
- Offer a “Bed and Lunch” or “Bed and Dinner” package for birders
- Don’t wait too long in the morning to get necessary work done....your guests will probably return around mid-morning to shortly after lunch and want to chat (*this from a comment from one inn owner who mentioned they couldn’t get anything done in the middle of the day.*)
- Provide resources on local attractions, local artisans, local shops, and other resources unique to your area.
- Your guests may have mud on their shoes when they return, provide instructions up front about where they can remove their shoes when they return (*they will usually be as concerned about your beautiful inn as you are.*)
- Provide field guides, binoculars, and local birding resources for your guests to use either in the inn or from their rooms (depending on your particular setup).
- Consider putting up birdfeeders around the inn. Birdwatchers NEVER STOP watching birds.
- Consider planting a butterfly garden at your inn. This is easy to do, attractive and it is another area of interest for many birders, who often switch to butterfly watching during the warmest part of the day.
- Provide a list of birds that have occurred on your property. Many local bird clubs can assist you with this, and it immediately connects you to the local birding network.
- **NOTE HERE:** Birders have one of the most extensive communication networks in the world! They talk to each other and they often recommend great places to each other!