



Adaptive Equipment for Birding Loaner Closets

This guidance document is intended as a starting point for building adaptive equipment loaner closets to support accessible and inclusive birding. It is not meant to be exhaustive, and we do not expect that an entire closet will be created all at once. Begin by working with local disability communities to identify priority needs and build from there. Every closet will look different depending on the birding environment, available resources, and community input. Many items can be added slowly over time, and there are often grants available to help with purchasing adaptive equipment. The most important thing is to begin - start small, center access, and grow thoughtfully.

Mobility Support

Manual Mobility Devices

- Rollator walker (with seat, good brakes, storage, ideally rugged/off-road design)
- Seat canes (walking cane that converts into a small stool)
- Standard walkers (foldable for easy transport)
- Trekking poles (collapsible and adjustable)
- Manual wheelchairs (for short distances or emergencies)

All-Terrain Mobility Devices

- GRIT Freedom Chair (manual, lever-propelled all-terrain wheelchair)
- TerrainHopper or TracFab chair (powered all-terrain wheelchair with joystick)
- Beach wheelchair (e.g., *DeBug, Smile Chair*) – often requires a companion to push
- All-terrain strollers (for older children or adults with mobility-related disabilities)

Mobility Aids for Trail Navigation

- Trail maps with highlighted smooth/flat trail routes
- Portable trail mat samples (for previewing surface texture)
- Wheelchair tire cleaning station (simple boot brushes can be adapted for wheels)

Low Vision / Blind Access

Auditory Aids

- Victor Reader Stream or similar audio players
- Audio tour devices (pre-loaded with trail or birding info)
- Smartphone with BirdNET or Merlin Bird ID Sound ID apps installed

Tactile / Braille Tools

- Braille trail booklets
- Braille bird ID cards or bird guides
- 3D-printed models (skulls, eggs, feathers, talons)
- Tactile trail maps
- Textured interpretive signs with Braille and raised graphics

Hands-Free Optics

- Hands-free binoculars (mounted or wearable)
- Binocular stand or tripod adapter (essential for use with mounted models)

Communication / AAC Support

Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Tools

- AAC bird ID cards – visual cards with common bird species, behaviors, and expressions (e.g., “I hear a bird,” “That’s a hawk!”)
- Point-to-communicate boards with birding phrases and needs (“Help me adjust binoculars,” “Let’s take a break,” etc.)
- Dry-erase communication boards or laminated flip cards

Deaf / Hard of Hearing Support

Visual Aids

- Printed birding guides with large photos and minimal text
- Binoculars with image stabilization (to help reduce fatigue from lipreading while scanning)
- Visual-only field guides or flashcard decks

Technology

- Captioning devices or tablets for live captioning during programs
- Pre-loaded video guides with ASL interpretation

Cognitive, Sensory, & Mental Health Access

Sensory Tools

- Binocular Bandits (binocular eyeshields to reduce light and glare)
- Noise-reducing headphones
- Sunglasses or brimmed hats (for those sensitive to light)
- Fidget tools (small, quiet sensory objects)
- Weighted lap pad or shoulder wrap (portable calming support)

Orientation & Processing Aids

- Step-by-step visual guides for using equipment or following a trail
- Simple laminated bird ID cards (10–20 local birds, photos + simple descriptors)
- Nature scavenger hunt sheets (bird bingo, color-based scavenger hunts, etc.)

General Birding Equipment (Accessible Formats)

- Lightweight binoculars (easy to hold and use one-handed)
- Monoculars
- Smartphone adapters for binoculars or scopes
- Digiscopes (telescopic lens adapters for phones)
- Field guides (large print, spiral-bound, regional, laminated)

- Clip-on hat magnifiers or pocket magnifiers

Comfort, Rest, & Personal Support

- Portable folding camp stools (lightweight, easy to carry)
- Cooling neck wraps or sun umbrellas
- Lap trays for those seated in wheelchairs to hold binoculars, guides, or snacks
- Accessible picnic kits (easy-open containers, utensils for limited dexterity)
- First aid kit including sensory-safe items

Storage & Logistics Suggestions

- Label each item with large print and Braille
- Store loaner closet contents in a clearly labeled, accessible location
- Create a check-out system (paper or digital) with usage instructions and photos
- Include basic training guides for staff/volunteers on how to assist with each tool