

## RESOURCE ASSESSMENT SITE POTENTIAL -- EVALUATION SHEET

**SITE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EVALUATOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**An integral part of the resource evaluation process is to identify the wildlife tourism potential for the wildlife of a site or area. The presence of even just one of these features with a high rating can make it a site of state or national significance. If several highly rated features are present, that is even better. Look for the following features and rate them:**

1. **Bald eagles.** Any time of year, but especially wintering concentrations. The first rule of wildlife tourism is that people can't get enough of bald eagles.

**Potential score:**

**Low** **High**

- 2. Large conspicuous mammals** like bison, elk, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and pronghorns provide memorable viewing opportunities.

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Low High

3. **Wildlife breeding grounds or display sites** for members of the grouse family, bison in rut, elk bugling grounds, colonies of breeding species like heronries (best viewed at a distance) and prairie dog towns. Blinds can provide opportunities to watch displaying prairie chickens, heronries, wild turkeys and sharp-tailed grouse.

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐      ☐  
Low High

4. **Migratory concentration sites and wintering sites.** The spectacle of migration is a natural attraction for people. Whether it involves shorebirds, Canada or snow geese, bald eagles, caribou, monarch butterflies, or sandhill cranes, people appreciate the opportunity to see thousands of creatures involved in the ritual of migration or concentrated on wintering grounds. Observation can be done from roads, viewing platforms, or blinds in a way that does not disrupt natural feeding, travel or resting patterns.

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐      ☒

**Low**                          **High**

- 5. Good examples of native biomes** (native plant communities). For example, Minnesota's four major biomes are tallgrass prairie, eastern hardwood forest, aspen parkland, and boreal forest. Sites with large, relatively undisturbed acreages providing scenic vistas offer excellent opportunities for photography, hiking and experiencing solitude. Large acreages are best. Learn what is special about YOUR biome and what unique or distinctive wildlife species are characteristic of that biome.

Low High

6. **Lakes, wetlands and rivers.** The edges of lakes, wetlands, estuaries, and rivers with natural habitats on the adjacent upland are a natural concentration site for many wildlife species. Interpretive opportunities are excellent from boats and pontoons and from blinds or roads at the water's edge.



7. **Wildflower concentrations and butterflies.** Yes, wildflowers are included in “wildlife tourism.” Good concentrations of spring “ephemeral” woodland wildflowers, prairie wildflowers, and specialty flowers like orchids or carnivorous bog plants have their own special attraction. **This includes butterflies.** Butterfly gardens, good natural meadows and prairies can be promoted for butterfly viewing.



8. Rare or endemic wildlife species that can be viewed without endangering or disturbing those species. Some rare species are too sensitive to disturbance to adapt to tourism visits, but others will literally ignore people who are provided proper ethical guidelines and rules for viewing. (E.g. NO touching of animals, NO feeding allowed, or viewing from vehicles or observation platforms ONLY.) Examples of rare species might be peregrine falcons, grizzly bears, or swallow-tailed kites.



9. Places where families or individuals with children or walking disabilities can view common wildlife easily. This includes interpretive and nature centers that may focus on conservation of eagles, bears, timber wolves, raptors, wetlands and other wildlife. Never underestimate the importance of providing the opportunity to see common wildlife like deer, ducks, foxes, frogs, turtles, lizards, harmless snakes, butterflies, and songbirds. There are some people whose lifetime career in wildlife conservation began with the sighting of a fox or scarlet tanager. These sites can include city parks and urban settings, landscaped grounds of B & Bs, state parks that are enhanced with an array of bird feeders at their interpretive centers, and large natural areas with protected wildlife populations.



**10. Nocturnal wildlife viewing** in natural areas and habitats where night viewing/ listening for wildlife (and star watching) are possible. This includes places where it is possible to “howl for wolves,” bat watch with bat detectors, go “owling” with taped calls (within ethical limits) to elicit response by owls, observe nesting sea turtles (with a trained guide), and use of spotlights to see nocturnal wildlife from walking paths or from vehicles (Check with your conservation officer. This is illegal in some states!). Night viewing can also be done from boats along the edges of wetlands. This can be very exciting and suspenseful for people who normally limit their wildlife viewing to daytime hours. Don’t underestimate its impact. It can provide lifetime memories.

