

# US Fish and Wildlife - Virtually Wild! Texas

## 2022 TEEA Winner - Education



US Fish and Wildlife's Virtually Wild! Texas is an exciting program that brings nature to young people who are learning from home, in a classroom, or healthcare facility. Participants from across the state are able to go on virtual field trips where they meet conservation professionals and learn about wildlife, habitats, and careers in natural resources. The free virtual field trips are 45 minutes in length and provide Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills- (TEKS) based, nature-related activities. The programs are offered through live-streaming and are designed to encourage youth to get out into nature, serve as environmental stewards, and consider pursuing a career in conservation.

Since its establishment in 2016, Virtually Wild! Texas has introduced more than 15,000 Texas students to conservation efforts all over the Houston and Gulf Coast areas. With the just use of an iPhone (as a camera) and videoconferencing technology, they enable students to join nature programs in remote locations and facilities often closed to the public. Students can travel to coastal wetlands and prairies, be introduced to endangered species, and interact with conservation professionals to learn about careers in the environmental field. Questions asked during the programs are answered live, in real time, to make the event truly interactive for the students.

During the pandemic and the 2020-2021 school year, Virtually Wild! Texas increased their programming to meet the varying demands of teachers whose students were learning remotely. They offered 13 programs on 44 occasions to reach a total of 4,700 students learning from home.