

NANFA's Annual Conventions

A Guide and Aid to their organization and success.

Since 1996 NANFA has held a national convention every year with the excellent help of our many hosts and volunteers. We cannot thank them enough for their undertaking as these annual conventions are a highlight for NANFA's membership. Conventions are a challenging effort of organization, preparation, promotion and logistics. If you would like to host a convention never hesitate to ask for assistance and advice from our skilled and experienced membership. We welcome and applaud your interest.

NANFA has been fortunate that 18 conventions have been held consecutively since 1996 and each in a different state of the union. Virginia, Kentucky and Georgia are wished for states but every state offers a unique experience and all possibilities and options are encouraged.

The goal of your convention should be to provide an educational and memorable experience to the attendees while "harvesting" as much money for the NANFA Treasury as possible. The money to be used to support our grant programs and other initiatives we have decided to support.

Historically we have had NANFA conventions in...

1996	New Orleans, Louisiana
1997	Portland, Oregon
1998	Chattanooga, Tennessee
1999	Champaign Urbana, Illinois
2000	Jackson, Mississippi
2001	Hocking Hills State Park, Ohio
2002	Ann Arbor, Michigan
2003	Huntsville, Alabama
2004	Columbia, South Carolina
2005	Little Rock, Arkansas
2006	Cape Girardeau, Missouri
2007	Greensboro, North Carolina
2008	Athens, Texas
2009	Tampa, Florida
2010	Ash Meadows, Nevada
2011	Roanoke, Virginia
2012	Salt Fork State Park, Ohio
2013	Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Kentucky

The convention team:

Putting on a NANFA convention is a multi-person job. The host should put together a team to support the various activities that are planned. It is fine to solicit volunteers from the attendees to help at the convention but there should be a core team in place and each team member should have defined responsibilities. The subheadings of this document lend themselves to these kinds of assignments.

Communication and organization:

We get the best feedback from attendees when they perceive that the convention was well organized and that everything affecting them was well communicated. Organization starts with a dedicated convention team.

An information table located in the most traveled area of the event should have such things as the field trip sign-up sheets, convention schedule and information about local restaurants and activities. This

should also be the place for late registrations, general and late breaking information about the convention. This table can also be used to sell NANFA stuff like t-shirts.

Signage should be provided guiding attendees to the information table, meeting rooms, banquet and auction and other events.

Selecting the date and location:

The host, along with the suggestions and guidance from the Board of Directors and membership, is the selector of both the location and date. Some points must be urged in regards to the timing. Fish are generally in their best colors in spring. Summer in the south can be very hot and will make it difficult to keep fish alive but in the north the summer conditions would likely offer a fine opportunity. Families are more able to attend during the summer, however not many children have attended over the years. Autumn can be a good time as it is cool but the breeding colors we admire are not present. Generally late spring, early June seems to be a good combination of all concerns in the southeast. Ultimately though the host must select and present the time that best works for him and based upon his knowledge of the region and seasonal weather conditions. **The type and location of facilities to be used should be a contributing factor in your decision.**

Days and activities have generally been as such...

Thursday:

People begin arriving. Have a hospitality suite setup for gathering and socializing into the evening. A registration table should be attended and stocked with any registration finances, paperwork, information, packets, name tags and t-shirts. For those arriving even earlier advance suggestions can be made of places to collect or visit.

Friday:

This seems to be ideal for the speakers, allowing for late arrivals to settle in, and field trips plans to be discussed during the day. The lectures will help in making attendees aware of what they may encounter during the field trips and any collecting issues or concerns can be addressed in advance.

Friday lunches and evening meals have usually been open / on your own with convenient, local suggestions made by the host. Since everyone is in one place and not scattered all over the state, the day of the talks is usually the best day to hold the banquet and auction. If the auction is delayed too far into the night attendance will suffer (so will profits). It is important that the banquet gets over in a timely manner especially if the auction is in a different venue than the banquet so that people have to change locations before the auction can start.

Saturday:

Field trips. Everyone has had time to plan, concerns have been addressed and the attendees have been further motivated with lectures and photographs.

~~Saturday evening has generally been the banquet and usually followed by the auction. Limiting field trip lengths must be insured so that folks will have enough time to take care of their fish and cleanup before the banquet.~~ **Don't schedule evening events on field trip days unless it is unavoidable. Frequently field trips will keep attendees out until dark. People returning from the field are usually tired and still have to take care of the fish they collected.**

Sunday:

Most attendees will head home but opportunities should be made for those wanting to continue collecting and staying another night. Often Sunday collecting trips are organized for and in the various directions that attendees will take in returning home. This is by no means limiting alternative activities or additional days. In Missouri we had a couple extra days of field trips and activity. Sometimes the banquet or auction might work better on a different evening, perhaps after the speakers. These suggestions are only typical of what has occurred, the host may wish to modify the schedule to fit their planned itinerary.

Promotion:

The Convention should be promoted as soon as possible. Ideally the location should be announced a year in advance and promoted throughout the year with notices in American Currents, on the NANFA Forum, and perhaps even a mailer directly to the NANFA membership. Submitting notices to fish magazines, fish clubs, stores and groups is also an option. **A page on the NANFA website will be provided describing the convention in as much detail as possible.** As the date approaches more details can be provided such as speakers, itinerary, and facilities and thus keeping the interest up. The exact date should be selected at least 6 months in advance so people can organize their schedules.

Logo design:

A logo should be created as soon as possible. The host, artist and designer should work together to create an image that represents the region and species that will be experienced. The logo can then be used for the various promotional needs, notices in American Currents and on the NANFA Forum. T-shirts should be printed in advance and while being sold and worn will aid in the promotion of the upcoming convention. The logo will also likely be used on convention signage, banners, name tags, registration papers and brochures.

Facilities:

Facilities costs can be the largest expense of the convention. If you can form a partnership with an organization such as a college or university, aquarium or zoo, or any related group such as a local aquarium club or the state fish and wildlife department you can usually get meeting rooms and other resources for free or at a reduced cost. Use of a hotel's facilities for meeting rooms, banquet services, and etc. is usually the most expensive option. However, negotiating with a hotel based on the number of room nights we will use can result in a reduced room rate and/or free use of a hospitality room.

We have had convention activities and facilities at a lot of unique locations over the years. Locations such as a rustic Ohio State Park, on a Mississippi River Barge, the Columbia, SC Zoo, a University, a Brewery, an Aquarium, a Historic Train Station, a Castle, and a Texas State Fisheries Center. There are many options available, be creative! The last choice is being stuck in a boring motel all day.

Present a unique experience for your visitors. Make it memorable **and profitable!**

Airports. Directions. Vehicle Rentals. Lodging.

All these should be studied and presented for the attendees' convenience. Special discounted rates should be sought after and a review of the facilities. NANFA's non-profit status can aid in discounts and even contributions.

Field trips:

Field Trips should be organized and based upon the number of attendees. The host will probably need to ~~have~~ offer several different trips and will require a guide or two for each one. Breaking into groups of 10 to 15 is ideal. Urge folks to carpool as having over 6 or 7 vehicles caravanning through red lights and back roads becomes difficult and even dangerous. Parking can also become a problem at some sites, as also can the impact of too many people in one small stream.

Advance presentation to the registered attendees of the field trip options **via the NANFA website** advising attendees of what species will be encountered will aid in **attendee decision making.** ~~Use an advance-signup list.~~ Urge folks to have their vehicles gassed up, gear ready and licenses, if required, on hand. Printed maps, directions and phone numbers are good idea to provide, as it is easy to get lost from the caravan.

Checklist for a successful field trip:

- 1. Provide an advanced sign-up sheet for each field trip. Include a description of the trip (same as**

the description on the website). If there are special instructions or restrictions such as listed species, these should stand out in the descriptions. Get names, number of attendees (family members). Include all cell phone numbers.

2. Put together a directions package.
 - a. Include maps, these can be photo copied from a gazetteer or other source. Frequently great maps can be downloaded from the internet (see [http://store.usgs.gov/b2c_usgs/usgs/maplocator/\(xcm=r3standardpitrex_prd&layout=61_61_48&uiarea=2&ctype=areaDetails&care=%24ROOT\)/.do](http://store.usgs.gov/b2c_usgs/usgs/maplocator/(xcm=r3standardpitrex_prd&layout=61_61_48&uiarea=2&ctype=areaDetails&care=%24ROOT)/.do)) Show the route to be followed, each collection site and if possible, include the GPS coordinates for each site.
 - b. Provide written directions. These can be gotten from mapping website such as mapquest.com.
 - c. Encourage and arrange for carpooling to reduce "caravan" size.
 - d. Provide copies of the trip sign-up sheet to each carful of attendees.
3. Provide signage indicating where each group is to stage.
4. The guides should go over their plan for the day and emphasize any last minute changes. The guide should reiterate warnings about species of concern.
5. Before departing each collecting site the guide should go over the next leg of the trip. The guide should also poll attendees to see if any are dropping out of the trip.

Back up plans should be made in case of terrible weather. Most NANFA members are fine with some rain but in severe weather a backup plan in the main facility with perhaps videos, spontaneous speakers and socializing opportunities should be offered. Unfortunately once the date has been set we can't alter nature's plans. We have been fortunate over the years but being prepared for bad weather is encouraged. Initially try and keep your field trips fairly close, certainly within an hour or 2 at the most from the convention site. Save the long distant field trips for the Sunday departures.

Don't schedule evening events on field trip days unless it is unavoidable. Frequently field trips will keep attendees out until dark. People returning from the field are usually tired and still have to take care of the fish they collected. **Evening events after field trips are usually poorly attended.**

Snacks & Drinks & Lunches:

Your region may offer unique products to share. In Chattanooga Moon Pies, Little Debbie's and Cokes were donated to NANFA. Don't hesitate to inquire, ask and request, and again, NANFA's non-profit status might aid in this. Find and provide the various, unique products that are made in your area. In Tampa several cases of beer were provided. Show off your regional products!

On some field trips we have been provided box lunches or MRE's. **You should consider this option if a field trip is to a remote area where there may be no restaurants or stores. In Nevada there were locations where food was not available. We provided MRE's and added the cost to the registration fee.** Other times drive through or outdoor restaurants have been selected. Have a lunch plan established for the field trips and don't dump a bunch of mud laden, wader booted fish mongers at a fine eating establishment!

Speakers:

NANFA has many fine speakers within our ranks, so be sure and ask the membership. Regional speakers should be selected that can tell of the species and their habitats that will be found in the area and while on the field trips. **Getting a speaker that is recognized as the region expert (possibly an author or coauthor of a "Fishes of..." book) is a real coup.**

Keep a balance to the composition of speakers. ~~—cater exclusively to one group such as game fish or aquarium care or environmental concerns but~~ provide a well-rounded mix of different topics, species, perspectives and experiences.

Talks seem to work best at 30 minutes but for someone especially interesting and entertaining up to 1

hour. Be sure and allow sufficient breaks between talks and strive to keep everything on schedule. It is very easy for longwinded talkers to throw the entire schedule off.

Speakers can attend the convention free, except that if they attend the banquet they must pay the actual cost of the meal. Because this results in lost registration fees, you must not exceed 8 speakers without the approval of the Board of Directors. Too many speakers can throw off your schedule and result in truncated times for the banquet and auction. Better to undershoot your allotted time than to overshoot. Better to go for quality over quantity.

Hours of presentations can lead to boredom. Adequate breaks are important. Hands-on activities can help vary and improve the experience. In Tampa Bay Tony Terceira gave a demonstration on aquarium photography. In Kentucky, Uland Thomas plans on teaching how to make a photo tank.

It is not the policy of NANFA to pay travel expenses or lodging for speakers. There may be cases where you think there should be exceptions. These must be approved by the Board of Directors.

Having a couple back up speakers available can be handy in case someone cannot attend at the last minute.

Finally it is often interesting to have someone speak of a totally different region and species for a contrast.

Audiovisual equipment:

Be sure and provide any audio visual equipment the speakers will need. Screens, projectors, microphones, laser pointers, and remotes. Rental of this type of equipment either from the hotel or an AV rental company can be extremely expensive. Barrowing them from work, a church, a library or some other source can save a lot of money.

Establish an acceptable format so that each speaker will know that their prepared program will work on the equipment provided. If possible, have speakers submit their presentation early so they can be tested on the laptop and projector they will be shown on. It's a good idea to have backup projectors and laptops.

Banquet:

The banquet has been a special feature for each year and eagerly enjoyed. Local cuisine should be embraced. We have had regional BBQs, a Low Country Boil, a Cuban Buffet, a Catfish Fry, a fantastic Cajun Cooking Feast with various mystery meats offered, T-Bone Steaks grilled on a Barge finished with New York Cheese Cake, and a Texas Chili Cook-off on welcoming night. Embrace your local culture! Remember attendees will be coming from all parts of our country. Show off your local cuisine, not only the fish and their native waters but also the food and history of your region. Make the experience memorable for your guests.

A popular local restaurant can often be a cost effective way to host a banquet. Many restaurants are glad to reserve an area for a large group. If your venue is a public facility many restaurants will deliver for no or a limited fee. Hotel food services tend to be very expensive and have a limited menu on offer. Using a restaurant may limit your ability to have a banquet speaker.

Banquet speaker:

We have had some fine speakers after our meals. Dr. Roston and his video work, Todd Crail's presentation on a living Aquarium, Dave Neely's Mexican Trout search. Even an Amazon photo travelog. This is a great way to relax after the meal and while preparing for the auction. Depending on your venue and schedule, it may not be practical to have a speaker.

Auction:

The NANFA Auction has been a big money maker year after year. ~~It is a time consuming effort and best~~

~~left up to members who have experience handling it, and the host will have enough responsibilities without taking on more.~~ Any donors should and must be thanked with letters of gratitude soon after the convention. New donors should be sought out and potential donor leads solicited from the membership. A donor list should be carefully nurtured, updated and appended annually. Potential or past donors who have not contributed during the past 3 to 5 years should be dropped from the Donor Request mailing list to save expense. ~~Urge one or 2 NANFA members to take on this continuous effort.~~

The NANFA Treasurer will provide an excel spread sheet that will streamline the auction process. As auction donations are received they should be added to the spread sheet across the top row. This gives each item an alpha designator. Prior to the auction the attendees should be added down the left column. This gives each bidder a numeric designator (bidder number).

CN13							Paid	
	A	B	C	BH	BI	BJ		
1				One Night Stay Salt Fork Lodge State Park	Fish Hats(4)	Fish Transportation Coolers (2)		
2				Salt Fork Lodge				
3	1	Kathlina	Alford					
4	2	Ryan	Argo					
5	3	Andrew	Avram					
6	4	Justin	Baker	35	19			
7	5	Fritz	Bazeley					32
8	6	Mike	Berg		20			28
9	7	Edward	Bihary					
10	8	Mark	Binkley					
11	9	Josh	Blaylock					
12	10	Eugene	braig					
13	11	SCOTT	CARLSON					
14	12	SUSAN	CHAMBERS					
15	13	Shawn	Conert					

Figure 1: The auction items are listed in fixed cells across the top. The bidder's names and numbers are in fixed cells along the left side. In this example Justin Baker paid \$35 for a night's stay at Salt Fork Lodge (item BH, donated by the lodge). He also paid \$19 for 1 of 4 fish hats (item BI), Mike Berg also bought a fish hat.

2012 Auction Item list.xlsx - Microsoft Excel

FileHomeInsertPage LayoutFormulasDataReviewViewAdd-Ins

Calibri11

GeneralConditional FormattingFormat as TableCell Styles

InsertDeleteFormatSort & Find & FilterCellsEditing

ClipboardFontAlignmentNumberStylesCellsEditing

CN13Paid

	A	B	C	CL	CM	CN
1				Freshwater Fishes (6)		
2				Binkly		
3	1	Kathlina	Alford		14	
4	2	Ryan	Argo		0	
5	3	Andrew	Avram		0	
6	4	Justin	Baker		161	Paid Online
7	5	Fritz	Bazeley	5	167	paid
8	6	Mike	Berg	6	139	Paid
9	7	Edward	Bihary		0	
10	8	Mark	Binkley		102	paid
11	9	Josh	Blaylock		79	paid 80
12	10	Eugene	braig		65	paid 60
13	11	SCOTT	CARLSON	30	58	Paid
14	12	SUSAN	CHAMBERS		117	Paid
15	13	Shawn	Conert		0	

ReadySheet1Sheet2Sheet3

86%

Figure 2: The last item listed (CL) was 6 copies of the book Freshwater Fishes. The next column totals each bidder's purchases. The next column records that a bidder has paid. Notice that some bidder's added a donation to their payment and another paid online. That is also reflected in the last column. This helps to "balance the books."

Phil Nixon has been our excellent auctioneer each year. Much success of our auctions is attributed to him. He is humorous, motivated, keeps the energy level high and the money flowing. Having alcohol available helps too, not that we need to encourage excessive drinking.

Raffle:

This has been a fund raising activity for a few random years and can make additional monies for NANFA. Volunteers should be acquired to take on this responsibility if it is desired.

Costs:

Generally registration has been around \$85. However the various expenses for your convention will dictate how much the registration should be and an extra \$25 or so included for unexpected expenses when figuring the total. The conventions, in addition to offering a lot of fun, fish and fellowship, should raise funds for NANFA's expenses, support and treasury.

Early registration should be at an established base rate. Late registrations, 1 or 2 months before, should be at a higher rate, perhaps 10 to \$20. more, and finally last minute walk-ins should be at an additional expense, another 10 to \$20., the reason being it is very hard for the host to determine logistics if people Don't register early. All kinds of worrisome issues arise. How many will attend the banquet? How many field trips should i plan for, how big of a facility do we need, how many chairs? All efforts and incentives should be made to have folks register early.

Student, children and spouse discounts can be considered but remember there are established expenses per person, such as the banquet and facility size, which must be provided for.

Registration should be based upon the individual being a member of NANFA, or at least one of the family. Non members should have a one year NANFA membership fee of \$20 added to their base registration.

Should speakers not pay for their registration? If so what about the auctioneer, the trip guides, the logo artists, the Board of Directors, and the American Currents editor?

Being that NANFA is an ALL volunteer membership i would urge everyone, except for the hosts, to pay the registration fee.

We are an ALL volunteer organization. No one is paid and the monies we gather are then distributed to cover our expenses and the causes we support. If the policy is established of paying expenses for speakers we are opening a difficult situation that will be perceived as unfair. Many speakers are government employees and thus supported by the taxpayers already. Part of their job is community outreach and speaking at a NANFA convention is certainly to be considered a public outreach.

It should also be stated how much our membership has been getting for their minimal convention registration fee each year... the use of the facilities, a banquet meal, snacks, drinks, lectures, and guided field trips. Many other conventions and conferences cost much more and don't include near the activities we have over the years. We have had excellent support from our hosts and state and university personnel.

Legalities:

A waiver should be signed by each attendee that acknowledges the potential hazards of participating in collecting field trips. NANFA or the host must not be held liable for any injuries. A NANFA form with the proper wording has been created and can be modified for each convention. (See exhibit 1)

Permitting and any collecting concerns must be in order and if collecting / fishing licenses are needed for each participant then they must be made well aware of that fact beforehand. If attendees are out collecting on their own or on a different day they are usually not covered by the group permits and this must be stated too.

Species of concern should be noted in advance so there will be no collecting of listed endangered species. NANFA as a group must honor and respect the laws, and our activities should never cast a bad light on the organization.

Finances:

Registration payments and any sales paid by check should be made out to NANFA and provided to the NANFA treasurer as well as any cash and receipts. Having the ability to accept Visa cards was beneficial in Florida and helped increase sales. **NANFA has the ability to accept credit and debit card via PayPal. A dedicated laptop may be required to support this.** Careful records should be kept and any funds needed for convention expenses should be presented to the treasurer.

Summary:

NANFA's annual conventions are a lot of fun and provide a wonderful opportunity for our membership to explore and experience another part of the country and its unique fishes. All efforts, with plenty of advance preparation and organization, should be made so that the convention runs smoothly **and profitably**. Many members are eager and able, to assist and should be called upon to do so.

We thank you for your interest and desire to host a convention, the membership will greatly appreciate the opportunity you provide. Embrace your local culture along with the fishes and nature of your region. Many eyes will be seeing them for the first time!

Exhibit 1 Liability Release Form

Liability Release Form

To: North American Native Fishes Association, hereafter known as NANFA

Event: NANFA Annual Convention

Participant: _____

I understand that participation in the above event could include actions or tasks which might be hazardous to the participant named above.

By signing below, I assume any risk of harm or injury which might occur to the participant due to their participation in the event or activity. I NANFA from all liability, costs and damages which might arise from participation in the above named event or activity.

If the participant is a minor, I agree that the minor has my consent to participate in the event. I further provide my consent for the NANFA to seek emergency treatment for the minor if necessary. I agree to accept financial responsibility for the costs related to this emergency treatment.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____ Date: ____/____/____