



# GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



*An approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing 5 April 2012*

## ***Transportation/LWCF and Congress***

### Back to the Drawing Board

Just about a month ago, the U.S. Senate passed a creative bi-partisan Surface Transportation Bill (also simply known as the Highway Bill). By a vote of 76 to 22, the bill was enhanced with essential conservation measures, including a remarkable two-year mandatory funding level for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the attachment of the RESTORE Act, dedicating 80 percent of penalties associated with the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon blowout to the restoration of Gulf Coast resources and economies. There also were important parts of the huge Highway Bill that included rails-to-trails, walking, and bicycling elements that deserved praise.

In short, the bill addressed major areas in favor of wild places, wildlife, and the expansion of sustainable ecotourism. You can see our review of those opportunities (from 13 March) [here](#).

The House of Representatives had to act on the Highway Bill by 31 March to keep crucial funding dollars flowing through the pipeline.

But instead of passing the Senate version of the Highway Bill, and eager to start a two-week recess, the House passed a 90-day stopgap measure to keep regular highway and infrastructure funding going. Two hours later, in a voice vote, the Senate agreed to go along.

This action marked the bill's ninth extension since its expiration at the end of September 2009. While this buys time for Congress to agree on a longer-term transportation bill - or pass another extension - it is hard to envision a passable bill that would be better than the one that the Senate put together. Time will tell.

## Another Birding Diversity Meeting Planned

Save the October Date

In October 2011, over 100 bird educators and bird conservationists met at the first "Focus on Diversity - Changing the Face of American Birding" event in Philadelphia, at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.



Now a "Focus on Diversity II" meeting is planned for 13 October 2012 at the Minnesota Valley NWR, just south of Minneapolis.

The purpose of this event is to perfect effective outreach methods to diverse audiences using a message of birding and nature-study opportunities, outdoor recreation, and a conservation ethic.

The assumption is that getting an expanded audience - one that really looks "more like America" - interested in birding will benefit those new birders, the general birding community, the broader environment, and, of course, the birds themselves!

If you are curious about building a broader, more welcoming, representative, and strong birding community for everyone, see the initial announcement on this October event [here](#).

## NPS Saying NO to Bottled Water

Some changes being made

Hey, it's just water! Right? Well, not when it's bought pre-packaged in a plastic bottle!

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), over 1,125,000,000 pints of bottled water were sold in the U.S. last year. Less than 15 percent of these plastic water bottles were recycled, with the rest going into landfills, or worse yet, discarded as litter.

A little over a week ago, Saguaro National Park announced that it would no longer host vending machine sales of disposable bottled water. This follows a similar move by Grand Canyon National Park, which eliminated the sales practice in early March. Instead, visitors will find water-bottle refilling stations at visitor centers and trail heads. In addition, reusable water bottles are available for purchase at these National Parks. Other National Park efforts - at locations like Zion National Park and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park - offer water stations and encourage visitors to bring their own bottles or buy stainless steel reusable bottles. (The purchase of a reusable bottle for as little as \$1.99 - versus \$1.25 for vending-machine water - also seems like a smart deal for many.)



For Saguaro National Park's late-March announcement on the discontinuation of disposable water in bottles, see [here](#).

Discussion continues on curbing the sale of bottled water at our National Parks. For more

on the business of bottled water, and the effort to get it out of our National Parks, see [here](#).

If you or your organization is planning a conference, a convention, a birding or nature festival, or a byway/trail destination enhancement, the connections with bottled water should be considered.

In the meantime, remember: *Reduce, reUse... and REFILL!*

## Rice is Nice

When is rice like coffee?

Answer: when it helps the birds.

Not unlike shade-grown coffee that protects our Neotropical migrant songbirds in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, flooded-field rice provides valuable habitat for waterbirds of all sorts - from ducks and geese, to shorebirds, egrets and herons, rails, and a suite of wetland-dependent songbirds.

Of course, while not all shade-grown coffee is equal, neither is all flooded-field rice! Still, since all rice in the U.S. is grown in flooded fields, the crop constitutes "working habitat" for people as well as birds. A "green" rice connection with many birds is packed with potential, mutually beneficial lessons for bird conservationists and rice producers alike. These may yet point to ways to engage in an appreciation and energetic marketing of bird-friendly rice.

Here opportunities abound.

## April Fool's Day:

Yes, there are no flying penguins, suet feeders the size of 55-gallon drums, nor is there a sequel to *The Big Year*. Still, [our April Fool's issue](#) of a few days ago had some of you guessing... if only for a few minutes.

## Words to Consider:

"Ecology is a new name for a very old subject... natural history."

- Charles S. Elton, *Animal Ecology* (1927)

## For contact and more information:

If you wish, you can contact me concerning your avitourism interests, site and trail/byway evaluations, "beyond birding" workshops, and group presentations. (A list of my standard 2012 talks and workshops can be sent to you upon request.) I can be reached at the e-mail and/or P.O. Box address below:

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