



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



An approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing

19 April 2012

Earth Day - Officially It's Sunday

Things to Consider



Well, it's almost Earth Day again. Actually, it's this coming Sunday, 22 April. Of course, Earth Day is a day when events are held across the U.S. and worldwide to increase awareness and appreciation of the Earth's natural environment. Many communities will even celebrate Earth Week, an entire week of activities focused on environmental issues.

The event has served as a powerful focus around which people everywhere could demonstrate their commitment to sustainable living.

But why shouldn't every day be Earth Day?

And for some of us, having a connection to the environment, to nature, to wild places, and to wildlife occurs mainly through birds and bird habitat. In that case, the daily connection to the environment through birds is obvious. In that spirit, below you will find *nine things you might think about this Earth Day*, ways to address our earthly environment through an appreciation of birds. Each of the nine also has at least one link to help you connect to activities that happen all year - and not just on Earth Day. The nine points are presented in no particular order:

1) Maintain a bird-friendly backyard.

Start small. Start with your backyard. Host a broad selection of feeders for year-round feeding. Put up nest-boxes to substitute for missing nesting-cavities in dead branches. Provide a water source. Work on less lawn, less pesticides, more ground-cover, and native trees and bushes! Managing your [yard](#) for birds actually works. Your yard is also friendlier when your [kitty stays indoors](#) and when your windows are bird-proofed.

2) Buy a Stamp or two

Buy the annual [Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp](#), commonly known as the "Duck Stamp." Funding from the Stamp is used to acquire National Wildlife Refuge System wetlands and grasslands (fee-title and easements). Thus, it supports all sorts of wetland and grassland birds. It's not "just for ducks." Also purchase the annual [Junior Duck Stamp](#) which supports conservation arts in the schools. And consider your own state's wetland or waterfowl stamp, most of which are dedicated to state-based wetland acquisition and conservation

3) Drink bird-compatible coffee

Since shade-grown coffee mimics natural forests in Latin America and the Caribbean, buying and drinking certified shade-grown coffee is important. The birds need it, and the coffee tastes great, too. You can also promote this effort in your community, encouraging others to appreciate the role that [shade-grown coffee](#) plays in providing habitat for Neotropical migrant and resident birds alike. Appreciate the overlap between organic and fair-traded coffee, too.

4) Recycle your field equipment

You can give a second life to some of your working equipment - binoculars, scopes, digital cameras - that you are replacing. Send that field equipment to our counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean. [Birders' Exchange](#) is the best example of this effort, but there are others, like [Optics for the Tropics](#). Understand that it is not charity, but simply self-interest, to link with our colleagues who are ultimately responsible with us for the joint-guardianship of our shared Neotropical migrating birdlife.

5) Take out a friend or neighbor

Bring a friend or neighbor into the field to appreciate the wonder of birds and other wildlife. Take out a kid or a bunch of kids. Take out a bunch of adults. Bring them to a National Wildlife Refuge or a local park. Spend a day with them at a regional bird or nature festival. Mingle with other people [learning about birds](#) and nature. It's an investment in the future.

6) Think Carbon Offset

Increasingly, individuals and institutions are asking their members or customers to consider offsetting their carbon footprint toward special projects, habitat restoration, solar power, wind power, etc. Not all these "green" projects are equal when it comes to birds, so some efforts have been made to focus on special carbon offset mitigation funding to secure quality bird habitat. One such effort, the Carbon Offset Bird Project (COBP) was at the [Midwest Birding Symposium](#) last fall, but there have been others. If anything, we need to see more examples.

7) Kick the bottled-water habit

We always take water into the field - on a trip or a hike. Unfortunately, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), over 1,125,000,000 pints of bottled water are sold annually. Less than 15 percent of these plastic water bottles were recycled last year, with the rest going into landfills, or worse yet, discarded as litter. Fortunately, some National Parks are [curbing the sale](#) of bottled water on site, and the trend is spreading. If you or your organizations are planning a conference, a convention, a birding or nature festival, or a byway/trail destination enhancement, the connections with bottled water should be considered. Encourage your folks to bring their own reusable plastic bottles or stainless steel bottles. And provide opportunities to refill these reusable containers.

8) Support a Lights Out effort

More urban areas are initiating "Lights Out" efforts. These campaigns can reduce glass glare - particularly dangerous to nighttime migrating birds - reduce the use of coal-fired power plants, and counteract light pollution. In North America, the trend was started through Toronto's established Fatal Light Awareness Program ([FLAP](#)). Personal and individual efforts to reduce electrical power and light power are fine; community efforts

are far more meaningful.

9) Support bird-friendly working lands

If we started our list small-scale - in your backyard - we end at a much larger personal land scale. We should be supporting actions on the scale of local working lands that will be bird-friendly. Such activities can include the promotion and use of conservation measures in agricultural areas through parts of the [Farm Bill](#) - such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). The trend includes the full appreciation of valuable agricultural working wetlands - such as the importance of quality [rice farming](#). And it also includes the management of "green" areas such as golf courses and cemeteries that can actually be managed to benefit birds.

Earth Day? Why not every day?

Words to Consider:

"The wealth of the nation is its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, wildlife habitats and biodiversity that's all there is. That's the whole economy. That's where all the economic activity and jobs come from. These biological systems are the sustaining wealth of the world."

- Gaylord Nelson (1916-2005) - Governor, Senator (D-WI), and principal founder of Earth Day

New GBP Website

Great Birding Projects is a vehicle to promote a creative approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing. It is not "strictly birding," and it is not "strictly conservation." Instead, GBP functions as a bridge to an innovative engagement between people and birds. Great Birding Projects does not provide all the answers or all the tools to rebuilding the old birding or constructing a creative and engaged new birding. Still, GBP has some creative ways to make an old birding relevant and a new birding exciting and promising.

You can now see what Great Birding Projects has to offer on the new GBP website at GreatBirdingProjects.com



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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