



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



An approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing 22 May 2012

Celebrate National Trails Day

A growing effort

Saturday, 2 June 2012, is National Trails Day. Save that day to participate in a local hike, dog walk, cycling event, birding walk, horseback ride, trail maintenance project, paddle trip, health fair, geocaching activity, rails-to-trails walk, or photo safari. Some new trails are being opened on 2 June. In any case, there is bound to be an outdoor trail event that matches your interests on that day.

National Trails Day emerged from a Presidential Commission on Americans Outdoors in 1987, recommending that all Americans be able to step out their front doors and within fifteen minutes be on trails that wind through their cities and towns to bring them back without retracing their steps. The concept was called Trails for All Americans, and it became the impetus behind several partners, led by the American Hiking Society, to launch National Trails Day in 1993.

National Trails Day is also a fine way to link a White House effort from 1987 to another effort today. The connection is through our current First Lady's [Let's Move](#) initiative, to bring up a healthier and more active generation of American youngsters.

To participate and find a National Trails Day event near you, see [here](#).

Another Push for LWCF

As you may know, the U.S. House and Senate are currently "in conference" working through two versions of a huge Transportation Bill. They intend to find agreement on one final package to pass before 30 June. The Senate's version of the Transportation Bill (S. 1813) contains a crucial provision that was added during floor consideration of the bill back in March. This provision actually provides \$700 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in each the next two years. It was passed in the Senate with an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote.

This is a remarkable victory for conservation, *but only if this element is included in the final Transportation Bill* that the House and Senate are presently negotiating.

There are some parts of the Transportation Bill (especially the House approach) that are undesirable, of course. There are other elements - like Transportation Enhancements (TE), Recreational Trails Program, Safe Routes to School, and federal land roads - that are very desirable and need continuation. But that's what the "conference" process is all about: keeping some elements in, cutting others out. The LWCF option is certainly one that that needs to survive the conference process.



To ensure a robust and consistent funding for LWCF through this Transportation Bill, a statement of support is circulating. You will find it [here](#).

The statement explains the vital issues and urges that this critical LWCF provision be included in the final transportation package. This will help provide access to open space and habitat across the country (on the Federal, State, and local level), stimulate our nation's outdoor recreation economy, and create jobs that cannot be exported overseas. All supporters of wild places and wild birds should appreciate that this LWCF inclusion in the Transportation Bill presents a timely opportunity - perhaps the best opportunity we will have this year - to ensure the protection and conservation of critical land and water across our country.

Consider having your organization or business sign on to this statement in the next few days - by Friday, 25 May - to show Congress how important it is to our local communities that LWCF be included in the final Transportation Bill this year. Also consider passing the statement along to other organizations you may work with.

If you have questions or would like to sign the statement, please contact Gareth Jones of Outdoors America at: gjones@outdoorsamerica.org

New NWR Trail Lessons *If you build it they will come*

Many people were celebrating International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) on Saturday, 12 May, in NW Ohio. The activities involved bird clubs, state, and federal land agencies, bird tour companies, and even overlapped the "Biggest Week in American Birding" event.

What happened at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, however, was the cherry on top of the sundae. At about 10am that morning, three Amish youth found a female Kirtland's Warbler, a rare and endangered species that breeds mainly in central Michigan and is only very rarely found in migration. This bird was discovered most of the way down a brand new trail, a Magee/Ottawa Partnership Trail - the "Crane Creek Estuary Trail." This new trail is next to the famous Magee Marsh boardwalk trail; it starts on Magee state

property and leads into Ottawa NWR property. It's about a half-mile loop trail. The refuge Project Leader, Jason Lewis, and his crew had just opened the new trail about 10 days previously, ready for visiting birders.



Still finding the Kirtland's Warbler at 5:30pm - Photo by Lisa Rock

Finding the Kirtland's Warbler on the brand new trail on IMBD was a big deal.

The word went out, and the rush began. The female Kirtland's Warbler persisted on site all day, delighting visitors at least until 7pm. How many folks saw the bird? It must have been hundreds and hundreds. It may have been 1,200+. One reliable observer estimated 3,000. Basically, everyone who wanted to see the bird got to see it!

The point here is that visitors - photographers, families, and dedicated birders - all had a wonderful experience on IMBD because access had increased at Ottawa NWR. Had the new trail not been opened, nobody would have seen the bird on this very special day.

Words to Consider:

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

- John Muir (1838 -1914)

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.

Contact me concerning your avitourism interests, site and trail/byway evaluations, "beyond birding" workshops, and group presentations.



You can see what Great Birding Projects has to offer on the new GBP website at:

GreatBirdingProjects.com

I can also be reached at the e-mail and/or P.O. Box address below:

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