



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

19 March 2013

Avitourism and the American Traveler

Looking at a recent survey

The State of the American Traveler, a twice annual national survey (January and July) conducted by [Destination Analysts](#) gives a snapshot of the trends and interests of traveling adults in the United States. The most recent survey (January) showed some interesting facts. In the area of activities on leisure trips - conducted 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home, and at least once in the previous 12 months - here were some results on the level of participation:

Visit a state or local park	24.8%
Visit a National Park	22.7%
Camping	16.7%
Drive scenic byway	15.5%
Visit a National Forest	14.7%
Bird watching	7.7%
Canoeing or kayaking	6.2%
Hunting	5.6%



These are all outdoor activities that may have avitourism - and even conservation - implications. And a number them can be done in tandem!

As shown above, birding is at level of 7.7% participation, and that is not unsubstantial. But as the list shows, there are lots of other activities which are clearly ahead. Also, and as other figures in the survey illustrated, just a few more people used the mini-bar in a hotel (7.9%) and went golfing (8.0%). On the other hand, birding seems to be slightly ahead of those who went to an adult cabaret, theater, or strip club (5.1%).

We learn new things all the time!

Optics and Festivals

Growth all around

We have witnessed the proliferation of birding festivals for many years now. Some are based at dynamic birding hotspots; some are smaller, community-oriented or species-centered events. Some are big; some are small. Most are field-trip oriented; fewer are lecture-oriented.

Increasingly we see an additional orientation, festival-type events which emphasize optics and related gear, with an increasing optics-vendor level of participation. This is healthy.



This increased role is in no small part due to the proliferation of optics companies providing a vast array of binoculars and spotting scopes at varied prices and surprising quality. It's not simply the three or four high-end superb-quality companies you have always expected to encounter. It's a lot more... and in a field full of real competition.

Moreover, if you go to one of the larger birding and nature festivals - e.g., Rio Grande Valley, Space Coast, San Diego, Midwest Birding

Symposium - these days, you are likely to find an optics company you didn't know existed only two or three years ago.

The current economy also plays a big role. Often, the optics companies are the ones with the wherewith all to be full sponsors and participants at these events. Other vendors - sometimes mom-and-pop operations - have fewer options when it comes to travel and personnel.

Some events are more optics oriented, and now even optics dominated. And we see a trend of them being free. For example, in late October there will be the second "[Wine Country Optics and Nature Fair](#)" in Sonoma, County, California. See here. And, next weekend, there will be a "[Birding Optics and Gear Expo](#)" in Columbus, Ohio. The major sports optics companies will be at this particular event dedicated to optics and gear for outdoor enthusiasts. This is another "try-before-you-buy" experience, an opportunity to sample all sorts of binoculars, spotting scopes, tripods, and other outdoor gear.

We should be watching for these kinds of events to grow.

What motivates "Green" Behavior? *Implications for birding and more*

We've touched on the issue of "green" intentions and practice before, most recently in mid-August, on "[Exploring the Green Gap](#)," but here we visit the question of motivation.

Environmental campaigns have attempted to convince our fellow Americans to live and buy "greener" in many ways, but mostly motivated by economics (cost cutting) and moralizing (often leading to guilt-tripping). For birders, this covers all sorts of issues we are aware of, from buying shade-grown coffee or bird-and-eco-friendly rice, to buying a "Duck Stamp," to reducing light and deadly glass from mirrored buildings, to engaging in carbon-offset birding, to volunteering to work at on-the-ground habitat preservation/restoration.



Two recent studies have recently reexamined the ways to motivate green practices and have concluded that while financial incentives are good to motivate the public, people

also want to maintain a good self-image, leaning toward a "moral green" orientation. Indeed, most people simply want to feel good about themselves.

But the exact pitch of the moral message is essential, depending on different audiences. What often work best are not simply arguments of "harm/care" but often re-framing those arguments to include "purity/sanctity."

The harm/care arguments stress an ethical obligation to protect the natural environment from harm. The purity/sanctity arguments stress the ways that, say, pollution and land abuse have contaminated the Earth and people's bodies. (To build on the purity/sanctity arguments, and to elicit a level disgust, the second study had images showing a person drinking filthy water, a city under a cloud of pollution, and a forest full of garbage.) The harm/care arguments confirmed the attitudes of a liberal-leaning audience, but the purity/sanctity arguments won over the orientation of a conservative-leaning audience.

The proper mix of motivational arguments is essential for all campaigns aiming to win people to greener values, including those motivated to help birds and bird habitat.

Furthermore, and as the researchers stress, those developing new arguments and reason for supporting green behavior have to consider arguments that are different from those that motivated the original advocates in the first place.

The two articles and the general issues are summarized [here](#).



Migratory Bird Stamp News *Three items of interest*

A few interesting developments are worthy of note in the area of appreciation and promotion for the Migratory Birding Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp:

1. The folks at *Bird Note* did one of their short, two-minute broadcasts on the Stamp, Birders, Hunters, and Refuges in early February. It's worth [a listen](#).
2. The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp launched their first electronic newsletter, *Wingtips*, this month. It focused on the new video/DVD on "Ding" Darling and on the contributions to education and conservation through the Jr. Duck Stamp. See [here](#).
3. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has chosen Maumee Bay State Park Conference Center in Oregon, Ohio, as the site for its [next Federal Duck Stamp Art Competition](#), which will be held on Sept. 27-28. The selection, in part, pays homage to long-time USFWS employee and acclaimed wildlife artist Bob Hines (1912-1994), who hailed from NW Ohio.

Words to Consider:

"Conservation... is a positive exercise of skill and insight, not merely a negative exercise of abstinence and caution..."

- Aldo Leopold, 1939

GBP Bulletin Archives

Great Birding Projects is a vehicle to promote a creative approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing. GBP functions as a bridge to an innovative engagement between people and birds. You can access all previous issues of the *GBP* bulletin on the GBP website [here](#).

