



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

25 July 2013

The Next Birding Diversity Meeting *South Texas in November*

The very next Focus on Diversity: Changing the Face of American Birding (CFAB) conference will be held November 4 - 6 in McAllen, Texas. The conference will explore the critical importance of engaging new audiences with birding opportunities and also involving them in bird-education and bird-conservation actions. This third annual event in the Focus on Diversity series promises to be an incredible opportunity for several reasons.



The conference aims to convene concerned birders, environmental educators, and bird conservationists from across North America. The central focus will be reaching communities of diversity to nature through birds. As an outcome of the conference, participants should:

- Understand the critical role that sharing their interests in birds with others has in shaping the future of both the birding community and bird conservation.
- Learn strategies for effectively fostering an appreciation for birds/nature in others.
- Network with other dedicated birders, educators, and conservationists from non-profit organizations, government agencies, businesses, and other entities across the country.

For all the particulars on the CFAB meeting - speakers, workshops, instructive bird walks, etc. - see [here](#).

Participants are also strongly encouraged to attend the 20th annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, centered in nearby Harlingen, an exciting event that immediately follows the CFAB conference. Here are details on the [festival](#).

Rice, Birds, Conservation, and Crawfish!

American Rice-growing Options in the South



Rice ready for harvest in SW Louisiana

The issue of rice as the most bird-compatible mass-grown crop in the United States has appeared in this newsletter a number of times, including in December. See [here](#) for that coverage.

Rice habitat is great for waterfowl, long-legged waders, rails, shorebirds, raptors, and many wetland-loving songbirds. Some especially creative rice-and-birds activities are occurring in California, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

One particular aspect of this blending of rice growth and bird habitat has been much ignored, however. Rice farmers in the American South will often use some dry rotation alternate crop - e.g., soybeans or sorghum - to minimize weeds and to maintain rice yields. But there is an alternate "crop" available to them, providing an additional "harvest" in wet-soil/aquatic habitat. And that "crop" is... crawfish!

The creative integration of crawfish aquaculture into a system of rice rotation means that some years there are rice fields that are transformed into lush crawfish-producing impoundments. According to Jay Huner, birder and retired director of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Crawfish Research Center, "the annual spring-summer draining of crawfish ponds provides the pulse of food necessary to sustain tens of thousands of egrets, herons, ibises, roseate spoonbills, wood storks, and more." These are all birds that can benefit from wetlands that are deeper than the 3-4-inch depth used by rice farmers, particularly since crawfish cultivation requires 10-12 inches of water.

Taking root in the 1950s in Louisiana, crawfish production has made that state a leader in the field (with 180,000 acres of crawfish farming today). But the crawfish-and-rice combination has also been tried in southeast Texas, northwest Mississippi, and southern Arkansas with some success. The potential to grow crawfish aquaculture is a unique byproduct of the rice scene, and can be important for our colonial wading birds.

The next time you have a Louisiana crawfish *etouffee* over rice, you might just feel a little better about your bird-friendly diet!

Note: A recent article on the important rice-and-bird connection has appeared in the July/August issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and it is accessible from the "Sustainable Agriculture" page of the USA Rice Federation website (see "Articles" at the bottom of the [page](#)).

The Fate of Travel Guides

How much of a change?



It used to be that when you traveled on vacation - even a short vacation - you might pack a dog-eared travel guide in your suitcase or backpack.

That's simply getting to be a rarer experience these days. Sales of travel books dropped 19 percent last year and 10 percent in 2011.

A year ago, the classic Arthur Frommer travel guide books were bought by Google, but the company announced in March that the series would be dissolved. The series had been mined by Google for content, and its usefulness was over. One month later, the series was sold to Arthur Frommer, the 83-year-old original founder of the brand.

Also, in March, BBC Worldwide sold Lonely Planet - one of my favorite series - at a loss of over \$100 million.

Is the travel guide a thing of the past? Not exactly... but it's looking a lot different these days. Lonely Planet now has 500 e-book editions, and the guidebook companies need to offer their contents in different formats.

Alongside crowdsourced sites like TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Wikivoyage, there are new e-published travel formats with new tools and platforms. Apps are increasingly common.

Not surprisingly, the same threats - and opportunities - are impacting the traditions of birdfinding and nature-oriented locality guides. And these guides include those to birding-and-nature trails across America.

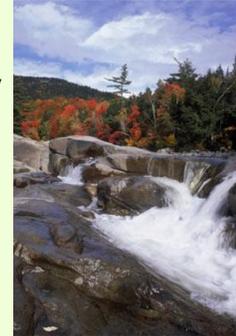
Why buy a hard-copy book when you can find most of the up-to-date information you may need cheaply or for free with just a few minute's searching on the Internet?

The evolving travel guides will experience growing - and aging - pains for the foreseeable future.

Another View of Outdoor Economics

An additional perspective from the industry

In a GBP newsletter earlier this month, a study on this country's economic stake in natural resource conservation was [described](#). The study, "The Conservation Economy in America," was commissioned by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and conducted by Southwick Associates.



Public and private natural resource conservation investments were measured in the study. The sources had federal accounting for 60 percent, state 24 percent, local 5 percent, and private 11 percent. This added up to over \$38.8 billion per year.

These monies, once spent, circulated through the economy and produced an estimated \$93.2 billion of total economic activity.

Actually, the figures were conservative, as the authors of the report readily admitted. Not included in the study were such important activities as outdoor recreation, environmental education, eco- or avi-tourism, historic preservation, pollution control and abatement, municipal parks and recreation programs, timber marketing, and scientific research.

Still, the study has represented a contribution to thoughtful measurements.

For another far more ambitious way to measure these activities, one can view the figures collected by the Outdoor Industry Association. Their measure of outdoor recreation - such as hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, biking, snowsports, and paddling - is in the context of a national recreation infrastructure. That infrastructure included public lands and waters provided by federal, state and local governments, and it produces some giant numbers. OIA maintains that the outdoor industry drives nearly \$646 billion in retail sales and services, and nearly \$80 billion in federal, state, and local taxes. For a state-by-state breakdown from OIA, see [here](#).

Somewhere between the conservative NFWF/Southwick number of \$93.2 billion and the ambitious OIA number of \$646 billion rests a call for better research on the economic impact of outdoor activities, especially focusing on the natural resource side of the equation.

Words to Consider:

"I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

- E. B. White (1899-1985) reporter, author, essayist, critic

More on the Migratory Bird Stamp Time to Show your Stamp!



Last month, the 2013-2014 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (often called the Duck Stamp, and increasingly called the Migratory Bird Stamp) was officially released. This year's stamp shows a Common Goldeneye painted by Robert Steiner. The stamp, of course, was originally created in the 1930s as a federal license for hunting migratory waterfowl, but "Ducks Stamps" have a much broader purpose.

The stamps are crucial for National Wildlife Refuge System acquisition, with revenues helping secure wetland and grassland habitat for the Refuge System. To date, more than \$850 million has been used to purchase or lease over 5.5 million acres of Refuge System habitat in the lower-48. (Stamp proceeds go into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund - MBCF - to be spent on fee purchase, easement, or leasing of Refuge System lands.)

But waterfowl are certainly not the only wildlife to benefit from the sale of these stamps. Other birds, mammal, fish, and herps have benefited too! And people have also reaped the rewards.

Simultaneously, the Junior Duck Stamp for 2013-14 - showing a male Canvasback painted by Madison Grimm - was released late last month. (The Jr. Duck Stamp funds go to sustain the educational program involved with the school-oriented efforts across the country.)



Of course, there are different ways to appeal to the public - hunting and non-hunting, young and old - to appreciate and buy the \$15 Migratory Bird Stamp or the \$5 Jr. Duck Stamp. Recently, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has made an appeal for bird enthusiasts to support the stamp effort. You can find the Lab's creative message [here](#).

If course, all sorts of approaches can be made, geared to different audiences, whether they are birders, hunters, wildlife photographers, urban environmentalists, or rural farmers.



At the same time, you may also wish to view the orientation of the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp. See [here](#).

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](#).

