



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

22 April 2015

Earth Day Thoughts *Action to consider*

Earth Day, of course, 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 organizations and 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 show their commitment to sustainable living.

Of course, there are two ways to create awareness and commitment. The first is to feature the stark picture of nature under assault, replete with images of destruction and abuse. The intent is to engage the audience in such a way as to call for a changes in policies, priorities, as well as public and individual behaviors, with stark images and dire predictions. Unfortunately, such calls can often be counterproductive and discouraging, a [disempowering environmentalism](#) described in *GBP* last Earth Day. They second way raises positive alternatives to the current environmental scene, while in no way soft-peddling the actual state of the environment and the challenges ahead.



It is that second approach which is pursued here, things that suggest positive results and a sense of hope for the future. For some of us, having a positive connection to the environment, to nature, to wild places, and to wildlife occurs mainly through birds and bird habitat. And that attitude raises a good question

this Earth Day:

Why shouldn't every day be Earth Day?

With that thought in mind, below you will find eight practical and positive things you might think about this Earth Day, ways to address our earthly environment, especially through an appreciation of birds. They are presented in no particular order:

- 1) Maintain a bird-friendly backyard. Start small, in your backyard. Try 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 on native trees and bushes! Managing your yard for birds actually works. Your yard is also friendlier when 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, bottomlands, and grasslands (fee-title and easements). Thus, it supports all sorts of birds, not just ducks. Also purchase the annual Junior Duck Stamp which supports conservation arts in the schools.

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) 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 launched to accentuate special carbon offset mitigation funding to secure (i.e., restore or revegetate) quality bird habitat. We need to see more examples.

5) 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, yet few (under 15%) are recycled. Fortunately, there are localities (e.g., some National Parks) that have been curbing the sale of bottled water on site, and the trend is spreading. Encourage organizers of conferences, nature festivals, and other events to work on reusable plastic bottles or stainless steel bottles for participants. Set an example.



6) Support a Lights Out effort

Increasingly, urban areas are initiating "Lights Out" efforts. These campaigns can lower glass glare - particularly dangerous to nighttime migrating birds - reduce the use of coal-fired power plants, and counteract light pollution. Personal and individual efforts to reduce electrical power and light power are fine; community efforts are far more meaningful.

7) 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.

8) Support bird-friendly working landscapes
If we started our list small-scale - in the backyard - we end now at a much larger land-scale. We should be supporting actions on the scale of local working lands that will be bird-friendly. The trend includes the full appreciation of valuable agricultural working wetlands - such as the importance of bird-friendly American rice farming to our waterbirds. And it also includes creative grass-fed beef for the protection of our grassland birds. It even includes smart management of "green" areas such as golf courses and cemeteries that can actually be managed to benefit birds.



Earth Day? Indeed. Why not every day?

How Can You Show Support for Birds and Rice? - You can wear a related t-shirt!



If you want to literally wear your support for America's most important mass-produced bird-friendly crop, rice (see #8 above), consider this t-shirt. It sends a simple message: "Buy American RICE - Preserve Bird Habitat."

The shirts are available in most sizes (S, M, L, XL, 2XL) and are 100% cotton.

The first shirt costs \$20, and any additional shirts sent to the same address will cost \$15 each. (Maryland residents should add \$0.90 tax per shirt.)

You can order shirts directly from (and make a check out to):

Paul J. Baicich
P.O. Box 404
Oxon Hill, MD 20750

Now Available

- The story of American bird feeding



From the 1930s: Federal Cartridge Corp.

Depending on the time and place, the seemingly simple practice of bird feeding in America has been many things over the last 120 years. It has been a social cause, a trendy curiosity, an agricultural obligation, a serious hobby, a billion-dollar industry, a basis for scientific study, a road to conservation, and pure entertainment.

The story of bird feeding is one of invention and a reflection of our changing economic times, but it is also a story of how Americans have come to value the natural world. It is a story that has never been

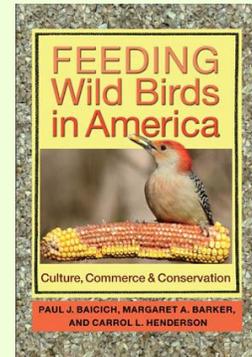
presented in a book-form until now.

What we now have with this book is the story of *bird feeding in context*.

This new book, released last week, *Feeding Wild Birds in America* (Texas A & M University Press), tells a real historic tale. The book is by Paul J. Baicich, Margaret A. Barker, and Carrol L. Henderson.

You can find more details - including comments from early readers - from [Texas A&M University Press](#). Or if you wish, try [Buteo Books](#) or [Amazon](#).

One of the co-authors, Paul Baicich, was recently interviewed by Mark Lynch on his show, "Inquiry," on WICN out of Worcester, Massachusetts. You can access that half-hour podcast [here](#).



Words to Consider:

"Leave shocks of corn in the field [for the birds], scatter grain sweepings in likely places, fasten suet to your orchard trees, and spread a lunch-counter under your window out of the reach of cats!"

- Mabel Osgood Wright, *Bird-Lore* (1909)

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](#).

