



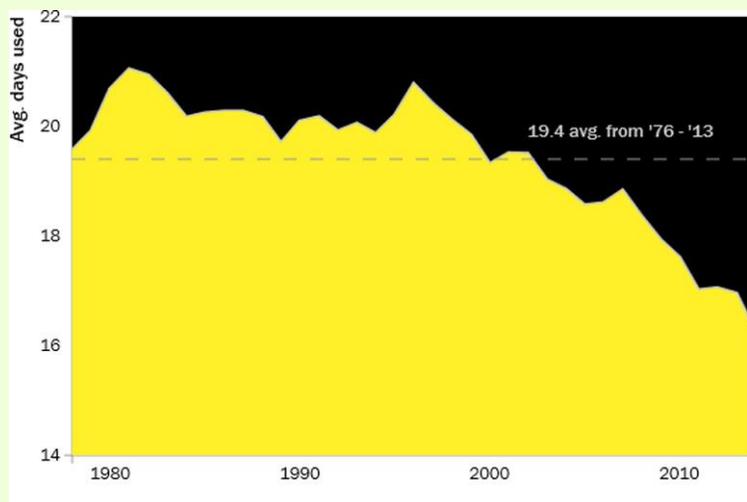
GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

29 June 2015

The Disappearing American Vacation *The evidence accumulates*



It's the start of summer, and it's time to think about summer vacations, with or without kids.

The harsh news is that we American are taking less vacation-time, and this is not good for America. Vacations are what make outdoor recreational activity possible. Birding, wildlife-watching, hunting, camping, hiking, mountain-biking, canoeing, and other activities are all dependent on free time, and

weekend time off never seems to be enough.

While employees in other highly developed countries usually enjoy 25-35 days off a year, U.S. workers are legally entitled to no paid vacation - although many get 10 days of national holidays. The United States stands alone as the only well-off developed nation without legally mandated vacations for employees and with no requirement that official holidays come with extra pay and a compensating day off.

A look at some examples elsewhere is revealing. The UK is among the world's leaders when it comes to annual paid leave with 28 days. Elsewhere in Europe, workers also do well when it comes to getting paid time off. Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, and Sweden all get 25 days off as standard. So do Austrians, who also get 13 public holidays each year, giving them an impressive total of 38 days off. Finns also get 25 days off, but with a single year of service in a job, workers in Finland are actually entitled to 30 days off. The French? Try 30 days. The Germans? Consider 20 days plus 10 more with paid holidays. And outside Europe, one might consider Australia with 20 (+18), New Zealand with 20 (+10), and our neighbor, Canada, with 10 (+9).

Here in the USA, those workers who are entitled to paid vacation often will leave days on

the table. In a [study](#) by the U.S. Travel Association, researchers found that among employees with access to paid time off, nearly five day went unused (in 2013), and 1.6 of those day were forfeited, not carried to the next year. (See the chart on the top of this article.) That adds up to 169 million days of lost vacation time for Americans.

But it actually gets more sobering.

If Americans returned to the vacation patterns we experienced on average from 1976 to 2000 (20.3 days per year), annual vacation days taken by employed Americans would increase fully 27%. This would be equal to 768 million additional days of vacation at a national level. If Americans were to use those 768 million days, it would result in \$284 billion of economic impact. This would include \$118 billion in direct travel spending.

Full-week vacations have steadily declined over the more than 35 years considered by this survey. The impact of this decline was offset by increased partial-week vacations, at least through the mid-1990s. Partial-week vacations have eased, but still remain crucial to the vacation industry.

As a consequence, such institutions and activities as resorts, cruise-lines, and festivals (those focused on birding, nature, or regional culture) have been designed around "100-hour vacations." Scheduling these sorts of events over "long weekends," is no accident.

Admittedly, most workers in the United States do get some paid vacation - perhaps three-quarters overall. But there is a schism: Paid vacations are nearly universal for our higher-paid workers, but only about half of lower-paid hourly wage workers receive paid time off.

The situation was well described earlier this month on the popular WBUR (Boston) show, [On Point](#), concerning the "no-vacation nation."

If we Americans do not pay attention to this trend, we will, someday soon perhaps, look back on paid vacations the way we now look back on defined benefit company pensions.



Have a Grand 4th of July!

about this approach and these figures when we plan a desired week-long trip to include birding or other outdoor activities.

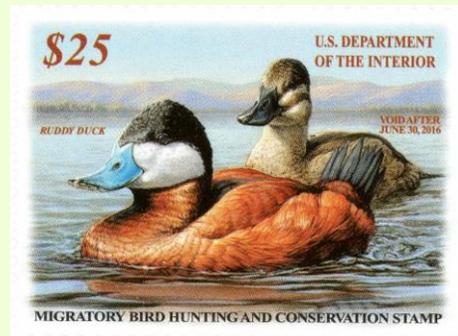
Finally, why is it that most politicians fail to connect time off and vacation-time to the theme of "family values"? Perhaps as we get onto the summer and into our 4th of July holiday weekend, we ought to think

New Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Released

- The \$25 challenge

The new Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp was released last week at a ceremony at the Memphis, Tennessee, Bass Pro Shops.

Almost all the revenue from Stamp sales - potentially up to \$40 million the coming year - will go directly to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF). The MBCF receipts derive mainly from the sales of the Stamp and from import duties collected on arms and ammunition. This dedicated funding will be directed to secure vital breeding, stopover, and wintering habitats for waterfowl, other bird species, and other wildlife across the National Wildlife Refuge System.



This year's stamp, however, is the first one to cost \$25, increasing the price by \$10. By law, the \$10 increase will be spent on wetland and grassland easements in the Refuge System.

The problem - indeed, a challenge for all serious bird conservationists - will be the need to keep sales up, to make sure that between 1.4 and 1.7 million Stamps are sold in the next 12 months. The topic was addressed in an [issue](#) of *Great Birding Projects* (page 2) in February of this year, an article titled, "How do you sell a \$25 Stamp?".

For more information on the Stamp see the Federal Duck Stamp office, [here](#), and the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp, [here](#).

Delightful Bird Images on Postcard Stamps

- Coastal Birds

A related subject, this time concerning normal USPS postage stamps, is the release of attractive bird stamps by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). At the very beginning of this month, four new USPS stamps were released. The stylized images show four eye-catching birds: the Red Knot, King Eider, Roseate Spoonbill, and Magnificent Frigatebird. They are reproduced on the right.

The USPS appreciates that the American public likes to buy attractive stamps showing birds, and this is the latest offering.



The USPS writes, "Feeding on everything from crustaceans and mollusks to insects and fish, coastal birds can be spotted along beaches, rocky coastlines, and mudflats, as well as in lagoons, wetlands, and other saltwater and freshwater habitats. They account for some of the world's largest breeding and migratory populations."

The Coastal Birds stamps feature the art of illustrator Tyler Lang. Each is worth 35 cents, ready-to-go for a postcard. (If you want to put one on a regular first-class letter, you'll have to add another 14 cents to the postage.)

Show Support for Birds and Rice

- Wear a supporting t-shirt

In the United States today, there is one significant "bird-friendly" crop grown on a large scale: it's rice. Our six largest rice-producing states are Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas. And these are places where waterfowl, shorebirds, long-legged waders, rails, raptors, and wetland-favoring songbirds frequent. American ricelands account for about three million acres of land which otherwise might be virtually devoid of birds. It's just that simple.



If you want to literally wear your support for bird-friendly rice, consider this t-shirt. It delivers a simple message: "Buy American RICE - Preserve Bird Habitat."

The shirts are available in most sizes (S, M, L, XL, 2XL). These shirts 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

A Fine Reception

- The story of American bird feeding

The story of bird feeding in this country is one of creativity and innovation, a reflection of our changing times, but it is also a story of how Americans have come to value the natural world. It's all described in *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce, and Conservation* (Texas A&M University Press, 2015)

Bird feeding here has been many things in the last 120 years. Depending on the time and place, this seemingly simple practice 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.

This new book tells the historic tale. *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce, and Conservation* has been written by Paul J. Baicich, Margaret A. Barker, and Carrol L. Henderson. It has received some good reviews, including one earlier this month from the Wildlife Management Institute's *Outdoor News Bulletin*, found [here](#).

Future issues of *GBP* will go into more detail on this book.

For now, you can find more - including comments from early readers - from [Texas A&M University Press](#).

Words to Consider:

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

- John Muir (1838 - 1914)

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](#).

