



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

2 June 2016

Is bird-friendly beer possible? Something you might not have considered...

It's not as outlandish as you might think. A "bird-friendly beer" really depends on how you look at beer ingredients and if they have content that actually helps birds.

Well, we are in luck. And whether you are a beer fan or not, this may be of interest.



Photo - Uri Tours

Ingredients in beer may vary culturally in such countries as the Netherlands, Japan, Mexico, Great Britain, and Belgium, but in the U.S. most brands of beer have used barley as the main ingredient in brewing. It's the "adjunct" ingredients that may now draw our attention. "Adjunct" refers to any beer ingredient other than malted barley used to contribute sugar for fermentation (including sugar itself) in making beers.

Mass market beers, and even craft beers, use these adjunct ingredients. They can include wheat, rye, oats, corn, and rice. Of these, one element surely stands out: rice.

Since American rice in the United States is the most bird-compatible, mass-produced, popular crop in the country, it deserves special consideration. Although the total acreage of rice grown in the United States (c. 2.8 million acres) may be less than that used by some other crops - corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, and sorghum, for example - rice is actually critical for our wetland birds.

Today, American rice farms, many of them family farms, serve as "surrogate wetlands" to supplement natural wetlands that have decreased over time. Rice production creates a modest but essential replacement ecosystem, helping to ameliorate losses of native wetland habitat. It's important for waterfowl, shorebirds, long-legged waders, rails, and many other species.

Separating rice at processing mills results in "head rice" (whole-grain) and different grades of broken kernels, or "brewer's rice." In the past, most broken rice in the U.S. went to the beer industry. Today, most of the rice going into beer is whole-grain, while the dog-food industry uses much of the broken rice.

Used properly in production, rice lightens the color and body of beer. It has been used much like corn has in beer, but it helps produce a drier product. Rice is very much about clean and dry drinkability. This may not be to your own particular taste, but pale lager still dominates the U.S. beer market, and grains that make beer lighter seem to be essential for most makers of pale lager.

Currently, Budweiser uses rice in its production. Indeed, the Budweiser bottle labels announce the rice content: "Brewed by our original process from the choicest hops, rice, and best barley malt." Among the larger brewers, Coors also uses rice, reportedly, less so. But with some of the biggest beer brands in the country - consider Budweiser, Miller and Coors - now owned by foreign investors, the future of beer here is still in flux. At the same time, local craft beers continue to grow, with some of them using rice in the brewing process.

So far, no major brand has pitched itself as a bird-friendly beer, but perhaps it's only time before that happens. And, yes, experts say that one could probably make beer from 100 percent rice, but it probably would be very bland!

Consider rice and wetland birds the next time you order up a brew or go shopping for a six-pack.



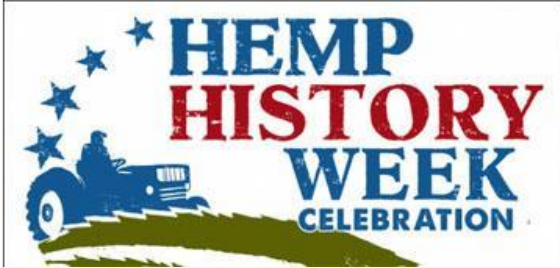
Rice in Louisiana - P.J. Baichich



In the meantime, if you want to literally wear your support for bird-friendly rice, consider a special T-shirt. It delivers a simple message: "Buy American RICE - Preserve Bird Habitat." The shirts are available in men's 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 see the model T-shirt and order shirts [here](#).

Hemp History Week - Next Week **- with a history of bird connections**



As we approach Hemp History Week, to be celebrated 6-12 June, it may be enlightening to review hemp's historic use as a birdseed in the U.S. In the winter of 1895-96, bird-feeding pioneer, Elizabeth B. Davenport of Brattleboro, Vermont, wrote glowingly of feeding birds at her window a seed mix with a large proportion of hemp. Its use was quickly adopted by early wild bird feeding proponents, and hemp became a

main ingredient in personal birdseed mixes. At the time, hemp seed was widely available at feed and grain stores. Use grew, and by 1918, in a circular on attracting birds produced by the state of Massachusetts and written by ornithologist Edward Howe Forbush, feeding hemp and sunflower seeds in winter was recommended because of the "bodily warmth they produce."

Over the decades, interest and praise continued. Discussing "satisfactory foods" for wild birds in the 1941 *Audubon Guide to Attracting Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson praised hemp as "a favorite with nearly all seed-eating birds. In a mixture of cracked corn and smaller seeds, hemp always goes first." Over half a century later, in 1994, Peterson reminisced over using hemp in his teenage years: "The birds' favorite seed, I recall, was 'hemp'... The birds seemed to be wild about hemp. They preferred it to millet or cracked corn."

Currently, it is wise to categorize hemp either as "industrial hemp" or "psychoactive hemp." Industrial hemp is usually defined as a product containing less than 0.3 to 1.0 percent THC (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol), the psychoactive ingredient. There are ongoing efforts to return industrial hemp to widespread production in the U.S., with the product to be available for health food and body care products, as well as eco-friendly textiles, clothing, auto parts, building materials, and, of course, birdseed. Hemp also has a profile that shows some promise for regenerating depleted soils, sequestering carbon dioxide, and preventing erosion. The possibilities [continue to grow](#).

This is all part of the effort in the upcoming [Hemp History Week](#). There is a short video associated with the effort that you can [view](#) on the importance of industrial hemp.

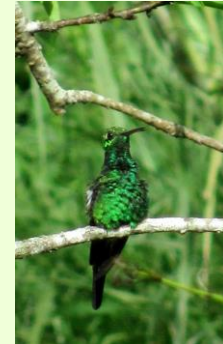
As far as those birdseed connections, the story of hemp is also part of *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce, and Conservation* (Texas A & M University Press), by Paul J. Baicich, Margaret A. Barker, and Carrol L. Henderson. The book can be found at many bookstores across the country, including bird-specialty stores and nature-centers, and can be found on-line. You can access a special order form [here](#).

If you wish to host one of book's three co-authors as a speaker on bird-feeding history at your event, contact [Margaret. A. Barker](#).

More on Cuba, birds, and us - openings and possibilities

Cuba is crucial for our inter-American bird populations. Over 370 species of birds have been recorded on the island, including over two dozen species which are endemic to Cuba. Due to its large land area and geographical position within the Caribbean, Cuba is a real stand-out. More than 160 species will pass through the island during migration or spend the winter on the island.

These are unique and very interesting times for the people and resources of Cuba. While many islands in the Caribbean have had their ecological riches paved over, poisoned, or otherwise destroyed in pursuit of development and to accommodate a tourist industry, large parts of Cuba remain immune from this trend. Cuba has "accidentally" become a safe haven for many rare and fascinating species, from the mountains and hills to the shores and swamps. That "accidental" status, however, is now coming into question.



Cuban Emerald –
Paul J. Baicich

At the same time, increased U.S.-Cuban bird-connections through people-to-people and research-based bird activities have been underway and have actually been increasing. This kind of engagement can only help in the process of better understanding, knowledge, and conservation.

If you are interested in a bird-study trip to Cuba later this year (3-15 November), a trip designed for 14 people and run by qualified and experienced leaders, check out [an itinerary](#) developed by the Caribbean Conservation Trust. (We will publish hints on other opportunities for 2017 in the near future.)

At the same time, the wonderful book by Nils Navarro, *Endemic Birds of Cuba: A Comprehensive Field Guide*, was recently published (2015, Ediciones Nuevos Mundos) and is [available through BirdsCaribbean](#).

Words to Consider:

"I wonder why progress looks so much like destruction."

- John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1962)

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](#).

