



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



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

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Deeper Survey of Birders

New look at old data



NYC Birders in Central Park
Photo: Ralph Hockens

An international team of sociologists recently finished a study of birders in the U.S., based on newly available data and on cross-referencing material originally used in two well-established studies. The team, led by Prof. [Stronzo Bestiale](#) of Palermo, Sicily, and currently visiting professor at the [University of Northern New Jersey](#), made some surprising findings. Much of the work consisted of cross-referencing raw material collected for the *National Survey on Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-associated Recreation*, compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

and the *National Survey on Recreation and the Environment*, prepared by the U.S. Forest Service.

The re-tooling of the data more deeply confirmed that bird watchers, especially those who travel multiple times per year to observe birds, are likely to be middle-class and fairly well-off, gender-balanced (almost 50/50), well-educated (heavily leaning toward college graduates or even beyond), older (53+), and Caucasian.

There are other characteristics that Bestiale and his team unearthed, however. Birders, according to the study are:

- 65% more likely than the general population to take handheld photos of wildlife
- 18% more likely to be vegetarians
- 12% more likely to enjoy Monty Python reruns
- 9% more likely to drive a Prius
- 7% more likely to drive an Outback
- 0.04% more likely to be leather fetishists

Finally, the more the birder travels, the less likely he or she is to contribute to conservation causes. This relationship is now being called, among human-dimension specialists and outdoor-oriented sociologists, *the Stronzo factor*.

Rice and Bursting Birds Finally Confirmed

Is this what is killing Bobolinks?



Spreading Deadly Rice
Photo: A. Crockus

Back in the 1980s, it was asserted that birds that ate natural, uncooked rice were likely to experience stuffed crops as the rice expanded in the birds' digestive systems. This, according to [Dr. Eppie Lederer](#), resulted in crop failure, if not the more dramatic bursting of birds, often in flight. The messy, if not tragic, results were reported from varied habitats, including, most curiously, in front of churches after weddings.

After years without further reports of these startling events, a spate of occurrences has arisen. These have involved such seed-eating passerine birds as sparrows, finches, and blackbirds. Some recently exploding birds have included species as large as Mourning Doves. [Dr. Alfred Crockus](#), from [Drumpf University](#), was able to document these events in the field and reproduce them in the laboratory.

Incidents of bursting birds were especially obvious in San Antonio, Texas, and San Jose, California. These are also cities with particularly high numbers of churches *per capita*. Dr. Crockus connected the bird deaths to rice. His critics insist that the cause of the birds' deaths is actually proximity to churches.



Exploded Mourning Dove
Photo: A. Crockus

Dr. Crockus is also convinced that the disturbing decline of Bobolinks - traditionally called "ricebirds" - can be attributed to the birds' deadly diet and not due to the destruction of habitat.

New Bird Food from Pumpkins

Taking advantage of a post-Halloween surplus

In an attempt to take advantage of surplus Halloween pumpkins, MegaFeed Corporation, a Pennsylvania-based bird-seed company has developed a two-pronged effort to feed pumpkins to wild birds. Researchers at the company recently announced that the seasonal timing is perfect, since the presence of surplus pumpkins - late October - occurs right before the start of highly popular wintertime bird-feeding in much of the northern U.S. and Canada.

First, and most obviously, the pumpkin seeds themselves will be used as birdseed. Not usually offered as bird food, the dried pumpkin seeds will still have to be sprayed with sunflower oil to make them more "tasty" or "attractive" to many birds. Second, the pulp of pumpkins will also be rendered into a kind of mush, eventually to be mixed into specialized suet cakes.



Photo: MegaFeed

Initial experiments have indicated that these dried and enhanced pumpkin seeds are attractive to Northern Cardinals, Pyrrhuloxias, Evening Grosbeaks, and some towhees. The company's researchers, however, also discovered that the pumpkin seeds were only consumed when sunflower seeds were unavailable.

The pumpkin suet cakes were gobbled up by cowbirds.

Newly discovered wren

Mexican species may occur in AZ or NM

A group of U.S. birders, birding in Sonora, northern Mexico, recently stumbled upon a small population of wrens which may actually be a new species. This occurred at the same time that at least three very similar individuals were reported in Arizona and New Mexico, where one bird was photographed. All the birds were found along riparian areas, sluggish creeks, or isolated ponds. Most were on private ranches.

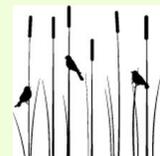


Searches are underway to find more wrens in appropriate habitats. Tour companies are about to line up customers. Debates are renewed concerning the appropriateness of play-back recordings.

The species, probably a member of the genus, *Troglodytes*, may be called the Singing Wren, due to its highly melodious characteristics. The original group in Mexico was able to [video and record](#) at least one cooperative singing individual.

Words to Consider:

"Camping is nature's way of promoting the motel business."
~ Dave Barry



For More Information:

If you wish, you can contact GBP concerning your avitourism interests, site and trail/byway evaluations, psychic channeling sessions for extinct bird species, and group presentations. More details [here](#).

