

Advertising, Marketing and Promotions To Attract Birders

Advertising a business or attraction to birders is paramount to the success of any birding endeavor, and you **MUST** advertise continually – every season, every year!

Because there is no birding season - that is, because birding is enjoyed year-round - you should promote your birding business, or the birding aspects of your business, every month of the year. This is possible with regard to field birding because you essentially have a different variety of birds to tout every month or two. But how do you come up with the resources (finances) to advertise birding as often as possible, throughout the year, year after year? Yes, some promotions require considerable finances, but others require far less, and still others are free of charge. Below we'll address a variety of options for advertising, marketing and promotions, including paid advertising and some freebies.

Sustained Promotions

To promote your birding interests through advertising, marketing and promotional materials, you must adhere to a sustained promotional plan with an appropriate budget. Your budget may be as little as \$40 per month, and it can range to \$4,000 per month and more. Your budget will dictate what kinds of promotions you can plan and, ultimately, the level of response you will get from birders. But you must keep up sustained promotions throughout the year, and year after year.

- **Annual Promotional Plan** – Begin by developing an Annual Promotional Plan. The best plan will highlight 12 promotions per year. Divide the year into monthly promotions that utilize your budget wisely. Keep in mind that some promotions can be developed that do not cost cash (such as in the case of press releases); and some promotions will have an initial cost, but you will reap their benefits for years to come (such as in the case of erecting billboards). [*Many good promotional options are listed below.*]
- **Attractive Goals** – You will also need to set realistic goals of how many people you wish to attract on an annual basis. Do you want to attract 200 birders? Or 2,000! Your marketing plans and budget will need to be revised in appropriate fashion to address your numerical goals, which will also reflect your level of birding-based income that will result from attracting birders.
- **Investments** – Keep the ultimate payoff in mind. Finances paid for promotions should be viewed as investments. In short, how much is your group willing to invest to attract birder one? And how much will they spend to attract 200 or 2,000 birders to your community?

You have many options to choose from when advertising your birding attraction or supplies. Overall, be creative, be dedicated and be resourceful and you will reap the rewards of your promotions for birding-based tourism.

Advertising Options

Below is a comprehensive list of advertising options your group can employ:

- **Your Internet Site** – Develop a simple birding-oriented web site or web page that describes and promotes your birding attraction or business as it best relates specifically to birders. You can develop your own dedicated web site, or add a birding page to an existing web site associated with your community or another business or education endeavor. Internet promotions offer a broad reach to market your birding attraction, supplies or amenities.
- **Internet Content** – Be sure to use plenty of high-quality photos of birds found in your area, post lists of birds that can be found during each season of the year, include descriptions of exciting birding field trips in your area, and add a helpful list of places to stay, places to eat, other amenities and businesses, etc.
- **Marketing Your Web Site** – Don't expect people to visit your web site automatically – you must advertise your web site just like you advertise your attraction or business. Marketing your web site may require some professional help in getting your web site listed high on worldwide search engines.
- **Basic Info** – Whenever you are advertising, always include your web site URL and email address along with your telephone number and street address.
- **Business Cards and Fliers** – These can be relatively cheap advertising as handouts that you can make on your computer or have printed by a professional printer. Fliers carry bigger images and greater messages, ranging from ¼ - to ½ -page sizes. The key is to get them into birder's hands.

- **“Welcome Birders” Posters** – These promotional posters, ranging from 8x11 inches in size to 2x3 feet, can be placed in storefront windows in businesses, on community bulletin boards and a host of other applications to help promote birding attractions.
- **“Welcome Birders” Signs** – These signs can be placed in storefront windows in businesses, and they can also be posted on private land – as a great community promotion that offers an impressive contradiction to the “No Hunting or Trespassing” signs we usually encounter in rural North Dakota.
- **Billboards** – Every town has a “Welcome” billboard along their highway approaches; add a large “Welcome Birders” sign to an existing billboard, or put up a new birding-based billboard sign to attract traveling birders and emphasize your community’s dedication to birds and birding.

Freebies

Some promotions do not require financial payment:

- **Press Releases** – Send press releases that promote your attractions, events and other news throughout your region and statewide to newspapers. Periodically, you should also submit your most substantial press releases to national birding magazines. Be sure to keep birding clubs alerted too, and submit press releases to their newsletters, as well as to Audubon chapters and state Audubon offices. And don’t forget to send press releases to appropriate internet sites, including birding web sites and birding list serves that reach many of the most active birders across the country. [*See how to compose a more effective press release below.*]
- **Press Conferences** – Organize a press conference for special events or annual promotions. Provide press releases and invite live press coverage including print, radio and television coverage. Feature political speakers including mayors and other lawmakers as press conference speakers, along with wildlife professionals such as wildlife refuge or Game & Fish personnel. Be sure to send press releases to all media who cannot send a representative, including a description of the press conference and contact information for your activity.
- **Press and Publications Coverage** – Invite newspaper and magazine writers to visit and develop articles that chronicle your birding opportunities. If possible, it’s best to invite publications staff ranging from area newspapers to national magazines to visit and contribute articles, reports and photographs. An insider always has the best chances of having their work published and distributed to their readership. Don’t hesitate to invite writers from major national newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Chicago Sun Herald*, etc. They are always looking for new places to visit and new topics to promote. Give ‘em a try, at least, but make your invitation very personal, and be prepared to offer fine accommodations (and possibly transportation).
- **Program Coverage** – Don’t hesitate to invite area television and radio staff to do a live report or interview regarding your birding attractions. A short story on one television or radio program can create a great response that should bring new visitors to your area.
- **Annual Events** – Consider developing an annual birding event that increases awareness of the wildlife resources in your area and the birding opportunities. An event may be developed by a city or county, a group of businesses, a refuge or state park, or a combination of organizations for mutual benefits. Such an event can promote birding-based tourism, but should also be geared to emphasize the importance of the area’s wildlife and habitats.

Producing Press Releases

Some Simple Tips for Developing a Press Release:

- Keep it simple, to the point, and print it in large enough so the type is readily readable without bifocals or binoculars.
- Always include all your contact information, including email address and web site URL, telephone number and street address.
- Include a photograph or digital photo scan with each press release.
- Make a personal contact with all publications you submit press releases to. Give the contact person a call after sending a press release to emphasize your connection with the publication.

Ad Production

Some Simple Tips for Producing a Print or Electronic Advertisement:

- **The Look** – Keep it simple.

- **Type** – Keep it readable; make sure the type face used is large enough and easily readable. Avoid thin and scripted type faces.
- **Illustrations** – Use a photograph or photographs to illustrate your advertisement. Use a photo of an attractive bird – not necessarily a pretty bird, but a species that is attractive to birders; refer to the Top 30 Most Wanted Species (listed in Week 3 of this series) to select an appropriate “logo” bird that will attract birders. Using a color photograph or photos will obviously be much more attractive and effective than using black and white photos or gray scale images. Drawings, paintings and other illustrations will be much less effective than a photograph.
- **Color** – If you can afford it, use an eye-catching color in the ad, either as a background color or a headline color or banner color. Red is best; maroon, yellow, blue, green, gold, orange, purple and other colors can also work well to help produce a more effective, more eye-catching advertisement.
- **Production** – If you work with professionals to produce a print or electronic advertisement, be careful when working with a graphic artist. Too often artists are more concerned about “art” than readability; more concerned with clutter or “white space” rather than simple, appropriate use of a given ad space. Take charge, provide direction, direct changes; but absolutely enjoy the creative process, for it is great fun to work with a good professional graphic artist.

Magazine Advertising Options

Advertising in magazines, especially national birding magazines, may be the most effective way of promoting a birding attraction to a huge focused audience. It’s the most high-profile mode of advertising, as well as the most high-priced aspect of advertising. But the benefit of advertising in national magazines should be the best of all, too. And there are some cheaper alternatives to feature advertising – namely classified and internet advertising.

- **Feature Advertising** – You must address a host of considerations when planning feature advertising, including the size of the ad, the price, 4-color or 1-color or black-and-white advertising, the number of times the ad runs per year, timing of the ad (spring, summer, winter, fall), advertising in special issues, positioning of the advertisement on spread pages (far forward, upper right page is best), positioning within an issue’s feature articles or columns. While some of the options listed above may be related to funds available, for instance the size and use of color, you can consult with an advertising representative about positioning, special issues and the option of positioning within a specific article in an issue.
- **Classified Advertising** – Use classified advertising in conjunction with feature advertising, or instead of feature ads if your marketing funds are limited. Classified advertising is much less costly than feature advertising, so buying classified space may extend your budget so you can advertise in several or all American birding magazines that offer classified advertising. In some cases, classified advertising offers the added bonus of being posted on the magazine’s internet web site, sometimes at no extra charge, so be sure to check out the classified advertising options for each publication.
- **Making an Advertising Decision** – You should subscribe to most or all of the American birding magazines so you have an understanding of each publication’s editorial direction and how it stands to serve you as an advertising vehicle to attract birders to your location or event. Don’t hesitate to get in touch with the advertising representative listed for each of the publications to request an advertising package that will include a current issue of the magazine and other helpful materials. (*Tip: Ask the rep for a couple extra back issues, so you get a feel for the seasonality and scope of the publication over an extended period of the year.*) The ad rep will be helpful in answering questions you have and providing excellent service in planning a potential advertising plan. Then it’s up to you to make decisions about which publications will serve you best within the limits of your budget. And as the years progress, you will surely hone the advertising process with appropriate changes to improve your coverage and results.
- **Advanced Planning** – Keep in mind that magazines require several months advance time to run your ad in a given issue. For example, in order to run an advertisement in a May issue, you might need to submit your ad to the magazine’s production office and pay the ad representative by December, a full 4 months before the issue date. Keep in touch with each magazine’s advertising representatives far in advance of your intended ad run.
- **Pricing** – The costs and inherent benefits of advertising vary widely among national and regional publications. To help you weed your way through the magazine advertising options available, Paul offers his decades of experience from inside and outside the birding publications advertising realm to provide the best possible reference points regarding the audience and potential response, all with regard to the prices of each advertising option:

Below is a helpful table that lists the national birding magazines, a key regional birding publication and a wildlife conservation magazine that also offers contact information, the number of issues published per year, any affiliations with a national organization, numbers of subscribers (readership rates may be 2 to 3 times greater) and standard ad rates. It also contains an index of overall publication quality with respect to advertising reach per dollar cost for each of the publications to help you in your ad choices. Each publication is rated 1 to 6, based on Paul Konrad’s professional insights into subscriber numbers and numbers of readers, readership profiles, editorial content and

advertising rates with respect to the quality of readership based on birding-based tourism. You should get much better results per dollars spent by advertising in a magazine rated 6 than you will in a publication rated 1, however you should do your own research and ultimately make your own marketing decisions as you promote your birding attractions, events and supplies. Obviously, if you advertise in all the publications listed, you will attract more birders than if you limit your advertising to one or more, but the dictates of your budget will require you to make some choices and, perhaps, to fine tune those choices year after year.

Advertising Information About Birding Magazines And Newsletters

<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Periodical</u>	<u>Issues/year</u>	<u>Association</u>
Birding			
<i>Birding</i>	bi-monthly	6	American Birding Association
<i>North American Birds</i>	quarterly	4	American Birding Association (formerly Audubon)
<i>Birder's World</i>	bi-monthly	6	none
<i>WildBird</i>	bi-monthly	6	none
<i>Birdwatcher's Digest</i>	bi-monthly	6	none
<i>Living Bird</i>	quarterly	4	Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
Birding Newsletters			
<i>Minnesota Birding</i>	bi-monthly	6	Minnesota Ornithologists' Union
<i>Winging It</i>	monthly	6	American Birding Association
Wildlife Conservation			
<i>Audubon</i>	bi-monthly	6	National Audubon Society

<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Subscribers</u>	<u>Quality</u>	<u>Add Rates</u>	
			<u>1/3-page Feature Ad</u>	<u>Classified Ad</u>
Birding				
<i>Birding</i>	20,000	6	\$ 400	none
<i>North American Birds</i>	5,000	5	\$ 185	none
<i>Birder's World</i>	52,250	4	\$ 911	\$1. ⁹¹ /word; \$25 min – internet: \$0. ³⁹ /word
<i>WildBird</i>	65,000	3	\$ 1,488	\$1. ⁷⁰ /word; \$25 minimum + internet
<i>Birdwatcher's Digest</i>	45,000	2	\$ 412	\$2. ⁴⁰ /word; \$50 minimum; internet: \$50 banner
<i>Living Bird</i>	24,000	1	\$ 500	none
Birding Newsletters				
<i>Minnesota Birding</i>	11,000	6+	\$ 60	\$ none, but 1,400 inserts for \$140 <i>That is, you can insert your material (brochure, booklet, etc.) in 1,400 newsletters for \$140</i>
<i>Winging It</i>	20,000	6	none	\$50 per issue (50 words) + \$25 membership
Wildlife Conservation				
<i>Audubon</i>	400,000	2	\$ 6,800	none

Publications Contact Information

To obtain more information about the top birding and outdoor publications, you can contact each of the following groups.

Birding (also *North American Birds* and *Winging It*)
 American Birding Association
 P.O. Box 6599
 Colorado Springs, CO 80934
 (800) 850-2473
 web site: www.americanbirding.org/publications/bdngen.htm
 Advertising: Ken Baron (830) 895-1144

Birder's World

Kalmbach Publishing Company
21027 Crossroads Circle
P.O. Box 1612
Waukesha, WI 53187-1612
(888) 558-1544
web site: www.birdersworld.com
Advertising: Craig Greuel (888) 558-1544

WildBird

Fancy Publications
P.O. Box 6050
Mission Vie, CA 92690
(949) 855-8822
web site: www.wildbirdmagazine.com
Advertising: Don Kramers (949) 855-8822

North American Birds

American Birding Association
P.O. Box 6599
Colorado Springs, CO 80934
(800) 850-2473
web site: www.americanbirding.org/publications/nabgen.htm
Advertising: Ken Baron (830) 895-1144

Winging It

American Birding Association
P.O. Box 6599
Colorado Springs, CO 80934
(800) 850-2473
web site: www.americanbirding.org/publications/wggen.htm
Advertising: Rick Wright, Editor (520) 544-7502

Living Bird

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 254-2424
web site: www.birds.cornell.edu/publications/livingbird/
Advertising: Tim Gallagher, Editor (607) 254-2424

Birdwatcher's Digest

Thompson Publishing
P.O. Box 110
Marietta, OH 45750
(800) 879-2473
web site: www.birdwatchersdigest.com
Advertising: Linda Brevo (800) 879-2473

Minnesota Birding

Minnesota Ornithological Union
5239 Cranberry Lane
Webster, WI 54893
(715) 349-5748
web site: www.biosci.cbs.umn.edu/~mou/news.html
Advertising: Allison Jensen (651) 488-3030

Tony Smith (Ammhsmith@aol.com)

Audubon

National Audubon Society

700 Broadway
New York, NY 10003
(212) 979-3000

web site: www.magazine.audubon.org/ and www.magazine.audubon.org/advertising/issuance.html

Advertising: Starrin Kanzer (312) 782-8855

There may be other publications, regional and national, that may prove to be good advertising investments, along with some excellent newspapers in areas with large populations of actively traveling birders. By utilizing the information provided above and adding to it with your personal research, you will soon build your own promotions directory.

Promoting birding-based tourism requires sustained advertising organized within an annual advertising and promotions plan. You have many marketing options; now it's up to you to organize and utilize a comprehensive plan to attract birders to your attraction, business, community and, ultimately, to the state of North Dakota.

Good Luck!

Sponsored by the North Dakota Tourism Division



North Dakota
L E G E N D A R Y

The logo features the words "North Dakota" in a large, black, cursive script font. Below this, the word "LEGENDARY" is written in a smaller, black, all-caps, serif font, with wide letter spacing.