

Why Evergreen Audubon Supports Birds & Beans Coffee

Chuck Aid August 4, 2020 :



“To me, the top three threats to birds overall are habitat loss, habitat loss, and habitat loss.” – Ken Rosenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Voice for Birds & Beans Coffee



In the past two years, Evergreen Audubon has been helping to make Birds & Beans Coffee available at the Front Range Birding Company in Littleton, at our local Natural Grocers in Conifer and Bergen Park, and encouraging the online purchase of B&B coffee. More recently, last year we became a B&B Partner along with many other conservation organizations. Birds & Beans have become a major sponsor of Evergreen Audubon and we are working to encourage the 21 Audubon Chapters that are part of Audubon Rockies (Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming) to take a closer look at why we have become so excited about Birds & Beans. Please read on....

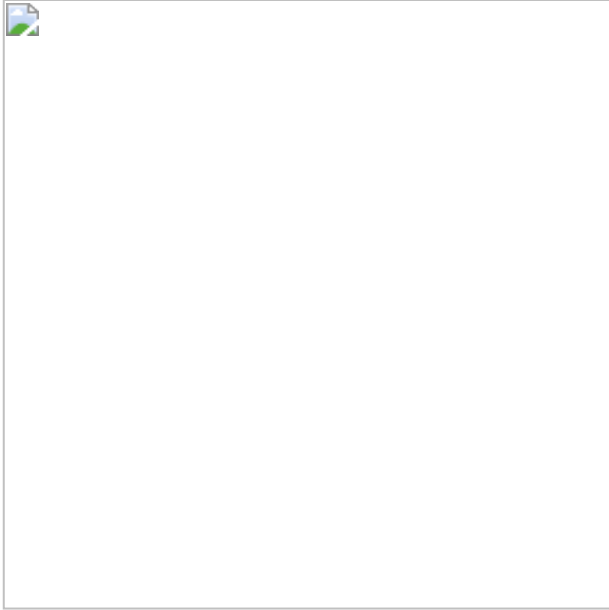


Evergreen Audubon believes that the coffee we buy should reflect the values we believe in, economically, socially, and environmentally. With coffee, you can pay a little more and hopefully know that the grower is receiving a fair minimum price, that the land is being used in a sustainable way, and that you're helping preserve essential wildlife habitat. A variety of independent third-party certifications have emerged that can ostensibly help guide us in our coffee choice. These certifications have become increasingly important since over seventy-five percent of the global coffee produced today is grown on an industrial scale under full sun. Massive plantations of coffee bushes are planted in hedge-like rows and sustained by fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation, with no thought to conservation of biodiversity. In the past three decades, industrial **Sun Grown** coffee production has destroyed millions of acres of tropical bird habitat, compounding the massive loss of forest to pasture, logging, and chemically dependent monoculture crops. Cheaper brands of coffee are produced with these unsustainable methods.



Yellow-breasted Chat (c) Mick Thompson –
One of the many neotropical migrants
found on Bird-Friendly coffee farms.

Among these coffee certifications are **Organic**, which is coffee grown without most synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and is fairly sustainable. However, there are no criteria for shade cover, hence the shade can be quite sparse, or if present it may be provided by a variety of non-native plants, e.g. banana. A second certification is **Fair Trade**, which seeks to ensure that workers on coffee farms get paid fairly for the work they do and that farmers get a fair price. However, it does not require any particular environmental practices. A third certification is **Rainforest Alliance**, which requires some shade, but it can be as little as 30 percent. A fourth term that we see used as a selling point, but which is not a certification, is **Shade Grown**. This term arises from the fact that coffee historically was grown on small farms beneath the shade of extensive forests. Unfortunately, Shade Grown has become a marketing buzzword that says little about the actual growing conditions which may include fertilizers, pesticides, and a sparse cover of banana trees.



In 1996, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, recognizing the inadequacy of these various certifications to play a meaningful role in bird conservation and in the conservation of natural habitats, came up with the **Bird Friendly** certification. This certification requires not only that the coffee be organic, but that it be grown under strict requirements for both the amount of shade, the percent of native plants creating that shade, and the multi-layered canopy structure of the forest. On Bird Friendly farms, forest structure and working coffee plantations merge into a single habitat. By insisting on Bird Friendly coffee, we can help farmers resist economic pressures to leave their farms or convert them and choose instead to stay on the land and preserve good forest habitat. Currently, the Bird-Friendly certification protects birds and habitats through the hard work of 5,100 Bird-Friendly farmers in eleven countries growing 34 million pounds of coffee annually. In a nutshell, that's the central idea behind Bird Friendly certified coffee: pay a premium price to growers on rustic coffee plantations so that they can continue to provide prime bird habitat.

5 reasons to always buy Birds&Beans® Organic Fairly Traded Smithsonian Bird Friendly® Coffee

- 1** Save Neotropical migrant and local bird species.
- 2** Conserve forest and habitat.
- 3** Keep toxic chemicals out of the eco-system.
- 4** Support farm families and local communities.
- 5** Preserve healthy microclimates.

BONUS: Our coffee tastes great!

Through the years, a few select coffee companies have offered a small selection of Bird Friendly coffee but the Bird Friendly approach got a big revitalizing shot in the arm when **Birds & Beans** was launched in the United States in 2008. Birds & Beans, with its strong team of passionate naturalists and professional ornithologists, immediately went all-in declaring that all of their coffee would be **Triple Certified** comprising three certification levels: **Certified Organic**, **Certified Fair Trade**, and **Certified Bird-Friendly**. Furthermore, Birds & Beans committed to paying their farmers top price for their coffee so they could keep growing coffee the old-fashioned shade-grown way and so they could keep supporting their workers and families. Today, Birds & Beans is helping save 2,250 plus family farms in Latin America. These farms, many of which have grown coffee for over 100 years, are amazing winter refuges for both neotropical resident and migratory birds. They are also key to anchoring viable local rural economies and to creating healthy micro-climates rich in biodiversity. Those of us who buy Birds & Beans coffee are helping family farms stay viable and we are helping strengthen communities that might otherwise be forced to make poor environmental choices or be steamrolled by big agribusinesses that move in and take over, as has happened in much of the coffee-producing world. We also get to drink great tasting coffee! **Every bean sold by Birds & Beans is certified Bird Friendly, and they are the ONLY company in the US that can make that claim!**



What is missing at this point is large-scale support and commitment from the millions of coffee drinkers in America. Too many birders are not aware of the benefits of shade-grown coffee to birds and farmers, do not realize how sun coffee is literally killing the birds we love, and do not realize how easy it is to buy **Bird Friendly** coffee from a company like **Birds & Beans**, thereby helping the birds they love. Furthermore, it behooves all birders and lovers of the natural world to assume a leadership role in promoting actions which can help stem the disastrous decline in bird populations that we are witnessing worldwide.

You can learn more about **Birds & Beans** and how to purchase their coffee by going to birdsandbeanscoffee.com or if you have questions you may contact them at:

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