



STEWARDSHIP NOTES BY SHELLY FOY

Summer is Really Here!

One of my favorite things about this time of year in South Florida, however, is that you can't go outside without hearing birds everywhere. For the first time in four years, I have great crested flycatchers nesting in a box in my backyard.



I have to laugh because I am constantly telling superintendents to be patient with their nest boxes, that sometimes it just takes a while for the birds to find them. I should take my own advice, because I am probably the most impatient person on this planet. Happily, I can now sit out on my patio and watch the mom and dad flying in and out of the box feeding their young. It just makes me feel incredibly satisfied with life.

I have found the secret to getting information for this column: pick up the phone and call people. Since you won't send the information to me, here is your heads up that I will be calling, so start making some notes on your environmental projects and programs.

Nest Boxes

I have truly enjoyed some recent phone conversations with George McBath, ornithologist from Naples. George works with

a lot of golf courses in Florida installing birdhouses and setting up monitoring programs for them. George now has over 1300 birdhouses on over 46 golf courses in Florida. He is currently monitoring birdhouses on 26 golf courses in Southwest Florida.

For any golf course interested in establishing a nest box program, George McBath is the person you need to call. George has designed his own nest boxes made out of all recycled material. You can call George at 941-774-2820.

According to George, "It is nice to have birdhouse projects, but it is important to adopt the physician's credo: *First, do no harm.* You need to check the birdhouses at least twice a month during the starling nesting season, and if you find starlings, they absolutely need to be eliminated."

George went on to say that, "Particularly on more urban courses that are surrounded by homes and shopping centers,

you really need to be concerned about starling reproduction. They are going to be more prevalent in these areas because they tend to hang around areas where there are a lot of people." Shelly's advice: Go out and buy a good book on Florida birds that has pictures of the birds and the eggs before you start your monitoring program.

George also talked about birdhouses fulfilling another function: wintertime roosting. He has seen quite a few red bellied woodpeckers roosting in boxes during the winter.

George tells me that these are the birds in Florida you can expect to find nesting on your golf courses: screech owls, bluebirds, great crested flycatchers, carolina wrens, red bellied woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, nuthatches, kestrels and purple martins,

Now, obviously that does not mean that every golf course will attract all of those birds. It basically depends on the surrounding habitat, and what area of the state you are in. For instance, even though technically bluebirds could be found in Southeast Florida, I can't tell you where any are. However, they are all over the place in Southwest Florida. Same with Kestrels: you are more likely to find them the further north you go in the state.

In talking about purple martin houses, George says that the success rate for the first year is over 90 percent. Basically, if you put up purple martin houses, you are going to have nesting success. He was particularly pleased with the purple martin boxes at Stonebridge in Naples. They had very good first year results with the boxes on the golf course, and more than that, a lot of the homeowners were so impressed they

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North American Birdwatching Open

Florida golf course participants
in Birdwatching Open:

ACSP Courses

(Golf Course, City, Total
Species)

IGM @ Aquarina CC, Melbourne
Beach, 33

Foxfire Golf and CC, Naples, 54

Heritage Pines GC, Hudson, 66

Indian River Club, Vero Beach, 50

Interlachen CC, Winter Park, 30

Royal Poinciana GC, Naples, 51

Seminole GC, Tallahassee, 17

IGM @ Spessard Holland CC,
Melbourne Beach, 23

The Majors Golf Course, Palm
Bay, 42

Panama CC, Lynn Haven, 28

Shadow Wood CC, Bonita Springs,
50

IGM @ The Habitat GC, Malabar,
43

Signature Courses

Bonita Bay East Courses,
Naples, 42

Collier's Reserve, Naples, 61

IGM @ West Bay, Naples, 50

Twin Eagles, Naples, 25

got involved and put the purple martin boxes on their properties as well. And that folk's is what it is all about... educating people and setting good examples.

George was also particularly impressed with the Waterlefe Golf Course in Bradenton. He said they had quite a diversity of birds, and that on the first day he was on the course he counted 62 species. They must be doing something right!

Can you imagine the data we would have if every golf course in Florida kept track of the bird species present and monitored and kept track of nesting birds? I have no doubt we would all be impressed with the numbers. More importantly, people outside of our industry would be impressed as well.

Everglades grants

The EGCSA recently gave grants to two golf courses to install bluebird boxes: Countryside and Gleneagles. Countryside had

three nesting pair this first year. Gleneagles had bluebird sightings on top of the boxes, but no nesting to date.

I also recently checked in with Collier's Reserve, and Pepper Terry reported that in a three-year period, 129 species of birds have been counted! Collier's Reserve has some members that are avid birders, and they keep an ongoing species list.

I also enjoyed hearing about the golf course tours they give every year to schools. This year, they gave 28 tours in three months to 580 students ranging from first graders

to seventh graders. These students toured Collier's Reserve from six different schools and a Boy Scout troop. Collier's would like to thank Bill Gamble and Bill Gordon from Club Car of Florida, who donated four transporters to help get the students around the golf course this year. Bill Davidson and/or Pepper would be happy to give you the scoop on how they organize these school tours, so just give them a call.

Replacing bermuda roughs

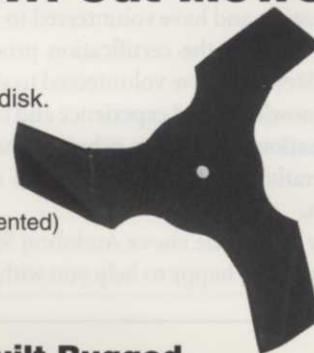
Matt Taylor and I talked about Audubon

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related projects at Royal Poinciana. Just in the past year, they have taken out over 15 acres of non-play bermuda and have planted over 27,000 native grasses, including cordgrass, fakahatchee grass and muhly grass. They are working on a longrange drainage plan, and have donated a pair of bluebirds for the Everglades project talked about in the Winter 2001 issue of the *Florida Green*. McBath also did a bird count for Matt, and on May 14, there were a total of 348 birds and 41 different species counted.

Audubon Steward Network

Audubon International has developed an Audubon Steward Network made up of people that have taken a property through certification and have volunteered to help others through the certification process. These Stewards have volunteered to share their knowledge and experience and be an information source for other Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary members in their regions.

Any one of the above Audubon Stewards would be happy to help you with any

questions you might have about the ACSP. If you have taken a property through certification and are interested in being an Audubon Steward, call Joellen Zeh, staff ecologist for Audubon International at 518-767-9051 ext. 14, or e-mail her at jzeh@audubonintl.org.

Birdwatching Open Results

For the fourth year in a row, Audubon International has invited members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program to participate in the North American Birdwatching Open. It was held on International Migratory Bird Day, May 12. Interested members were given forms and asked to identify by sight or sound, all bird species on their property within a 24-hour period. The purpose of the event is to gather data on specific bird species that use managed lands and to demonstrate publicly that many land managers are committed to responsible environmental stewardship.

There are more Florida golf courses than are on this list that have birds on

property, right? Joellen will be making changes to the Birdwatching Open for 2002, and I sincerely hope that more of you will participate. We currently have 231 ACSP registered properties in Florida. I know we can do better than 16 participants. (I'm hoping that a little guilt will work wonders)

Meadowbrook Birdwatching Cooperative

Lyne Page, Meadowbrook/IGM Environmental Compliance Coordinator reported that they had five courses in close proximity work together to participate in the Birdwatching Open. Three of those courses are managed by IGM. The Majors, Indian River Club, IGM at Habitat, IGM at Spessard Holland and IGM at Aquarina had 12 volunteers spread out across the area counting, and everyone was pleased with the results (*see results above*).

Lyne was also particularly pleased with some recent naturalization projects at Spessard Holland. The golf course only has 65 acres, and they have still been able to

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Audubon Stewards in Florida

Buddy Keene, Gainesville Golf & Country Club, Gainesville

Bob Karnes, Disney's Osprey Ridge, Lake Buena Vista

Matt Taylor, Royal Poinciana, Naples

Jeff Klontz, Country Club of Florida, Village of Golf

Ron Hill, Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island

Lyne Page, Meadowbrook/IGM, Lakeland

Don Merritt, Hobe Sound Elementary School, Hobe Sound

Shelly Foy, USGA, Hobe Sound

Todd Lowe, USGA, Englewood

naturalize over 10 acres. They primarily used saw palmetto, muhly grass and sea oats. The golf course also has a 3-acre butterfly garden planted with coontie, beach sunflower, and galardia. The butter-

fly garden was planted last summer and Lyne reports that it is just beautiful!

A personal comment on the Meadowbrook/IGM golf courses. There are currently over 40 of them in Florida, and each one is a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Currently, six are fully certified, and most of them are enroute towards full certification. I'd personally like to give a pat on the back to Scott Zakany and Greg Plotner for seeing the importance in having all of these golf courses participate in the ACSP. Kudos to you both.

Everglades Bluebird Project

Here's the quick update on the golf course bluebird translocations and their current status from Gary Slater (*see article in Winter 2001 issue*). We moved a pair of bluebirds before they began breeding from each of three golf courses: Royal Poinciana, Foxfire, and Grey Oaks. All except one of these birds, the female from Foxfire, have been found nesting in Everglades National Park.

The Grey Oaks pair nested, but an

American crow depredated their nest. We expect them to renest. Birds from Royal Poinciana and Foxfire nested together in the unlikely location of a hole in a Ted Shed, but just fledged three juveniles. Finally, the second bird from Royal Poinciana is nesting with a Big Cypress bluebird that was also translocated this year. Their nest is still active, but should fledge soon.

At two golf courses, The Glades and Eagle Creek, we moved a pair and their nestlings. All the nestlings fledged in their aviary fine. Unfortunately, a snake made a meal of the two fledglings from the Glades. The Glades birds were radio-tagged and released and one has been located on a couple occasions. The pair from Eagle Creek split up after release, but we found the female with one surviving juvenile. The male has been flying all over Everglades National Park and we locate it regularly.

Gary will give us a full update on the Bluebird project in the next issue of the Florida Green.

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