

Birds, Not Birdies, Count on North America's Golf Courses

By Jean Mackay

Volunteer birdwatchers recently turned up 295 different species of birds on golf courses participating in Audubon International's 2002 North American Birdwatching Open. During the 24-hour event, 48 golf courses that are participating in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary and Audubon Signature Programs recorded as many different bird species as they could to provide a snapshot of bird activity on golf courses at the height of bird migration in May. Audubon International encourages courses to play an active role in conserving habitat for birds and protecting overall environmental quality.

Eagles Landing Golf Course in Berlin, Md. sighted 92 different bird species during the day to record the highest number of species for the third year running. Birders at Lake Quivira Golf Course in Kansas sighted 78 species and Turning Stone Casino Resort in New York came away with 76 species, to place second and third respectively. Among this year's leading courses were prior top performers The Club at Seabrook Island in South Carolina (75 species) and Michigan's Gull Lake View Golf Club (71 species). Joining them for the first time this year was Oak

Meadow Country Club in Missouri with 74 species.

"The results of the North American Birdwatching Open show that it's not just the size of the property that counts, but the variety of habitats present and the way natural areas are managed that make a difference," said Jean Mackay, director of educational services for Audubon International. The diversity of species overall and the number of birds recorded per site reflect both the geographical spread of golf courses across North America and the wide range of habitats found on and around these sites. Fifty-six percent of participants identified 50 or more species, while 14 percent counted fewer than 30.

Data from this year's event proved to be highly consistent with data gathered since the event was first held in 1998. The top twenty-five birds sighted remained nearly unchanged. Mourning doves, blue jays, and red-winged blackbirds topped the list of birds sighted. From there, the inventory of birds gets more interesting, with sightings of great blue heron and red-bellied woodpecker on nearly 75 percent of partici-

pating courses and eastern bluebird and green heron on 52 percent.

In addition, seven federally threatened and endangered species were sighted. Fifteen courses spotted loggerhead shrikes, eight courses recorded sandhill cranes, and six courses identified American bald eagles. Other endangered/threatened species included least tern, brown pelican, grasshopper sparrow, and clapper rail.

"In the end, the greatest challenge of the North American Birdwatching Open is not in counting the most birds, but in calling all golf courses to take account of wildlife and other environmental aspects of management," said Mackay. "When properly managed, golf courses can make a valuable contribution to the rich diversity of avian species across North America."

Audubon International is a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) environmental organization dedicated to improving the quality of the environment, with an emphasis on helping people become actively involved in good environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management.

The organization was established in 1987 to find ways to address environmental problems by working cooperatively, and in partnership with, a diverse array of organizations and individuals to improve environmental quality on the lands they manage.

On the Web

<http://www.audubonintl.org>

STEWARDSHIP NOTES

It's Time to Walk the Talk

By Shelly Foy

I already miss summer. Not the hot, humid days where you feel that you can hardly breathe when you step outside; but the slower pace of it. No fighting teenagers to get them off to school, no volunteering at schools for a couple of months, and the "slower" season in our office when most of the members are up North somewhere and superintendents are busy with summer projects and renovations. We actually have time to catch up a little and even take some time to head to



A flock of cedar waxwings finds sanctuary at the Willoughby G&CC over the winter. Photo by Bob Smith.

