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Birds are scarce around this bull gator on the 12th hole on the Preserve nine.

Egrets and Herons congregate in the marsh grass on the lake on hole #2.

A flock of Lesser Scaup ducks becomes a flotilla on the Hatchett Creek nine.

A pair of Marsh Hens disturbed by a nosy photographer on #26.

A Sandhill Crane stalks the shoreline along the lake on #22.

A Little Blue Heron looking for minnows in the lake on #25.

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Birds are scarce around this bull gator on the 12th hole on the Preserve nine.
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Researchers with the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences recently completed the state’s largest-ever study of landscape turfgrass and fertilizer use, and new online videos will help homeowners and lawn-care professionals understand the findings.

The eight-year, $4.2 million study was funded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to determine the effectiveness of current UF/IFAS fertilizer recommendations, which have been in use since about 2000, said John Hayes, UF/IFAS dean for research. Florida has more than 5 million acres of home and commercial turf.

“This work is an important body of information generated here to address important questions about nutrient management,” Hayes said. “We’re proud to communicate our findings and we hope they will play a substantial role in helping residents, industry personnel and policymakers protect water quality.”

Three hours of technical presentations from a Jan. 15 live symposium are available at http://tinyurl.com/be2la7q and a three-minute video aimed at educating the public has been posted at http://tinyurl.com/ajy4ytr.

The results generally are consistent with current UF/IFAS recommendations for fertilizer use, Hayes said, but the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services plans to review the state’s urban fertilizer rules in light of the study findings. The agency will hold public meetings to seek comment about possible changes.
The study involved experiments conducted at UF/IFAS research facilities in the Panhandle, Gainesville and Fort Lauderdale, using turf, soils and management practices common to each area. The state's most popular turf, St. Augustinegrass, was studied at all three sites.

Faculty members John Cisar, Jerry Sartain, Laurie Trenholm and Bryan Unruh led the study and presented their research findings at a public meeting in Citra, where much of the footage was shot.

The video includes a question-and-answer session with the scientists, and comments from Andy Rackley, director of agricultural environmental services for FDACS.

Several researchers mentioned that their findings raised new questions and pointed out the need for additional research on topics including the use of bio-solids and other organic nitrogen sources, the use of reclaimed water, turfgrass phosphorus requirements, and the effects of summertime fertilizer bans.

“We're in some conversations with DEP (the state Department of Environmental Protection) still about moving forward with some additional data analysis,” Unruh said.

He also noted that the results suggest UF/IFAS' nutrient recommendations for zoysiagrass may need to be modified, but any changes to those nutrient recommendations must come about through a vetting process by the Plant Nutrient Oversight Committee, a team of administrators and scientists who review all nutrient recommendations from UF/IFAS.

Extension personnel will be trained to help them communicate the findings to homeowners and there may be additional public workshops, Trenholm said.

Homeowners with unhealthy lawns should contact county extension personnel to discuss the problem and not automatically assume that fertilizer is needed, Cisar said.

“If you have a lawn that's in bad shape, it makes sense to ascertain why,” he said. “It may be that the grass needs fertilizer but it could be something else, like a lack of proper irrigation, proper mowing height, or the grass isn't getting enough light.”

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THE EVERGLADES CLUB RECOGNIZED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE

By Joellen Lampman, ACSP Programs Director

PALM BEACH – The Everglades Club has achieved designation as a “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary” through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. Peter Brooks, CGCS, Golf Course Superintendent, has led the effort to obtain sanctuary status on this course and is being recognized for Environmental Stewardship by Audubon International. The Everglades Club is the 113th golf course in Florida and the 1003rd in the world to receive the honor.

“The Everglades Club has shown a strong commitment to its environmental program. They are to be commended for their efforts to provide a sanctuary for wildlife on the golf course property,” said Joellen Lampman, Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary programs director. “To reach certification, a course must demonstrate that it is maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas,” explained Lampman.

These categories include: Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, endorsed by the United States Golf Association, provides information and guidance to help golf courses preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, and protect natural resources. Golf courses from the United States, Africa, Australia, Canada, Central America, Europe, New Zealand, and Southeast Asia have also achieved certification in the program.

In addition to golf courses, Audubon International also provides programs for businesses, schools, communities, and new developments. For more information, contact Audubon International, 120 Defreest Drive, Troy, New York 12180; phone: 518-767-905; fax: 518-767-9076.
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SELKIRK, N.Y. – Ronald G. Dodson is retiring from Audubon International after serving as the organization’s founder and president of the board for more than 25 years.

Audubon International, a not-for-profit environmental organization headquartered in the Albany area of New York, provides education and technical assistance to businesses, government agencies and communities throughout the United States and over 30 other countries to implement sustainable natural resource management in all places people live, work and play.

After playing a central role in Audubon International’s intensive search for a new executive director, which culminated in the hiring of Ryan Aylesworth (formerly of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) in June 2012, Dodson informed Audubon International’s board of directors at a recent board meeting of his intention to retire.

“Audubon International has a unique and important mission,” said Dodson. “Under its new executive leadership, the organization is making considerable progress toward its mission and will continue the vision of a public that is well educated in environmental issues and a society committed to sustainable natural resource management practices.

“It is not without nostalgia that I bid farewell to the organization’s dedicated staff and board members – many of whom I have worked with for decades,” Dodson said. “But I am very excited about what the future has in store for Audubon International under Ryan’s capable leadership.”

Dodson is credited with re-establishing the Audubon Society of New York State in 1987 after the pioneering environmental organization had been inactive for several decades. Dodson shaped and guided much of the work the organization does today under the
Audubon International

About Audubon International

Audubon International is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to delivering high-quality environmental education and helping to implement sustainable natural resource management in all places where people help the environment where they live, work and play. Through education, motivation, certification and recognition, Audubon International educates people about the responsible management of land, water, wildlife and other natural resources. Utilizing a set of environmental education and certification programs, Audubon International is able to positively impact the environment at all levels from individual property to entire communities.

For more information, please contact Ryan Aylesworth at 518-767-9051, ext 106 or Ron Dodson at 518-859-5370.

We wish Ron a very happy and well-earned retirement, and will continue drawing on his wisdom as we work with our valued conservation partners across the globe to provide valuable environmental education and help proliferate application of sustainability principles.”

– Ryan Aylesworth

name Audubon International.

Over the course of a more than 30-year career in natural resource management, land-use planning and “green” design, Dodson has assisted hundreds of small businesses, major corporations, educational institutions, government agencies, not-for-profit organizations and communities around the world in achieving their goals while advancing sound environmental stewardship. As a wildlife biologist, educator and avid birder, Dodson will remain an ardent environmental leader and champion of biodiversity and watershed protection.

“Ron has helped set a vision for a sustainable future that will allow Audubon International to continue thriving far beyond the conclusion of his long tenure with the organization,” said Aylesworth. “Audubon International will honor Ron’s legacy by building on our past accomplishments and continuously improving to even more effectively address new and evolving environmental challenges.”

During Dodson’s tenure, Audubon International saw substantial growth in program offerings, services and organizational outreach. Under his long-time leadership, Audubon International has emerged as a highly reputable organization that employs education, technical assistance, certification and recognition to implement environmental management practices that ensure natural resources are sustainably used and conserved. Dodson also worked closely with the United States Golf Association to grow the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, an internationally renowned education and certification program that helps golf courses protect our environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. Since its founding, Audubon International has enrolled more than 3,000 properties – including golf courses, cemeteries, ski areas, housing developments, hotels and many others – and communities in its rigorous certification programs.

“Ron’s passion for environmental conservation is well known, and he retires from an organization with a cadre of individuals who share that same passion,” said Aylesworth.

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Bill Murray spoofed an assistant golf course superintendent as Carl Spackler in Caddyshack, but increasingly his performance in Groundhog Day shows like a documentary on the position. Day after day, after day, assistant golf course superintendents across the country are rolling out of bed as if it's yesterday all over again. For many, it's becoming increasingly difficult to remain upbeat in the face of a seemingly endless cycle of long hours, low pay and, worst of all, limited prospects.

The golf industry's contraction, instigated, ironically enough, by overbuilding and now exacerbated by the Great Recession, has brought superintendent openings to a virtual halt. For a lot of talented young people, the way ahead looks like the worst Atlanta traffic jam. Their options are stark — remain on idle and hope for a break, or get out and walk on a profession they've poured their hearts and their hopes into, in many cases for years.

It's not just that new-course-construction has ground to a dead stop. Existing courses are closing, and elsewhere veteran superintendents are staying put. Some because they want to limit any risk, others because the crash drained the nest eggs they planned to retire on. When a rare opening does come up, there's not so much a rush to fill it as there is a stampede.

"I couldn't cope with it," admits Drew Wilson, who stepped away from the logjam a year ago to start his own landscaping business in Atlanta. Wilson's case is illustrative of the frustrations occupying many assistant superintendents and also the extent of the bottleneck. "I would make it to the final cut for jobs but then get beaten out by guys who had 10 or 15 years experience on me, as superintendents. It's very tough out there. I graduated with about 60 turf students and I would bet 50 percent or more of them are now out of the industry altogether."

In all, Wilson, who is 29, spent 14 years in golf course maintenance going back to his high school and college days when he worked part time. Armed with a turf degree from Kansas State University, he later worked at world-renowned Prairie Dunes Country Club and Augusta National Golf Club. Then he put in five years as assistant to Georgia Golf Hall of Famer, Mark Esoda, CGCS at Atlanta Country Club. That's a resume that surely would have fast-tracked Wilson to a senior role a decade ago.

Instead, with a young wife and a desire to have children, he was forced to take a long, hard look at whether a passion for the profession was enough to justify being patient indefinitely. In the end, he couldn't see himself getting his hands on the tools he needed to build the future he wanted for his family. "I was at a point in my life where I needed a next step," he says. "Pulling 80 hours a week at the same golf course for years pushes you to want that next step."