What’s Audubon and what’s not

This month’s front-page story on the once-and-future golf course in Jacksonville, with its complex, compelling political battles, was long enough without delving into the curious relationship between the routinely need a set of fingers, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS) and Signature Program, widely hailed inside the golf industry, for forging “a marriage of business, recreation, national and environmental concerns. Duval Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon, which doesn’t necessarily look fondly upon New York Audubon and the ACSS.

Every year or so, it’s important for golf to take a reality check with regard to the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. It’s a fantastic program, but folks must recognize that ACSS participation doesn’t necessarily earn your course environmental legitimacy outside the golf universe. In fact, Audubon recently sent the word “Audubon” in their title, and only one — New York Audubon, the system founder — has thrown its full support to ACSS. In other words, just because your course is an ACSS participant, or because you have an Audubon-friendly architect, don’t expect other Audubon organizations or members of the environmental movement at large to throw you their unying support.

“IT’s kind of frustrating,” says Ron Dodson, executive director, Audubon International. “The Audubon organization founded by New York Audubon. “I tell everyone interested in our Signature Program, during the first visit: If you think that because you follow our program you’re going to bring all of Audubon in behind you, you’re wrong.”

This concept is easy to grasp when you understand how
dential increase in the number of companies marketing these products in a variety of ways (distribution, sales reps, fac-
tory-direct, etc.). The majority of golf courses in Louisiana and Mississippi trust the quality of Standard Golf and Par Aide ac-
cessories and the service and support they receive from their local full-service turf-equip-
dment distributor.

Independent turf-equipment distributors exist only because we can sell more of a manufacturer’s product in a given market more cost-effec-
tively than can the manufacturer. And I believe that, while some exceptions will continue, we will continue to be the pri-
mary provider of golf course accessories in the future.

Kim E. Robertson, president
Delta States Turf, Inc.
Baton Rouge, La.

LISTENING TO ALL VOICES

To the editor:

Thanks for being sensitive to our needs and issues; and, to the voices we heard that are still trying to define what constitutes REAL golf course management (“Determined: All sprinklers are not created equal,” GGN April 1996). You and Golf Course News are a class act, providing me copies of the April issue and a note of thanks was special. Because we are certain that sprinkler systems, from resi-

After tough winter, the virtue is communicating patience

A new Dutch proverb tells us “A handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains.”

GCSAA President Bruce Williams concurred in saying that golf course superintendents should not feel rushed into applying this fertilizer or that chemical to hasten winter-damaged turfgrass back to its green, lush old self (see story page 1).

Now we can hope golfers in the North Central United States can do the same: Be patient. Last year was not always the case, and in the wake of major turf damage, a number of Midwestern superintendents lost their jobs. Why, they had the audacity to control the weather.

“Unfortunately,” Williams said, “when spring ends, people historically watch the Masters on television, or return home from winters down South and expect the courses up here (Illinois) to look like the ones they left down South: in wonderful condition.

The problem is — from Illinois and Kansas to Minnesota and Michigan — it had been a cold, wet, rainy summer has seemed a distant dream. So how do superintendents counter the prevailing attitude in many places (usually private clubs) that they should be little gods creating perfect playing fields? Not that golfers are necessarily expecting Herculean efforts. Williams said, “so the best thing we can do is be patient and use public-relations skills...to encourage members to be patient.”

If a course has a newsletter, use it. If it has bulletin boards, use them. If you can make signs to place out on the course, make them. One-to-one contact with members can’t be beat.

Michigan may have gone one better.

“Golfers here seem to be quite understanding,” said Gerry Faubel from his club in Saginaw. He credited Michigan State University, and the Golf Association of Michigan [GAM] for approaching the

DISTRIBUTORS WILL SURVIVE THROUGH SERVICE

To the editor:

I would appreciate the opportunity to respond to your article “Manufacturers hedge bets on distribution” [GGN April 1996]. I strongly oppose the statement by Mr. Phillips that “ten years from now, golf courses will likely purchase their accessories directly from the factory.”

I feel that the professional turf equipment distributor will still be the manager’s most effective and efficient means to deliver these products to the customer.

My company is fortunate to distribute Standard Golf and Par Aide accessories in Louisiana and Mississippi, and through ag-

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Phillips comment

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National Audubon manages its own membership and chapter affiliation. And who better to explain it than Dodson, a former regional representative for National Audubon.

Here's how it works: Suppose you live in Kalamazoo, Mich., and you want to join the Kalamazoo Audubon Society (KAS). The KAS is an official Audubon chapter, which means it publishes a newsletter, elects designated officers, holds at least nine meetings a year, and issues an annual report to National Audubon.

In exchange for these stipulations, Kalamazoo Audubon receives national affiliation plus a predetermined cash amount for every National Audubon member with a Kalamazoo-area zip code. In other words, when someone from the Kalamazoo area joins National Audubon, they pay the $25 annual dues, of which KAS receives $5.

You simply cannot join Kalamazoo Audubon or Duval Audubon without joining National Audubon first. Why? Well, this system allows National to claim 550 chapters and more than 55,000 members. That's why.

Further, there are 15 state Audubon groups that have no affiliation whatever to National Audubon. New York is one. Florida is another. In fact, as an Audubon society in its own right, the Florida organization has engineered its own deal: When you join Audubon in Florida, one-third of the $25 dues goes to national, one-third goes to Florida Audubon, and another third goes to a local zip-code chapter, like Duval.

Here's another important factor: While state and local Audubon chapters have been around since the late 1800s, National Audubon wasn't organized until the 1940s. "Many people believe that national was first, and that all the other chapters are subservient and affiliated with the national. It's not true," Dodson explains. "All the different societies have their own boards of directors and bylaws, and are free to take any position they like on any issue.

We have many Audubon chapters around the country working with us. But we have many that don't, and it usually comes down to one or two individuals who are against everything, all development, looking for anything they can do to throw a monkey wrench into the government permitting process."

In Jacksonville, for example, Duval Audubon has opposed the restoration of golf at Blue Cypress. In public meetings, Duval Audubon member Pat Anderson is on record as opposed to all golf development anywhere in Florida.

"Even we haven't endorsed the Jacksonville project," Dodson points out. "I haven't even been on the site. But we're encouraged that, if a golf course is developed there, it will be done under the Signature Program. Things are going to be developed in this country and it's our responsibility to make sure it's done properly. So if a golf course is developed, we prefer developers follow Audubon Coopera-

Sive Sanctuary guidelines.

"If you compare a well-sited, well-maintained golf course to any sort of development — any kind — I'm telling you, it's the best kind of development. I'm not saying there should be golf courses on every street corner. In fact, I think there are places there should be no golf courses at all.

"Despite this, the Audubon Society of New York State and Audubon International are somehow suspect by other Audubon groups because we choose to pursue conservation agendas that are positive in nature. Instead of saying things we're against, we talk about what we favor. Instead of running around the country talking about who's hurting the environment, we talk about ways to enhance and protect it."

Despite the chasm that separates New York Audubon and its estranged sister organizations, there is a chance Audubon's disjointed cold war will thaw sometime in the future. Last month, according to Dodson, members of National Audubon had an extremely productive meeting with representatives of the ACSS.

"When they left our building they said, 'Ron, we think there's light at the end of the tunnel. I think we can work together. We think you're doing good work here.'

"I don't think there will ever be a time when National runs around the country telling people to join Audubon Sanctuary. They have no vested interest in seeing us get any bigger. But there may be a time when a memo is issued that might say, 'Let's stop the bad-mouthing. Let's get on with life.'"

"I'm hopeful."

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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