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Salmon return to Oregon stream that meanders through 27 holes

WELCHES, Ore. — Thanks to The Resort at The Mountain's "Wee Burn" stream restoration project, fish are now being seen in parts of the stream and ponds that have been inaccessible since 1928, and two crops of wild coho salmon and steelhead trout smolts that spawned in the new habitat have migrated to the open sea. The Wee Burn wanders through the resort's 27 holes of golf, set at the western base of Mt. Hood.

The Wee Burn (Scottish for small stream), which runs through The Resort's Three Nines golf course, is a minor tributary of the Salmon River, a federally designated "wild and scenic river," and is part of the Sandy River Watershed. Since 1995, The Resort has been working closely with the U.S. Forest Service, Mt. Hood National Forest, WolfTree, Trout Unlimited, and others to restore wild fish habitat in the stream. In addition to volunteer work and grants from the Oregon Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Resort has invested over $200,000 in the project.

"We knew the Wee Burn had the potential to provide excellent fish habitat, and we're encouraged to see the juvenile fish using the prime habitat in the ponds and upper stream.

Audubon survey

219 have achieved designation as Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries by implementing and documenting a full slate of conservation activities.

"As we move into our 10th year of the program, we wanted to quantify the results of program participation," said Larry Woolbright, Ph.D., Audubon International's director of research, who spearheaded the survey. "Do courses that participate achieve the goal of enhancing and protecting the environment? The survey gives us some hard numbers about how members have improved on a variety of environmental fronts."

QUANTIFIABLE RESULTS

For example, members reported that, on average, acres devoted to providing wildlife habitat jumped from 40 to 70 per course - a 75-percent increase. Also 79 percent of ACSP members decreased the amount of managed turfgrass, and 64 percent now monitor wildlife activity, up from 16 percent beforehand.

Another key environmental priority of the ACSP is helping members to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and to safely use, store, and handle chemicals. Survey results show that golf courses have been able to achieve that goal without sacrificing playing quality. In fact, 86 percent reduced pesticide use and 92 percent reported using pesticides with a lower toxicity level since joining the program. Also, 84 percent increased the amount of slow-release fertilizers they used.

ACSP members said that playing conditions and golfer satisfaction remained the same or improved for 99 percent of ACSP courses. Sixty-four percent of participants reported that their job satisfaction improved after joining the program.

"Golf course superintendents can be excellent stewards of the environment," said Ronald Dodson, Audubon International's president and CEO. "Not only are they contributing to improved quality on the course, they are also spreading the word about environmental responsibility."
Audubon certifies Leatherstocking

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. - Audubon International has officially designated the Leatherstocking program endorsed by the U.S. Golf Association.

Leatherstocking Golf Course, which joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS), a Cooperative Sanctuary under its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS), a Cooperative Sanctuary under its Audubon Association.

Leatherstocking is one of only 11 courses in New York State to receive the Audubon International honor, along with other such courses as the Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck and the Westchester Country Club in Rye.

"Gaining certification is not a simple process. Course superintendent Bernard Banas and his staff were completely dedicated to this program for four years, and they deserve a lot of credit," said Eric Straus, president of the Leatherstocking Corp., which owns the course.

"In addition to being one of the prettiest courses you'll ever play, Leatherstocking is home to a variety of indigenous wildlife, including foxes, deer and the Eastern bluebird," said Dan Spooner, director of golf. "We are proud that we can maintain a safe sanctuary for the animals while providing an enjoyable and challenging golf experience."

Fescue breakthrough

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tolerance," said Carrow.

For test samples, Duncan collected any tall fescue plants he could find growing within six inches of a paved highway. "That would bring a high heat load to the grass," Carrow said.

"Any tall fescue that survived in conditions like that had to produce enough carbohydrates to do so. With that germ plasm base, plus the strains that survived intensive screening, we had enough to begin crossing."

The cross-strains went through another boot camp, which killed at least 95 percent of them. Then Duncan took the top one to five percent and started crossing those, subjecting them to even more rigorous conditions.

"To get a stronger strain," Carrow said, "once he got those initial crosses, he scaled them with a mower to remove all the green tissue, which put a further strain on the carbohydrates. Under these extreme conditions, the harder plants will turn on their genetic capability, with the survivors becoming the next generation."

The scientists also made the grass more frugal. Grass usually drinks all the water it can at one time, growing in spurts that can't be maintained. With Southeast Tall Fescue, "even though the water is there in the soil, the grass doesn't use any more than it needs," Carrow said.

Salmon

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for the first time in 70 years," said Ed Hopper, owner of the resort.
The Wee Burn has always had some coho and steelhead in it, but the best spawning portions, including ponds, were inaccessible to fish. A significant amount of work has been done, including adding wetland and alcoves to slow the stream down, restoring some of the stream's natural habitat, adding additional plants and trees, adding in-stream structures for spawning and resting areas, and building ladders to allow fish access to the upper ponds on the stream. While most of the work is complete, much is still left undone by the resort and its partners to improve, maintain and monitor the changes.

"The Wee Burn's habitat has been improved fourfold, and we expect to see an increase in fish populations in the coming years," said Forester fisheries biologist Chris Rosell. "To bring back fish stocks to a level of being delisted from the federal endangered and threatened species list, fish habitat on private lands has to improve. This project is a great example of public and private entities working together to ensure successful stream restoration on private lands."