Armyworms hit the Northeast, far afield from usual range

By JOEL JOYNER

MASHPEE, Mass. — The media has tried hard this summer to whip up a public hysteria about armyworms, but superintendents have taken the so-called invasion pretty much in stride.

"They're fairly easy to kill," said Bill Levesque, assistant superintendent here at Willowbend Golf Course. "And they probably won't survive the winter this far north."

Truth be told, armyworms are a menace. They often travel and feast in masses, like soldiers moving across enemy land. They'll devour turfgrass leaves right down to the nubs before migrating to a new sector. They've been known to consume up to 10 acres of crops within a 24-hour period.

Usually found in the South and Midwest, great numbers of armyworms made their way to the Northeast this year, borne on the winds of tropical Storm Allison. They hit the region by the millions.

'BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS'

As homeowners grew panicky about their lawns, the media picked up the scent of a big story. In sensationalized stories, they tossed around terms like "attack," "siege" and even "plague." One reporter totally lost his grip and said the invasion was "of Biblical proportions."

"Armyworm" is really a misnomer — it's not a worm at all. The pest is actually a caterpillar with a voracious appetite for turfgrass, wheat, corn, rye, and hay. The insects

Continued on page 10

Cook 11th American to qualify as Master Greenkeeper

By JOEL JOYNER

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich. — Steve Cook, superintendent here at the Oakland Hills Country Club, is now one of the 31 certified Master Greenkeepers worldwide and the 11th American to achieve the prestigious distinction from the British International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA).

A graduate of the University of Illinois, where he earned a B.S. in ornamental horticulture, Cook has nearly 20 years of experience in the golf course maintenance profession.

Cook said he undertook the process as a personal challenge. "If you're going to be a superintendent, you might as well get as many certifications as the industry offers," he said. "I consider myself a goal-oriented person, and it was one more goal."

Building his resume in hopes of higher

Continued on page 9

Brian Bossert’s Bryn Mawr Country Club clinches Audubon certification

By JOEL JOYNER

LINCOLNWOOD, Ill. — It took him three years, but Brian Bossert finally cleared Audubon International’s tough environmental gauntlet.

Now Bryn Mawr Country Club counts itself a proud member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, one of fewer than 20 clubs in Illinois to be certified.

"It’s challenging," Bossert said, "particularly in the summer, when some of the documentation gets placed on the back burner."

Located across from the Chicago city limits, the private club was built in 1919.

Native areas were established around the pond along the eighth hole at Bryn Mawr CC.

"We have an urban environment to work with here," Bossert explained. "We’re on 135 acres surrounded by some crowded residential areas. Not everyone has 400 acres out in the middle of nowhere, so we do the best we can."

2001 ‘BIRDWATCHING OPEN’

The amount of wildlife on the property is limited. Birds have become the primary visitors.

“We participated in a Birdwatching Open this spring, and identified as many as 28 species on the property,” the superintendent said. "My mother-in-law and one of our members are avid birders, and they helped us identify the different varieties."

Continued on page 23
The exam consisted of two essay questions, one for each day. "They give you a scenario, then you have three hours to come up with an answer," said Cook. "It's considerably different from the GCSAA exam, because I don't think anyone can really study for it. The exam puts a premium on personal experience. You either know the subject matter or you don't."

College professors and others review the answers. According to Cook, every question is different for each exam. "One of the scenarios was developing a budget for a golf course. The other one was more science related, on the physiology of turfgrass," he said.

Cook typed six-page essays for each question. "The length of the answer depends on how loquacious you are," he said. "But three hours was barely enough time."

The course inspection must be conducted by a Master Greenkeeper. "It was a one-day inspection, and Bill Montague, who was over at the Oakwood Club in Ohio at the time, came over to do it," said Cook. "We basically talked about the chemical and fertilizer programs we have here, how we're organized, and how the staff is managed. We toured the course, and then he submitted a report, which I wasn't able to see."

PREPARING FOR RYDER CUP
Cook benefited from the experience of other superintendents early in his career while at the Medinah Country Club in Chicago. Superintendents Danny Quast, Pete Wilson and Phil Taylor are high on Cook's list of influences. "Danny Quast has just retired, and Pete Wilson is over at the Seattle Golf Club now," he said.

"Those guys had a lot of patience with me and taught me that being a superintendent is a lot more than growing grass."

Cook is now getting Oakland Hills ready for the 2002 U.S. Men's Amateur and the 2003 Ryder Cup Matches. The course is in the final stages of a $2-million renovation project involving green banks and surrounds, bunkers, and a new irrigation system. "Staff at the course will remain. "When IGM took over our maintenance operations, we were able to keep our own staff, which was a big plus," said John Cargill, general manager at the club.

"We're looking forward to bringing the course back to the original conditions that made it the 'jewel' it is best known as being." Staff at the course will remain. "When IGM took over our maintenance operations, we were able to keep our own staff, which was a big plus," said John Cargill, general manager at the club.

IGM adds three
Continued from page 7
operations for IGM. "We're looking forward to bringing the course back to the original conditions that made it the 'jewel' it is best known as being."

Staff at the course will remain. "When IGM took over our maintenance operations, we were able to keep our own staff, which was a big plus," said John Cargill, general manager at the club.

COMPUTERIZED IRRIGATION
The third acquisition, Pelican Bay, consists of two 18-hole courses. Its North Course, designed by Bill Amick in 1980, is private; the South Course, designed by Lloyd Clifton and opened in 1985, is semi-private. Both layouts curve around inland waterways. The North Course, playing at 6,829 yards, underwent IGM-supervised renovation work in 1996, creating smoother putting surfaces and larger greens. The project also altered sandtraps, bunkers and tees, and improved drainage.

Plants are under discussion for a practice putting green and computerized irrigation system for the North Course, said Jason Moore, IGM's central Florida regional manager.