



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Open Letter to the Members of Somerset Country Club

By James Bade

Dear Somerset Country Club member:

By virtue of your membership I would call you an environmentalist. As I drive around the grounds of Somerset I am stunned by the fact that some people feel golf courses are bad for the environment. On any given moment this is what one may see at Somerset: white egrets, blue herons, green herons, eastern blue birds, mallard ducks, mergansers, wood ducks, hawks, painter turtles, snapping turtles as well as songbirds and woodpeckers of all kinds. On rarer occasions owls, pileated woodpeckers, kingfishers, turkeys and migratory birds can be found at Somerset C.C.

I am not an ornithologist but for some reason the green heron does exceptionally well here. The egret and blue heron visit to feed on the minnows. I am always amazed that our ponds have as many minnows as they do. Plus they have crayfish and frogs. I'm not sure what the Chinese calendar year is but at Somerset it is the year of the duck! Due to predators (a sign that this plot of land is teaming with nature) ducks don't usually survive. However, this year we had a record amount of ducklings and mergansers moving onto adulthood. A fox, coyote, weasel, raccoon or raptor is missing this year, which has reflected in an increase of rabbits.

When the city of West St. Paul receives a lot of rain, Somerset Country Club is a very important part of the watershed. The golf course absorbs a lot of dirty water and trash. I would be willing to bet that the water that leaves Somerset, down the Ivy Falls and into the Mississippi, is cleaner than when it entered the golf course. Furthermore, when the water is really flowing through the golf course the wild grass and flowers help in erosion control. In your no mow areas are two different varieties of milkweeds which the Monarch butterflies just love. The staff keeps an eye out for noxious weeds like purple loose strife and Canadian thistle. We do miss some thistles, but when they go to seed the gold finches just love them.

The other very colorful bird that is a joy to see is the eastern bluebird. The bluebird houses scattered throughout the golf course have been quite successful. To see the vibrant bluebird chasing after insects is quite a joy. The no mow areas have created a nice habitat for the bluebird trail, and also allow a place for voles and field mice which the hawks and owls love.

In this day and age where hundred year old oaks come tumbling down for town homes and hill-sides are literally hauled away for the same purpose, the green space that Somerset Country Club provides is priceless. You should be applauded for your willingness to keep these 150 acres what they are, especially in this urban setting. With your membership you fulfill a quote by Aldo Leopold: "If the private owner were ecologically minded, he would be proud to be the custodian of a reasonable proportion of such areas, which add diversity and beauty to his farm and to his community." The staff and I would like to thank you for being stewards of this wonderful place that is teeming with all sorts of natural events 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

*Partnering in stewardship with you,
James*

Fellow greenkeepers: Don't underestimate all that you do for the environment by managing the land that you do. Being a steward of this planet is quite rewarding and a privilege. You could be classified as a conservationist with all your hard labors. Get involved with the Audubon if you can.

"Improving the environment one green at a time."

James

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