



IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Autumnal Gleanings

By PAUL DIEGNAU, CGCS
Keller Golf Course

Birds, Birds, Birds: Not to brag but the bluebird trail at Keller Golf Course fledged 138 bluebird youngsters this year from 181 eggs. We continue to set new records every year, even with serious house sparrow and raccoon pressure. I actually have some golfers that are taking note of our large populations and expressing their sincere pleasure. This is very gratifying to me as for many years I thought I was one of few enjoying these beautiful creatures!

I can't emphasize this enough...golf courses provide INCREDIBLE habitat for bluebirds. They love trees, open spaces and short grass. With the investment of very little time and resources you can set up a modest trail of your own. I would recommend that you join the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota (bbrp.org) to help you get started. Check out the top ten tips for starting a bluebird trail on their website to see if you have what it takes to be a successful blue birder. Also, BBRP will be at the 2008 Green Expo along with Jack Hauser, BBRP liaison to golf courses. Jack can be reached at 952-831-8132. I am also more than willing to help out anyone interested in starting a trail. Give me a call or send me an e-mail.

Redheads In Trouble

Speaking of birds, there is currently a movement afoot to assist Red-headed Woodpecker (RhW) populations in the state of Minnesota. A group calling itself the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program has formed with the intent of expanding RhW populations in the state. This is one of the first groups to form in the U.S. for this purpose. As one might expect, Jack Hauser is involved in this fledgling group as well.

Why Red-headed Woodpeckers? It seems that their numbers have declined 89% since 1967! It is speculated that the decline is due to the loss of oak savanna habitat, the removal of dead and dying trees (snags) and the suppression of wildfires. Many golf courses have the opportunity to provide nesting habitat via artificial nest boxes, allowing snags to remain standing in non-hazardous locations and by utilizing prescribed burns in appropriate woodlots. If you are interested in participating in this program, contact Jack Hauser at the number listed above.

Side-note: Back in the late '80s and early '90s, I had the opportunity to observe several of these avian wonders on a regular basis over a period of several years on a golf course where I was previously employed. These birds are stunning to see in person!

PCNB Status... Going, Going, ???

I have heard rumors from multiple sources over the past several months that PCNB will continue to be available for use on golf courses. Comments I have received from industry representatives on the manufacturing and distribution sides of PCNB all seem to indicate an exception will be allowed for snow mold control on fairway turfgrass. The problem is no one is able to confirm this speculation. I spent an hour of frustration on the U.S. EPA website searching for any current information on the status of PCNB. One document I came across seemed to indicate that additional test results were still being analyzed this past summer. The third public comment period ended back on January 8, 2007. I e-mailed the EPA supervisor who is managing the re-registration of this product. I eventually received a response from her as follows: "It is possible if we determine that the public comments don't provide enough substantive information to support a change in the decision, that the registrants will use the rights of

appeal allowed by pesticide law to challenge the decision. Therefore, it is not possible to determine when the decision will be final. We do hope to complete our response to comments late this calendar year or early next year." There you have it from the horse's mouth!

A Message From RISE

The following is an October excerpt from a Minnesota Grassroots Alert sent by Elizabeth Grotos, the new Grassroots Manager from RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment):

"I am writing to make you aware of a pending pesticide issue in your state. Rep. Ken Tschumper (DFL-Houston and Fillmore Counties) is hosting a hearing tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. in Wadena Memorial Auditorium to discuss efforts to broaden Minnesota's pesticide-right-to-know law and to hear from area citizens concerned about possible human health effects of pesticide exposure.

The hearing will be held in rural Wadena, a hotbed area for anti-pesticide activity, which is not located in his district."

(An update from the hearing in Wadena...Theresa Ambroz, lobbyist for MN PIE (Pesticide Information and Education) attended the meeting. In a communication with Elizabeth Grotos of RISE, she stated that the meeting was anything but informal. It was a well-planned event that turned out to be an opportunity for anti-pesticide activists to raise unsubstantiated claims about pesticide drift from aerial applications.)

It is probably safe to assume that Rep. Tschumper, chair of the House Subcommittee on Environmental Justice and Healthy Housing, will be introducing new legislation when the Minnesota State Legislature reconvenes in February of 2008. He will be pressing for possible banning of aerial pesticide applications, pre-spray neighbor notification laws, monthly pesticide report submittals to the MN Dept. of Agriculture and opening up restricted-use application records to the general public. Keep your eyes and ears open. Get involved. You have a voice. Use it! Let YOUR representatives know how these issues affect you.

The new contact information for RISE is: Elizabeth L. Grotos, Grassroots Manager, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), (202) 872-3869 or egrotos@pestfacts.org and www.pestfacts.org.

Bye-Bye "P"

Wisconsin recently passed new anti-phosphorous fertilizer legislation that includes golf course properties. As of March 10, 2008, anyone applying fertilizer to five acres or more will be required to have a written site-specific nutrient management plan based on soil tests. Phosphorous applications are prohibited unless deficiencies are indicated via soil testing.

On the Other Hand

Six years of research conducted at the University of Wisconsin by Dr. Wayne Kussow has shown that:

~ Banning phosphorous in fertilizer does not reduce phosphorous runoff into water bodies.

~ Lawns treated with phosphorous fertilizers produced less phosphorous runoff than those where no phosphorous was applied.

~ On the average, runoff was 78% greater from unfertilized plots than from fertilized plots.

Go figure!

Green Expo Keeps On A Rockin'

The 2008 Minnesota Green Expo Trade Show officially "sold out" on November 16. This is especially impressive in that 17 additional booths were added to the 2008 floor layout. While most turf and grounds conferences across the U.S. continue to decline in size, our show gets bigger and better every year! I hope to see you there.

Happy Holidays!