A RESPONSIBLE CHOICE!

Environmental Stewardship on Minnesota Golf Courses

By MICHAEL BROWER
Golf Course Superintendent, Minnesota Valley Country Club

With hundreds of golf courses spread throughout the great state of Minnesota, collectively these courses represent a large amount of valuable acreage. Within this acreage lies a great deal of natural resources. Golf courses are very unique in this respect, a great sport traditionally played in the great outdoors, in and around nature itself.

As golf course Superintendents, we've primarily been employed to manage these acres to provide a recreational playing field for golfers. But in addition to this, we have a basic responsibility to manage and care for the land in a responsible manner. It's called being an "environmental steward." To meet this description, one must commit to environmental quality by protecting the environment, conserving natural resources and sustaining and improving wildlife habitat. When we do all of this, golf courses become one of the best types of land development. I ask you all, are we at a place in time where this is commonplace, or is it still just a fad? Have you adopted this total commitment to the environment? If not, now is a perfect time!

A good number of golf course Superintendents have documented their adoption of an environmental ethic by becoming Certified Cooperative Sanctuaries through Audubon International. Audubon International provides a wonderful source of education and assistance for Superintendents in their environmental stewardship practices. Visit their website at www.auduboninternational.org. The following 24 Minnesota golf courses are fully certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries. There are also 23 additional courses in the state that are members in the process of becoming certified. Please contact me, Audubon International, or one of the following certified courses near you to find out more!

Baker National Golf Course
Birnamwood Golf Course
Braemer Golf Course
Crystal Lake Golf Course
Dakotah Ridge Golf Club
Hastings Country Club
Izaty's Golf and Yacht Club
Keller Golf Course
Legacy Courses at Cragun’s (Bronze Signature)
Meadowbrook Golf Course
Minnesota Valley Country Club
Somerby Golf Club
Somerset Country Club
Spring Hill Golf Club
Superior National at Lutsen
Tartan Park Golf Course
The Minikahda Club
Theodore Wirth Golf Course
Town and Country Club
TPC Twin Cities
Wayzata Country Club
White Bear Yacht Club
Wilderness Golf Course at Fortune Bay
Woodhill Country Club

In our effort to educate and inform our members, their guests, and patrons of Minnesota Valley Country Club, we recently put together a tri-fold brochure which highlights our environmental stewardship practices. In an effort to provide useful ideas for other golf courses, we have printed the entire brochure here. I encourage you all to adopt an environmental ethic, join Audubon International and become certified sanctuaries. It adds a lot of enjoyment to the work we perform, and assures that the golf course environment is responsibly managed, improved and sustained for future generations of golfers. Now is the perfect time!

The Course

Designed by Mr. Seth Raynor in 1924, the golf course sits on 147 acres of gently rolling terrain above the great Minnesota River Valley. The course environment, including micro-climate, wildlife and landscape, is heavily influenced by its close proximity to the river valley and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge just 400 yards to the south.

Pond, milkweed and No. 12 tee

No-mow, pines and bluebird houses

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Environmental Planning: MVCC evaluates the natural resources of the property and acts responsibly to balance the natural environment with golf. **Wildlife and Habitat Management:** MVCC implements practices which enhance habitats and promote wildlife and biodiversity conservation. **Chemical Use Reduction and Safety:** MVCC staff employ techniques to safely store, handle and apply chemicals using best management practices. **Water Conservation:** MVCC maximizes efficiency and minimizes waste by employing water conservation irrigation practices. **Water Quality Management:** MVCC employs environmentally sensitive management to protect the health and integrity of all water resources. **Outreach and Education:** MVCC utilizes a variety of education and outreach activities to communicate the importance of environmental stewardship to its members, guests, patrons and the community.

**Environmental Stewardship Practices**

**Bluebird Trail:** Bluebirds abound at Minnesota Valley! We average 80 fledged bluebirds from our 30 houses on the golf course!

**Olson Elementary:** MVCC has adopted nearby Olson Elementary as a sister sanctuary, assisting them with developing their Audubon program, utilizing the golf course as an outdoor classroom, developing outdoor education areas on their campus and donating plant material and labor to beautify and improve their learning environment.

**Recycling:** MVCC has developed a far reaching recycling program which includes glass, plastic, paper, aluminum, various metals, machinery and appliances.

**Hazardous Waste Recycling:** All hazardous waste such as waste oil, oil filters, batteries, fluorescent bulbs, and paint by-products is safely collected and recycled.

**Resource Advisory Committee:** Quarterly meetings of staff, members and consultants dedicated to the various environmental projects at MVCC.

**Safety Committee:** Monthly meetings of staff dedicated to providing a safer and healthier workplace for members, guests, patrons, and employees.

**Environmental Lake:** 2.5 acre natural lake focusing on wildlife habitat.

**Natural Areas:** 13.5 acres of low maintenance, native and natural areas.

**Bird Feeders:** Nine birdfeeders provide essential food in winter months.

**Waterfowl Nesting Structures:** Mallards, Wood Ducks, Mergansers, and other waterfowl frequently utilize the nesting structures provided on the golf course.

**Wildlife Habitat:** On-going philosophy of preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat.

**Cultural Practices:** An excellent Integrated Pest Management program is practiced that guides decision-making and cultural maintenance practices such as water management, pesticide use, fertilizer use, plant selection and cultivation procedures.

**MVCC’s Annual Calendar of Audubon Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Prepare Waterfowl Nests</td>
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| April | Environmental Awareness Day  
Earth Day Celebration  
Arbor Day  
Tree Planting |
| May | Migratory Bird Day  
Olson Elementary Outdoor Classes  
Bluebirds Birth-Days Week |
| July | Kid’s Campout  
Kid’s Nature Hike |
| October | Birdfeeders Gala |
| December | Ski Trail Opens |

**Flowers at Minnesota Valley**

**Wildlife**

Known to nest or live at Minnesota Valley or are annual visitors to the property

**Feathered Friends**

- American Bittern  
- Gray Catbird  
- Great Blue Heron  
- American Robin  
- Green Heron  
- Brown Thrasher  
- Night Heron  
- European Starling  
- Turkey Vulture  
- Cedar Waxwing  
- Canada Goose  
- Ovenbird  
- Wood Duck  
- Northern Waterthrush  
- Mallard  
- Wilson Warbler  
- Chipping Sparrow  
- Common Golden Eye  
- Dark Eyed Junco  
- Hooded Merganser  
- Northern Cardinal  
- Common Merganser  
- Rose-Breasted Grosbeak  
- Bald Eagle  
- Indigo Bunting  
- Cooper’s Hawk  
- Red-Winged Blackbird  
- Red Tail Hawk  
- Common Grackle  
- Ring-Neck Pheasant  
- Brown-Headed Cowbird  
- Wild Turkey  
- American Coot  
- Virginia Rail  
- Mourning Dove  
- Ruby Throated Hummingbird  
- Belding Kingfisher  
- Red-Headed Woodpecker  
- Downy Woodpecker  
- hairy Woodpecker  
- Common Flicker  
- Pileated Woodpecker  
- Eastern Phoebe  
- Yellow Throated Vireo  
- Solitary Vireo  
- Blue Jay  
- American Crow  
- tree Swallow  
- Barn Swallow  
- Black Capped Chickadee  
- White Breasted Nuthatch  
- Brown Creeper  
- House Wren  
- Golden Crowned Kinglet  
- Red Crowned Kinglet  
- Eastern Bluebird  
- Veery  
- Brewers Blackbird  
- American Goldfinch  
- House Finch  
- Pine Siskin  
- House Sparrow  
- Northern Oriole  

**Reptiles**

- Snapping Turtle  
- Painted Turtle  
- Common snapping turtle  
- Tiger Salamander  

**Mammals**

- Opposum  
- Eastern Mole  
- Eastern Cottontail Rabbit  
- Woodchuck  
- Eastern Chipmunk  
- Eastern Gray Squirrel  
- Red Squirrel  
- Plains Pocket Gopher  
- White Footed Mouse  
- Muskrat  
- Coyote  
- Red Fox  
- Raccoon  
- Striped Skunk  
- White Tail Deer  

**Amphibians**

- Spring Peeper  
- Striped Chorus Frog  
- Green Frog  
- Northern Leopard Frog  
- American Toad