

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses

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Objectives:

1. Enhance wildlife habitats on existing golf courses by working with golf course superintendents and providing advice for ecologically sound course management.
2. Encourage active participation in conservation programs by golfers, golf course superintendents, golf officials, and the general public.
3. Recognize the people who are actively participating in environmentally responsible projects.
4. Educate the public and golfing community about the benefits of golf courses and the role they play relative to the environment and wildlife.

Start Date: 1991

Project Duration: ongoing

Total Funding: \$100,000 per year

In 1991, Audubon International launched the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP), an education and certification program that promotes ecologically sound land management and the conservation of natural resources on golf courses. Participation is designed to help course personnel plan, organize, implement, and document a comprehensive environmental management program and receive recognition for their efforts.

The Audubon Signature Program is an education and certification program that provides comprehensive environmental planning assistance to new golf course developments. The program assists owners and developers in applying sound environmental conservation and sustainable development practices while planning, designing, building, and managing a golf course development.

As of June 30, 2003 (the end of Audubon International's fiscal year), 2,010 courses throughout the United States and



The Great Blue Heron was seen by 80% of North American Birdwatching Open participants and ranked in the top twenty most frequently sighted species on golf courses.

in 25 countries were enrolled in the ACSP. Fifty-nine percent of ACSP golf course members (1,176 courses) have completed an environmental plan to guide their management efforts. A total of 390 golf courses (19%) have achieved the distinction of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for their efforts to implement and document a full complement of conservation activities, including chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation and water quality management, and wildlife habitat improvement.

The Audubon Signature Program celebrated its 10th Anniversary with 103 active members, located in 31 U.S. states and three countries (Canada, Portugal, Puerto Rico). Six golf courses achieved certification, bringing the total number of Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries to 40, including 26 Bronze-, 11 Silver-, and three Gold-level projects.

In February 2003, Audubon International launched its Fifty in Five Initiative, an effort to get 50% of all golf courses in the U.S. enrolled and active in its programs by 2007. As part of this effort, Audubon International created a Golf Advisory Council representing interests from across the golf industry in support of Fifty in Five. Council members are currently providing advice for improving our programs and getting more golf courses actively involved.

Audubon International surveyed all ACSP for Golf Course members to find out how aware various stakeholders (golfers, owners, community groups, local governments) are of the program, and to get a better sense of the business value of participating. To date, over 170 responses have been received.

In 2002, 56 golf courses participated in Audubon International's yearly Nest Box Survey, reporting a total of 3,429 birds fledged. Surveys are still being received for 2003, but thus far we have

received 50 surveys from golf courses with a total of 2,283 birds fledged.

Volunteer birdwatchers identified 319 different species of birds on 82 golf courses participating in Audubon International's 2003 North American Birdwatching Open. The event provides a snapshot of bird activity on golf courses at the height of bird migration in May. The average number of bird species sighted per course was 41, with a range from 8 to 94.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) selected Audubon International, along with fifteen other organizations, as PESP Champions of 2003 for its extraordinary level of commitment to protecting the environment and human health.

Summary Points

- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program: 2,010
- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Signature Program: 103
- Number of bird species sighted on 82 golf courses participating in the 2003 North American Birdwatching Open: 319
- Number of new birds fledged from nest boxes on 56 golf courses reporting in the 2002 Nest Box Survey: 3,429
- Number of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Courses: 390
- Total number of golf courses certified in Environmental Planning: 1176 (59%)
- Number of golf courses certified in two or more program components: 562 (28%)
- Number of requests for certification reviewed in 2002/03: 353
- Percentage of certification requests awarded: 89%
- Number of golf course personnel and others educated by Audubon International in 2002/03 through classroom seminars, conference presentations, team meetings, and fieldwork: 4,000