

Audubon International

Audubon International strives to educate, assist, and inspire millions of people from all walks of life to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them. In 1991, Audubon International launched the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP), an environmental education program designed to help golf courses play a significant role in enhancing and protecting wildlife habitat and natural resources. The ACSP provides an advisory information service to help golf courses conduct environmental projects and achieve positive recognition for their efforts.

In addition, the Audubon Signature Program works closely with planners, architects, managers, and key stakeholders of new golf course developments to merge wildlife conservation, habitat enhancement, resource conservation, and environmental improvement with the economic agenda associated with the development. Involvement in the development stages of a project enables Audubon International to ensure that biodiversity conservation, environmental quality, and sustainable management are built into the project and continue after construction is completed.



Golf courses are finding ways to manage wildlife problems successfully and using the ACSP as a means to share management tips and practices with others. Installing a device known as a Beaver Deceiver in its wetlands enabled Telluride Golf Club in Colorado to co-exist with beavers and eliminate damage from flooding. The course shared its results through an ACSP case study, published in the USGA Green Section Record.



Courses enrolled in the ACSP manage an average 95 acres of wildlife habitat per course, helping them serve as significant natural areas that meet the needs of golfers and wildlife. For instance, Valderrama Golf Club, a certified ACSP member in Spain, serves as a migratory stopover for thousands of birds funneling through Europe's Strait of Gibraltar each spring and fall. Golf course staff work with local ornithologists to band, count, and monitor Valderama's migratory birds.



More than 500 conservation organizations are directly involved with golf courses as a result of the Outreach and Education component of the ACSP. For example, Braemar Golf Course in Richfield, MN, invited Karen Shragg (above), Director of Wood Lake Nature Center to conduct bird surveys on the course. She was so impressed with Braemar's environmental efforts that she worked with course staff to host a presentation and course tour for community leaders, including representatives from the Izaak Walton League, Metropolitan Council, Bluebird Recovery Project, local National Audubon chapter, National Recreation and Parks Association, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation District, 9-Mile Creek Watershed District, and MN Department of Natural Resources.

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

Audubon International made significant contributions to complete *Managing Wetlands on Golf Courses*, a new book written to help golf courses conserve and manage all types of wetlands. The book was a cooperative publication of the United States Golf Association, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Audubon International, published by Wiley Publishing.

Audubon International encourages active participation in conservation programs by golfers, golf course superintendents, golf officials, and the general public through a variety of outreach and education activities. These include: public programs, birdwatching events, research, community participation in Audubon Resource Advisory Groups, course displays and educational signage, and collaborative initiatives.

More than 2,850 people took part in seminars and field training conducted by Audubon International staff in 2003/04. More than 500 conservation organizations are directly involved with golf courses as a result of their participation in the ACSP. This includes representatives from cooperative extension services, Audubon societies, native plant organizations, parks, water management districts, and wildlife organizations.

Birdwatching teams from 68 golf courses collectively identified 317 bird species during the 2004 North American

Birdwatching Open. The average number of birds sighted per course was 41, with a range from 11 to 95. In 2003, 87 golf courses participated in Audubon International's Nest Box Survey, reporting a total of 4,480 birds fledged from nest boxes.

Twenty-two percent (479 golf courses) of ACSP participants have achieved the distinction of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for their efforts to implement and document a full complement of conservation activities.



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Eleven completed developments were designated Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries, bringing the total number to 49, including 7 Gold, 12 Silver, and 30 Bronze certified projects.

Audubon International conducted two member surveys to gather data on the business value of environmental stewardship. The research focused on ways in which protecting water, wildlife, and natural resources through Audubon programs can save money, enhance performance, or promote business. Among the findings: 97% viewed their participation in the

Audubon Signature Program as a good business decision; 90% reported that they believed annual operation and maintenance costs were either "lower than" or the "same as" the costs of an equivalent, non-Signature golf course; 63% stated that program participation, including upfront monetary and staff investment, has saved or will save money, compared with a course designed, constructed, and managed without Audubon assistance; and 90% believed their Certified Audubon Signature status has or will have value in marketing and promotional efforts.

Summary Points

- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP): 2,172
- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Signature Program: 103
- Average number of acres of wildlife habitat per ACSP golf course: 95
- Number of conservation organizations directly involved with golf courses as a result of participation in the ACSP: >500
- Number of bird species sighted on 68 golf courses participating in the 2004 North American Birdwatching Open: 317
- Number of new birds fledged from nest boxes on 87 golf courses reporting in the 2003 Nest Box Survey: 4,480
- Number of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Courses: 479
- Total number of golf courses certified in Environmental Planning: 1158 (53%)
- Percentage of the ACSP and Audubon Signature Program members on Golf Digest's Top 100 lists in 2004: 52% of classic courses, 53% of modern courses, 43% of public courses.
- Number of golf course personnel and others educated by Audubon International in 2003/04 through classroom seminars, conference presentations, team meetings, and fieldwork: 2,850