

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 is a non-profit environmental organization that strives to educate, assist, and inspire people from all walks of life to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them. Since 1991, it has worked in partnership with the USGA to offer 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. Audubon Signature Programs provide comprehensive environmental education and planning assistance to new developments.

Today, more than 2,100 golf courses in 26 countries participate in the ACSP. More than half of those enrolled have developed an environmental plan to guide management of the golf course and 504 have achieved certification for their outstanding best practices. An additional 129 golf course development projects are enrolled in the Audubon Signature Programs, in which a comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan is prepared to guide construction, as well as operation and maintenance. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) selected the ACSP as a 2005 PESP Champion in recognition of the program's achievements.

Sustainable Golf Courses, A Guide to Environmental Stewardship, by Audubon International President Ronald Dodson, was published in 2005 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. The book serves as a reference for people who are involved in planning, developing, and constructing new golf courses, as well as for those who

manage golf courses once they are built.

Audubon International encourages active participation in 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.



A pair of osprey successfully raised two young in 2005 at Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Club in Naples, FL, a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1993.

Approximately 2,850 people took part in seminars and field training conducted by Audubon International staff in 2004/05. More than 500 conservation organizations are directly involved with golf courses as a result of their participation in the ACSP.

Birdwatching teams from 63 golf courses collectively identified 304 bird species during the 2005 North American Birdwatching Open. The average number of birds sighted per course was 46, with a range from 14 to 98. In 2004, 86 golf courses participated in Audubon International's Nest Box Survey, reporting a total of 5,069 birds fledged from nest boxes.

Audubon International recognizes the people who are actively participating in environmentally responsible projects by awarding certification to courses that participate in a full complement of environmental activities. Twenty-four percent (504 golf courses) of ACSP participants

have achieved the distinction of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary and 56 completed developments have been designated as Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries.

Site visits became a required element of re-certification in the ACSP in 2005. The site visits help Audubon International verify some of the more visible aspects of golf course environmental management activities and provide an opportunity for golf course representatives to demonstrate some of the voluntary actions they have taken to protect the environment.

Summary Points

- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP): 2,139
- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Signature Program: 129
- Average number of acres of wildlife habitat per ACSP golf course: 87
- Number of conservation organizations directly involved with golf courses as a result of their participation in the ACSP: >500
- Number of bird species sighted on 63 golf courses participating in the 2005 North American Birdwatching Open: 304
- Number of new birds fledged from nest boxes on 86 golf courses reporting in the 2004 Nest Box Survey: 5,069
- Number of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Courses: 504
- Total number of golf courses certified in Environmental Planning: 1102 (52%)
- Percentage of Golf Digest's Top 100 lists in 2004 enrolled in the ACSP or an Audubon Signature Program: 55% of classic courses, 50% of modern courses
- Number of golf course personnel and others educated by Audubon International in 2004/05 through classroom seminars, conference presentations, team meetings, and fieldwork: 2,850