

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses

Josh Conway
Audubon International

Objectives:

1. Enhance wildlife habitats on golf courses by working with the golf course superintendent 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: \$75,000/year

Audubon International is a non-profit environmental organization that envisions communities becoming more sustainable through good stewardship of the natural environment where people live, work, and recreate through responsible management of land, water, wildlife, and other natural resources. Since 1991, Audubon International has worked in partnership with the USGA to offer the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP).

The program, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, is an award-winning education and certification program that promotes ecologically sound land management and the conservation of natural resources on golf courses. In addition, Audubon Signature Programs provide comprehensive environmental education and planning assistance to new developments.



Today, 2,114 golf courses in 38 countries participate in the ACSP for Golf Courses. More than 70% of those enrolled have developed an environmental plan to guide management of the golf course and 834 have achieved certification for their outstanding best practices.

Today, 2,114 golf courses in 38 countries participate in the ACSP for Golf Courses. More than 70% of those enrolled have developed an environmental plan to guide management of the golf course and 834 have achieved certification for their outstanding best practices. We also awarded 985 "Certificates of Achievement" to recognize golf courses for outstanding accomplishments to improve wildlife habitat, save water, conserve energy, and reduce waste.

Audubon International also provided environmental planning services to 156 projects (128 golf-related) development projects in 37 states and in 11 countries, covering more than 75,000 acres of land, through the Audubon Signature Programs in 2009/10. Three projects achieved certification, bringing the total number of golf courses that have been designated as Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries to 92 in 27 states and five countries.



Diamondback terrapins are small turtles that spend their lives in brackish estuaries and are listed as "Species of Special Concern" by the State of New Jersey. Excluder traps installed at Marriott's Seaview Resort and Spa protect diamondback terrapin eggs safe from golfers and predators such as fox and birds.

The voluntary environmental actions taken by members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses are indeed leading to chemical use reduction and increased safety, enhanced wildlife and habitat management, and improved water quality and conservation.

Summary Points

● Chemical Use Reduction and Safety

- 94% of respondents have reduced their pesticide use
- 70% of respondents have reduced their pesticide costs
- 96% of respondents now use pesticides with lower toxicity levels
- 91% of respondents have implemented a primary and secondary spill containment systems

● Wildlife and Habitat Management

- 89% of respondents now use native plants when landscaping
- On average, respondents reported that they have natural vegetation around 71% of their shorelines.
- On average, respondents reported that they have added 20 acres of wildlife habitat since joining the ACSP

● Water Quality and Conservation

- 50% of respondents have removed irrigated turfgrass
- 69% of respondents have improved their irrigations systems
- 89% of respondents have increased their mowing heights along water bodies to filter runoff
- 51% of respondents have reduced their water costs since joining the ACSP