

# HOW I BEGAN AUDUBON CERTIFICATION AT FOUNTAINGROVE GOLF & ATHLETIC CLUB

by Andrew Trinkino

The decision to start our involvement with the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) primarily came from me. I felt that it was important to bring such a matter to my general manager and the governors of the greens committee. Originally, I found my passion for the environment when I was in high school, working at The Village Club, an environmentally friendly course in the Midwest/Chicago-land area.

Here at my current club, Fountaingrove, we were concerned about things being in balance with nature. So the ACSP was a natural fit for us. The ACSP program is an award winning education and certification program that helps golf courses protect the environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf.

After the blessing of both the Golf and Greens committees, we moved forward initiating the program. Having used the USGA for many years as a consulting organization, I asked the Senior Western Agronomist, Mr. Pat Gross, to help us with some first steps. We began by registering our club with Audubon International. Upon registration, the Audubon International staff helped me take stock of the course's environmental resources and potential liabilities. From that we developed a plan, goals, and the time requirements for involvement. The ACSP program consists of a well organized approach for managing of areas of environmental concern. The six main areas are: Environmental Planning, Outreach, Wildlife Habitat Management, Chemical Use, Water Quality, and Water Conservation. The main concerns here in the west are water conservation, water quality management, and outreach and education.

Fountaingrove was an excellent candidate to become a successful cooperative sanctuary by already providing valuable wildlife habitats. Ted Robinson Sr. took this property 20+ years ago and did a masterful job of creating this track. Now, even more, the club is committed to managing the property for environmental quality while trying to enhance, protect, and connect the wildlife habitats and resources.



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Two of the major aspects that I worked on were Chemical Use and Pesticide Reduction. I improved safety by applying chemicals on more of a "when needed" basis and through the use of the most environmentally responsible methods possible. In the area of Water Conservation, my staff has removed over 5 acres of landscape from the irrigation system. In Wildlife and Habitat Management, we have naturalized 2.5 acres of formally managed turf grass and provided wildlife habitats along stream and lake edges. These naturalized zones provide food and shelter for wildlife.

The most difficult areas to complete were our Outreach and Education Programs. Both planning and completing projects in this area were by far the hardest aspect. Fortunately, I have a great club member who got her kids and my own daughter's Girl Scout troop to be involved. People from our athletic club also walk the course on Mondays when the club is closed to pitch in and identify animals and plants. Once involved, these people have become a great resource for us to build our program on.

In the area of Water Quality, we now test the water for nitrogen and phosphorous accumulation. We developed comprehensive water tests and conduct them on a regular basis. We test the water coming into the golf course, the water being pumped from our wells, the water in the main lakes, and then ultimately the water as it exits the property. This allows us to determine any possible impact of my course management practices on the water.

The ACSP has been a great success at Fountaingrove. I have to credit Jim Sluiter, the Audubon International Staff Ecologist and the Pat Gross of the USGA Green Section for all their help. They were great to work with on this outstanding project. The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program has truly benefited our club and members.

