

## Food for Thought II

by Tod Hopphan

I'm back. Just when you thought you had enough of me, I spring back with some more stuff.

In my last piece I wrote about things you can do to help spruce up your image with the environmental crowd. Now I would like to go into more detail about a subject I wrote about last time, the Audubon Society of New York State Cooperative Golf Course Sanctuary Program (Wow! What an impressive and long title).



We at Evanston have been members since April, 1992. We were looking for ways to help improve our image with the community and from suggestions from Peter Leuzinger, we decided to join. In 1991, we had started a program of letting out-of-the-way areas to develop naturally. Some areas had been developing over the last ten years or so. Being in the heart of Skokie, we were surprised by the amount of wildlife that we could support in our 160 acres.

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After filling out the original short form and sending in our dues, we received an inventory form to be filled out about our golf course. It was about five pages long and somewhat easy to fill out. It asked for size of our course, basic layout, water sources, natural areas, etc. Once that was filled out and sent back, they returned an evaluation of our course and gave us some suggestions to help improve the wildlife areas. It is important to note that they were only suggestions and not requirements.

Some of the suggestions we followed up on right away, such as building more bird houses, putting up some feeders, allowing other areas to grow naturally. Many of the other suggestions such as using IPM, developing water conservation programs, water enhancement, and public relations with our members and community had already been initiated.

The Audubon Society has a wealth of informational sheets that they send out upon request. We used these to design and place our bluebird houses (16), wood duck house, and hopefully this winter our first bat houses.

The next possible step in the Audubon process is begin the ball rolling toward certification. There are seven areas that you can be certified in. They include wildlife food enhancement, wildlife cover enhancement, water conservation, water enhancement, environmental planning, public relations, and integrated pest management. The Audubon Society gave us all of the forms and examples we could use. I was in contact with their staff ecologist, Jean Mackay and Pete whenever I needed help.

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("Food for Thought II" continued)

The information we gave was about a page or two in length for each category. After the first try in April 1993, we became certified in environmental planning. We received helpful suggestions and encouragement for the other categories. Over the summer, we implemented their ideas and resubmitted in the fall. We became certified in all of the categories and I am now proud to be one of the nine (maybe ten) certified members of this program. It is also a proud moment for the Midwest Association that of the nine certified courses, five of them are in the Chicago area.

With all of this information I have thrown at you, you may be wondering where am I going with all of this. Since becoming a member and becoming certified I have had a few questions thrown my way about our involvement. Most people seem to be interested however, I have been hearing some negative vibes about the program. Some have said that it is too hard to become certified, we don't want boy scout or birdwatcher clubs

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walking up and down our fairways, we don't have the space to form nature trails, this is a golf course, not a park, etc.

First of all you don't have to have all of these things to become certified. The Audubon Society of New York State is very understanding to our situations. They realize that not every golf course can support nature trails or what have you. Even if you do nothing, the fact that you have a large portion of land that is kept green and not paved over is a benefit for the environment and the wildlife. With a very few changes you can reap a large amount of benefits for your membership and your community.

You can be a member of this organization without having to gear yourself up to be certified. You could also be certified in the categories that fit your particular course. The options are many and are up to you.

The only reason I see that you should not join is if your membership has no interest at all. If there is some interest, then join up.

We have always been aware of the wildlife that surrounded us on our course. However, since joining and becoming a part of this organization, we have looked at our course with a different eye and we are even more proud of what we have accomplished and so could you.

## "March"

March is Here, Spring soon to follow!

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**Kenneth R. Zanzig**

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