

# No Time Like the Present



Don Ferreri  
Seven Bridges G.C.

**9** assume everyone in our industry makes a list now and then. Some people even make lists of their lists. Usually this is done to keep track of job details to be performed by yourself or staff. Sometimes lists are a simple reminder of items to be accomplished or items to be prioritized to the importance of timing.

Many of you may have on your list the task of joining the Audubon Society of New York State. This should be done by every golf course in Chicagoland to show support of our environment. Currently, 2,253 golf courses are enrolled as members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (A.C.S.P.) throughout the country. This is a very easy item to cross off your list by simply filling out an application form and budgeting \$100 a year for dues. In return, you receive a membership poster suitable for framing and displaying to your club members and customers and also up-to-date newsletters with information and suggestions to improve environmental conditions on your course no matter where you are located.

Locally in Illinois, there are 120 golf courses enrolled in the A.C.S.P. at various stages of the program. Currently, 83 golf courses have been fully certified from coast to coast.

Upon joining the Audubon society as a member, you receive the A.C.S.P. resource inventory, the dreaded first step to becoming a certified site. Filling out the resource inventory becomes a fantastic item to put on our list of things to do. I know this because it has graced my list for a substantial length of time, even moving from list to list on occasion. It certainly sounds like a great idea, and I truly admire our peers who have accomplished this seemingly insurmountable chore. Why is this task so hard to pursue? In my case, it is flat out fear, fear that I will get started and not see it through to the finish, or that it will be more difficult than I expected. These are very weak excuses, to say the least. Actually, I have completed my resource inventory and promptly received my booklet of recommendations and suggestions for best completing the certification categories at my golf course. It is as easy as getting started. That seems to be very simple to say but at the same time extremely hard to do. So with this dilemma staring at me, I have asked the experts from our own association for their suggestions, as they all have fully completed the certification program for their golf courses.

Tod Hopphan, assistant superintendent at Eaglebrook Country Club in Geneva, Illinois, had completed the process while working at Evanston Golf Club in Skokie, Illinois. Tod offers the following list of comments and advice to those of us joining or becoming new members of the Audubon Society of New York State Cooperative Sanctuary:

1. Join (if you haven't already)! The \$100 membership fee will be the best \$100 you will ever spend.

2. Open your eyes. Take a look at what your course has to offer. You will be surprised at what you see.

3. Lose all misconceptions about the program. Boy Scout troops do not have to march up and down your fairways for you to belong!

4. Big or small, private or public, municipal or resort—it doesn't matter what class you are. We all have something to offer.

5. Start slow, take your time. Fill out your initial inventory questionnaire. Important! It seems that many members have not done this task.

6. Questions? Call the Audubon Society of New York State. They are very friendly and more than willing to help.

7. More questions? Call your neighbors, friends or other superintendents (or in this case, assistant). You could avoid some of the mistakes commonly made and make the process easier.

8. Set reasonable goals. Plan your work and then work your plan!

9. Make sure your course official, board of directors and green committee chairman, owners, and/or neighbors support your involvement. You would be surprised to know that not everyone is green-minded, and you may have opposition to your membership or proposed program and/or ideas.

10. Search out members, customers, or neighbors that could help you with your program (resource committee). Also, out-

*(continued on page 30)*

## No Time Like the Present

(continued from page 22)

side help such as co-op extension, nature groups, arboretum and botanical groups, and garden clubs could be potential sources for help and advice.

11. Finally, open your mind and get rid of any misconceptions you may have about this program. This program does not have to be consuming or expensive. Whatever you invest in this program will be well spent, and the rewards will far outweigh the cost.

If there was ever a time to be a part of a group serving a great cause, this is the one to join. As this program grows, our message will get across to those who oppose us, and we can hopefully show our community that we are assets and not detriments to the environment. With the Audubon Society of New York State Cooperative Sanctuary Program, we can convey our message better as a group than if we work alone. Good luck!

John Gurke, C.G.C.S. at Aurora Country Club, offers us some helpful tips in getting started. John has been one of our association's pioneers in this field.

1. Communication is key! Talk over/describe to your board or governing body what it is and how it will affect play (it shouldn't). At this point, stress the positives like buffers around water will keep shots in play, etc., and that the program will help save resources like fertilizer, labor, and pesticides. It can attract wildlife that may include predators for geese. It will be used as a positive PR tool.

2. Identify those out-of-play areas to be naturalized, and map them out.

3. Start writing things down; winter is a good time. Once ideas are on paper, organize and begin

the certification process.

4. Photograph areas before, during, and after conversion.

5. Important! There are no requirements set forth by N.Y.S.A.S., only recommendations. Be creative, and do only what your course will support.

Our third expert is Tim Kelly from the Village Links Golf Course in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Tim is at the head of the class when it comes to environmental concerns. The staff at Village Links has won two national environmental steward awards to go along with their fully certified Audubon sanctuary. Tim has been very instrumental in teaching his entire community how to help our environment.

Tim has prepared a quick outline of steps that may be taken by a MAGCS member to get a basic environmental program established at their golf course:

1. Get your golf facility or club registered with the USGA/New York Audubon Society-Cooperative Sanctuary Program. You will receive initial information after you have registered. This information is useful in starting your own environmental program and as you work to become certified in this program.

2. Set realistic, achievable goals on becoming certified (e.g., completing two out of the seven categories per year). The seven categories when I applied were: wildlife cover enhancement, wildlife food enhancement, water enhancement, water conservation, environmental planning, IPM, and public involvement.

3. Get help from other resources: existing staff, new staff (temporary?), and/or volunteers (e.g., nest box program).

4. Select and establish an effective resource committee.

5. Inform the local news media about the positive things that you and your golf course are doing to help the environment.

6. Apply for the GCSAA Environmental Steward Award. Apply for other local awards. The Village Links won the Brooks McCormick Environmental Award in 1996. It was sponsored by the Conservation Foundation of DuPage County.

7. Finally look at routine operations and make sure that they are done in way that will benefit the environment.

We have heard from three experts who have completed all the necessary projects to fully certify their golf courses. They are willing to help others get involved in the program if any questions arise once you get started. We should all do as much as we possibly can in this venue. The Audubon Society is not only the right thing to do for our environment, but the A.C.S.P. is one of the least expensive public relations you can provide to your golf course. Take the time now while we are in our "off season" to plan your attack on this project and cross it off your list!

Feel free to contact the following with questions concerning joining or complying with the New York State Audubon Society:

The Audubon Society of New York State  
46 Rarick Road  
Selkirk, NY 12158  
Contact: Marla Briggs  
(518)767-9051