

The Winning Team: Audubon International and Golf

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This is another in a series of articles written by members of the MAGCS Environmental Committee.

Are you part of a winning team? Is your successful operation due to your individual efforts or attributable to a group working together for the same goal? What affiliations have you formed to help you in your goal of complete success in the golf course industry? Have you networked with other groups or explored every avenue available to you in this journey? Chances are, you have accomplished all of the previous to be at the level of excellence you are at today.

The one thing I have learned this year, is that you have to know who your friends are and lean on them in times of trouble. In our industry, we have a great pool of friends to rely upon. I have worked in this industry, in various capacities, for more than 23 years and thought I had it all figured out. As always, was I wrong! I have had the opportunity to learn from some of the masters of the turf (Carl and Hans Hopphan, Walt and Wally Fuchs, Greg Johnson and Bill Leith, to name a few), and feel very lucky for the experience. Went through a lot of good years and bad. However, through all these experiences, I have had a host of people willing to help me. I hope everyone who reads this article feels very fortunate for what we have in our Association. It is comforting to dial up the phone and have a multitude of people willing to assist you with a problem. These people want to do it,

As you are probably aware, over the years I have been a strong supporter of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program sponsored by Audubon International (AI). I have pushed, no, shoved, everyone in our Association to at least seek membership in the program.

not for profit, but with a charitable heart. I want to thank all those who have been there for me over the years and I can never say thank you enough for the support.

Boy, what a lead in! Now that I have everyone tearing up, I get to my point.

As you are probably aware, over the years I have been a strong supporter of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program sponsored by Audubon International (AI). I have pushed, no, shoved, everyone in our Association to at least seek membership in the ACSP. As mentioned previously, this is a group that wants to assist us in our industry. No hidden agendas, just guidance. In a world where golf courses are not viewed with the most favorable eye, Audubon International is an organization that wants to help, an ally. This is a program you should involve yourself with, or at

(continued on page 18)

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The Winning Team: Audubon . . .

(continued from page 16)

least support by sending in your \$100 membership fee.

You may be saying to yourself right now, Tod, my course has nothing to offer to AI. I'm a small course with no natural areas or features. We mow corner to corner, or don't have the area, budget or support to offer to such a project. I sympathize with you! I have been down that road. My answer is this: you are right, most courses don't have the potential to develop such outstanding natural areas like Ivanhoe, Olympia Fields, Cantigny or many other courses in the greater Chicagoland area. But you are green! You grow grass, and maintain trees (in some cases), shrubs and flowers that are home to many species of wildlife, even if only squirrels and geese. With the ever-expanding development that surrounds us, golf courses are one of the last havens for wildlife. If properly managed (and most are), any golf course is a great site for wildlife. So why don't you at least belong to this great group, Audubon International, and get as much help as possible to develop your property to its fullest potential. Anything you have to offer is terrific. Just join! (Today!)

Another point I want to emphasize is Illinois' current standing in the U.S. for certified cooperative sanctuaries. I feel very proud to have been associated with one of the first 10 courses in the country to be deemed a certified golf course through the ACSP. Of those first 10, five were from Illinois! Until recently, Illinois had held the lead, but we have fallen behind. Today, AI-ACSP registers 2,101 courses; of those, 201 are deemed certified sanctuaries. Currently, Illinois ranks second in the country with 16 certified golf courses. Sounds great, but we are a distant second


to Florida, with a total of 28 certified golf courses. What's with that? Some interesting notes on other

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states that rank high in number of certified courses: in third place with 10 certified courses is . . .

New Jersey. I was surprised to discover that some larger, more populous states such as Texas (six certified) and New York (seven certified) did not rank higher. Also, California has only six certified courses. Go figure, dude!

We are doing well, but we can do so much better. I know of a lot of courses in the Chicagoland area that could easily, or have tremendous potential to, be certified. With the help of Audubon International and the many certified courses in the area, no excuse exists for not starting the procedure for certification this winter. I want to offer my services (as limited as they are) if anyone has questions.

So—come on guys, let's make a push this winter to regain our lead and show the country once again that we are the environmental leaders we know ourselves to be! Best of luck. 

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