

Make Your Golf Course A Sanctuary

This year, the MAGCS Environmental Committee is working to promote participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf Courses and the annual North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open, which is sponsored by ACSP.

The ACSP is designed to help golf courses take stock of their environmental resources and then develop an environmental plan that is tailored to the specific needs of the course.

Since 1991, the ACSP for Golf Courses has promoted the ideals of ecologically sound land management through education and conservation. Membership in the ACSP has grown to more than 2,100 courses in the United States and Canada. More than 300 of these courses have received certification by completing projects in a series of six categories. Currently, 144 courses in Illinois participate in the ACSP. Of these, 24 have been recognized as Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries. These courses include:

- Village Links of Glen Ellyn
- Aldeen Golf Club
- St. Charles Country Club
- Forest Hills Country Club
- Silver Lake Country Club
- Ivanhoe Club
- Aurora Country Club
- Flossmoor Country Club
- Olympia Fields Country Club
- Pottawatomie Golf Course
- Cantigny Golf Club
- Jackson Park Golf Course
- Arrowhead Golf Club
- Settler's Hill Golf Course
- Skokie Country Club
- Sandy Hollow Golf Course
- Naperville Country Club
- Kemper Lakes Golf Course
- Countryside Golf Course
- The Den at Fox Creek
- Brae Loch Golf Course
- Elgin Country Club
- Bryn Mawr Country Club
- Itasca Country Club

As you can see, the members of the MAGCS are no strangers to the ACSP and the idea of environmental stewardship. As someone who has just started the Audubon program, I have a great deal of respect for the individuals at these facilities who were willing to put forth the time and effort to achieve certified status.

The ACSP is designed to help golf courses take stock of their environmental resources and then develop an environmental plan that is tailored to the specific needs of the course. To accomplish this, you complete a site assessment and environmental plan. Audubon International then assists you with information and planning in six categories:

- Environmental Planning: This stage helps course personnel evaluate the course and current management strategies. You work to define goals and outline objectives.

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Photos by Craig Nowack



Blue heron.

- **Wildlife and Habitat Management:** This involves the management of nonplay areas to provide habitat for wildlife on the golf course, taking into account course location, size and layout.
- **Chemical Use, Reduction and Safety:** Principles of IPM and education of workers and patrons are emphasized.
- **Water Conservation:** Conservation management focuses on increasing irrigation efficiency, reducing irrigated acreage, use of drought-tolerant plant species and recapturing water.



Wood duck.

- **Water Quality Management:** This deals with management of ponds, streams and wetlands. It also emphasizes monitoring of water quality, and proper equipment such as chemical rinsate pads and chemical storage areas.
- **Outreach and Education:** Through outreach, courses work to increase golfer awareness and public understanding of wildlife and the environmental benefits that golf courses have to offer.

Participants in the program have undertaken a variety of projects, including use of native plants, butterfly gardens, recycling programs, nesting boxes, monitoring water quality and prairie restoration. These projects cover all aspects of environmental stewardship.

How you choose to incorporate the projects into your management program is flexible. All decisions concerning the implementation of various projects remains with the superin-

tendent and the course officials. You can choose to seek certification in one category or all six categories.

Or you can simply enroll as a member and complete the site assessment as a means of documenting the environmental resources at your facility.

On May 11, watch the birdie!

Each spring, Audubon International sponsors the North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open. It is held during the first part of May and coincides with the International Migratory Bird Day. This year's event

will take place on May 11. In past years, more than 50 courses nationally have participated in this event. During this one-day event, participants have documented more than 350 different bird species, including several federally threatened or endangered species. These results verify that golf courses play a valid role in bird conservation and wildlife habitats in general.

This year, the Environmental Committee's goals are twofold:

1. To increase participation of MAGCS members in the ACSP at whatever level of participation is best suited for individual facilities.
2. To encourage ACSP members to participate in the North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open. We would like to follow up the event with a press release that would highlight the involvement of MAGCS members.

Membership in Audubon International is \$150 annually. Membership information is available online at www.audubonintl.org or by calling Audubon International at 518-767-9051. Membership application forms will also be available at our monthly meetings. To participate in the Birdwatching Open, you can register online and download rules and information as well as a bird checklist. If you don't have Internet access, contact Jean Mackay at Audubon International, extension 13.

If you plan to participate in the birdwatching event, please contact me so that we can include your information in a follow-up press release. Also, it would be helpful to network and identify sources for volunteers who are experienced birdwatchers.

The ACSP presents a win-win opportunity for the game of golf and the environment. Please take a moment to consider this program and the many benefits that it has to offer.



Shoot That Goose!

With your camera, that is. Have you captured wildlife in action on your golf course? *On Course* wants to publish your photos . . . whether the subject is bird or beast, reptilian or amphibian. Come to think of it, we'd love to see photos of stunning vegetation (a lush display of wildflowers, perhaps) and weather events (looming storm clouds or a stunning sunset), too. When we gather enough submissions, we'll publish a photo gallery and repeat as warranted. Please send your print or slide to the editor at 68 S. Waterford Dr., Round Lake, IL 60073. All submissions will be scanned and returned. Or submit your photo digitally—call Cathy Ralston at 847-740-0758 for technical requirements.