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FRONT COVER

Par-5, 515-yard hole 18 at Idlewild Country Club, where Kurt Sams, CGCS hosts the September golf meeting and MAGCS championship.
(Photo by Jim Trzinski/Trzinski Golf Course Photography)

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

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ON COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Phil Zeinert, CGCS Elgin Country Club

Befriending Technology

Weather! And I thought 1988 was a once-in-a-career drought! All the memories of 1988 have been freshened with this year's drought—wells and ponds drying up, inadequate irrigation coverage and daily hand-watering. Numerous irrigation improvements were made during the 1989 season following the drought of 1988. We shall see if the economy can support this same scenario during the 2006 season. During 1988, I was moving brass quick-couplers from valve to valve, this year I adjusted for ET, soil types, wind, etc. . . . via the irrigation computer program. During 1988, there was one row of valves down the middle that created successive scalloped green areas from tees to the greens. This year, three triangulated and automated rows of irrigation sprinklers uniformly covered all fairways and most rough areas. To say the least, advances in irrigation technology were my friends this summer.

Just as technology is making life easier with regards to irrigation systems, technology has opened some cost savings and opportunities for the MAGCS. The *On Course* magazine is in full color because technology advancements made it affordable. The editorial and graphic content have improved due to improvements with timing due to advancements in technology. Educational presentations at monthly meetings have all the necessary technology available and in good working order because this equipment, hardware and software, is now affordable.

Technology has afforded us the opportunity to better communicate with the membership. Notifications for meetings and other related events are sent via timely e-mails. Sign-ups utilizing the MAGCS Web site home page have made registration a snap. I personally like to see the names of everyone who is going to attend an upcoming meeting by checking the confirmation page. This

communication is relatively inexpensive and represents a huge cost savings compared to paper mail.

Recently, Luke Cella informed the Board of Directors of a Web-based survey service. This service company, Zoomerang, is very affordable, easy-to-use and a key component to communicate effectively with members. As members, we can participate in short, timely surveys to help make our current services better, and to give input on providing additional services or discontinuing others if needed. This use of surveys will rely on participation, and given indications from the first one concerning July meetings, the participation was outstanding. If anyone is experiencing problems receiving information via the e-mails and Internet, please contact Luke Cella so we can get you aboard.





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Reach = Reward

Over time, I have learned to appreciate the tremendous variety of “experts and enthusiasts” right in my own backyard. As superintendents, we sometimes have the opportunity to harness the abilities of others, while helping support their passions. Sometimes just a little reaching out can pay back big rewards!

The best example I can think of is a story about my new friend Ray Feld. Late last summer, I walked into the office to check my voicemail. After sifting through a few messages, I finally got to a message from Ray, the “purple martin enthusiast.” Now **that** caught my attention. Upon returning Ray’s call, I was intrigued to learn that Ray thought I had an ideal habitat for purple martins. Huh . . . imagine that. After he continued to sweet talk me into purchasing a new martin motel, I installed the motel in accordance to Ray’s strict specifications, and waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. As it turns out, we were only advertising for **next year’s** martins. This is, of course, because martins tend to scout for suitable habitat during the fall as they prepare for their long migration. So Ray plugged all the entrance holes in the motel just before winter, cranked the motel to the down position (four feet off the ground) and left it for the winter.

Spring came around and I had to endure snide remarks like, “What do you got in there, mosquitoes?” I had to explain that Ray said the martins didn’t come around until late May or early June, if they were to come at all. I was just hoping that some martins had taken notice of my new motel last fall. As the spring progressed, Ray made some design modifications to the motel and decided it was time to crank up the motel and hope for the best. Before long we had sparrows and tree swallows attempting to move into this highly coveted piece of real estate. If other birds were to colonize the motel prior to the martins’ arrival, the martins would never move in. Ray responded quickly by cranking the motel down and plugging the entrance holes. He then installed two small, single birdhouses within 15 feet of the motel to encourage the tree swallows to nest there instead. Ray also set a number of sparrow traps to keep the sparrows from overrunning the motel. (Sparrows are an extremely aggressive and invasive non-native bird species that have contributed to the decimation of native songbird populations.)

Lo and behold, the tree swallows immediately moved into one of the small adjacent houses, and the pressure from nearby sparrows subsided. Ray then cranked up the motel yet again and opened up some of the nesting compartments for the martins. Not too long after that, I got a call on my cell phone, and it was Ray. We had our first pair of martins! This pair nested successfully, and raised one little martin. We call him Junior. Since then, we have seen many more martin visitors that may come back to join our first pair next year.

The whole point of my story of purple martins and my friend Ray Feld is that I have been enriched by reaching out and welcoming Ray to Cantigny so he could work his martin magic. Ray has an incredible wealth of bird knowledge, and is a tremendous part of our Audubon Sanctuary program—not to mention the fact that he’s just an all-around nice guy. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the art and science of raising martins. It is hard not to enjoy it when all I have to do is ask Ray.

As superintendents, we don’t always have the time to devote to projects like these. In this case, I felt like all I had to do was empower a man with

(continued on page 38)



Ray Feld, purple martin enthusiast, keeps a watchful eye on “Junior.”



Cantigny's purple martins taking flight.



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Park Hills Golf Course: A Case Study for ACSP Outreach and Education

Park Hills Golf Course is located in Freeport, Ill., a small city in northwestern Illinois' Stephenson County about half an hour west of Rockford. Dave Fisher, CGCS has been with the golf course since 1982. The golf course is a 36-hole facility with good topography, plenty of open space and a meandering creek that winds through the property. It is a public golf course with its share of outings, leagues and "regulars." David moved his family to Freeport from his hometown, St. Charles, having worked at St. Charles Country Club first as a student intern from McHenry County College and later as assistant superintendent for two years.



Dave Fisher explains how this prairie habitat unfolded as part of his facility's participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) and the course's eventual certification.



Dave Fisher and a representative for the County Soil Conservation Service explain to the public their cooperative roles as environmental stewards.

Early in his career at Park Hills, Dave made a commitment to be conservative while at the same time improving the golf course. His crew consisted of part-time students and retirees from the community. After many years of developing a good program for the golf course, Dave made a decision to get involved with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Park Hills Golf Course property became an ACSP member in 1998 and was fully certified in all six categories in 2001. Fisher's love for the outdoors and his ability to delegate reinforced his conservative approach and money-saving techniques at an even higher level.

Habitat enhancements are the most obvious improvements in his management scheme as clubhouse windows and other vistas throughout the golf course reveal the rolling hills at Park Hills, showing off many acres of new prairie preserves. Fourteen acres have been returned to Mother Nature and provide habitat for numerous birds, butterflies, bees, rodents and mammals. The changing beauty draws interest and comments from golfing members and friends from the community, especially in May when the lupine are in full bloom.

The program received such widespread acceptance that the Stephenson County Conservation Service and Pheasants Forever from Stephenson County endorsed and provided resources for additional prairie ground. Official tours are given annually to local citizens. The club provides six-person golf carts so those who cannot walk can go out on the grounds to see the prairie; its marvels are not just within reach of able-bodied walkers. Tour-takers listen to representatives from the golf course and the Conservation Service tell stories about the prairie. These tours allow for educational outreach to the community about how to prepare a site for prairie restoration, and care, maintenance and identification of native plant material.

In fact, neighbors to the golf course, Marcia Cox and

(continued on page 8)

Deb Schoeder, have a goal to identify at least one new plant a week. They keep a life list of prairie plant material and a photo album. These two dedicated committee members also can be seen monitoring bird boxes weekly. Their bluebird population has exploded. In 2003 they counted more than 90 fledged bluebirds with just 20 bird boxes on the property! In '04, they had about 50 and felt bad about the lower number. Their enthusiasm and pride are very evident.

In mid-2005, Fisher received notice of recertification in all six categories of environmental commitment. The categories are:

- Environmental Planning
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Chemical Use Reduction and Safety
- Water Conservation
- Water-Quality Management
- Outreach and Education

He welcomed the opportunity to have a site visit from an independent observer because he was sure his compliance guidelines were a model for other golf course properties to pattern. For example, Fisher locks



Tours for the public look at prairie restoration examples at Park Hills Golf Course. This type of public outreach and education is a prime example of how the ACSP works.

down his irrigation pumps during peak-use hours. This guarantees cheaper rates and stabilizes a water-conservation method for the entire golf course. He estimates a savings of more than \$12,000 in electric bills. The pump house is neat as a pin, centrally located and leak-free.

Park Hills Golf Course has a meandering creek throughout the

property. The water quality is quite good as evidenced by the quality of aquatic plants growing in it. However, bank erosion and silting are a never-ending battle. A weir helps keep back the silt, and gabion walls and rip-rap stabilize the steep slopes. This project will take years to complete.

Regarding the category "Chemical Use Reduction and Safety," all



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fuel tanks are properly contained. Rinse-pad outflow is across a large stretch of turf, buffering nitrates from open water. Chemical storage is a state-of-the-art building designated for chemical, fertilizer and spray-rig containment, mixing and storage.

Dave's environmental plan is thorough as he keeps good records of activity and announcements are easily read on bulletin boards and pro shop signage areas. He even has a committee for publications in the local newspaper and quarterly newsletter.

This year is the Park Hills Golf Course's 50th anniversary, and a big part of their heritage is the environmental commitment to the community-owned golf course property.

Each generation of golfers will be witness to native trees and great stands of prairie grass habitats. Each generation of wildlife will be given new life on this Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

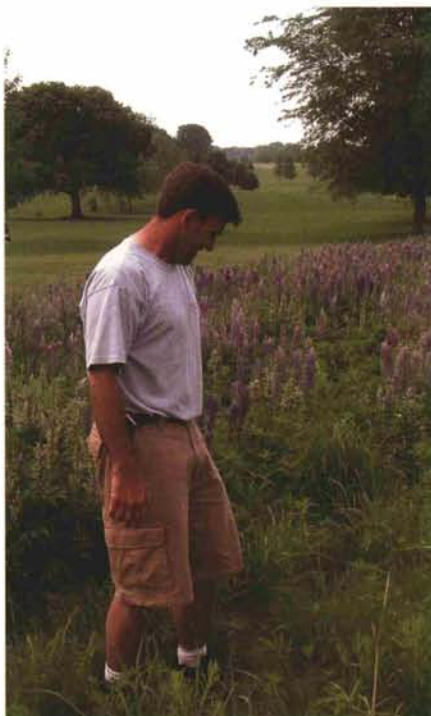


Volunteers Marcia Cox and Deb Schoeder do the bird-box inventory on a weekly basis.

Further, one of their goals is to identify one new species of plant in the prairie habitat every week. They know how many birds have fledged from the nest boxes each year and have a wonderful catalog reference of plant life on the golf course.



An example of erosion control for stream banks.



Fisher looks with pride at the changing prairie.

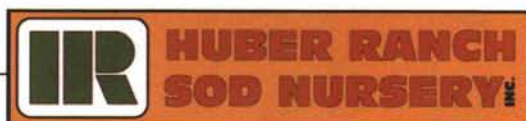
Each week a new species of plants dominates the prairie. In May, the lupine make quite a colorful show from afar.



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