

Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

Not only has it gained support among golf course superintendents, but the USGA has donated funds

BY KIT BRADSHAW

Ron Dodson — founder, booster, educator and ombudsman for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program — has a goal for 1992. He wants 1,000 golf courses in the country as participants in this program by the end of the year. So far, 450 courses have signed up for the program.

Dodson told a group of Florida golf course superintendents who met at John's Island West on June 19 that even with the remarkable success of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program in a little over a year, the Audubon Society is still out on a limb.

"When I left my vice presidential post with the national Audubon Society and went to the New York Audubon Society as president, I wanted to make the Society reach out in a positive way," Dodson said. "This program does this. But because we are the first

conservation or environmental group to cooperate with golf courses to enhance the environment, we've taken our shots from these other groups and they are watching this program closely."

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses allows any course the opportunity to enhance its wildlife habitats, practice sound conservation activities, have environmental planning and utilize effective Integrated Plant Management. The unique part of the program is although the goal is universal — the active environmental enhancement of the golf course — the plan for each course is customized.

Ron Andrews, golf course manager of Grand Harbor in Vero Beach, pointed out that "John's Island West was built in a natural setting, and has great potential in this program. But the best part about the cooperative sanctuary program is that even a course with parallel holes can be a little better environmentally with the program.

"And, the golf course superintendent doesn't have to do all the work," Andrews added. "At my course, I intend to enlist the support of the residents who want to maintain the bluebird boxes, for instance, and have them be part of the program."

Not only has the program gained support among golf course superintendents, but the USGA has donated funds toward the program which enabled Dodson to expand the activities and the staff to promote the cooperative sanctuary program.

Dodson says the involvement of the USGA has been significant.

"The program started when an upstate New York golf course called because they had problems with skunks running on the property. We helped them eliminate the skunk dens, so the skunks moved elsewhere. Through word of mouth, other golf courses contacted us for help in making their courses more conducive to increased wildlife activities without damaging the

course.

"Then, I happened to talk with the USGA, and not only told them about our small successes to that point, but our vision of what could be accomplished with the cooperation of golf courses. We already had programs for schools, businesses and individuals, and we felt golf courses were an excellent place to continue our conservation effort. The

USGA agreed, and in 1991, it made a \$30,000 donation on the condition that I devote a significant portion of my time to developing the program. These funds also provided us with the printed materials to distribute."

Dodson's efforts resulted in 280 courses joining the program last year, and with that success came the need for additional staff. The USGA donated \$100,000 to the program for 1992, 1993 and 1994, Dodson said, which provides for additional staff and printed materials.

Dodson's involvement hasn't stopped with his nearly continual traveling to educate golf course superintendents about the program. He is moving the program forward in several directions. Among these are:

- ◆ The *On Course with Nature* publication, funded with a USGA grant, which will provide an comprehensive ecosystem map and corresponding information about native plants and their benefits in each ecosystem. It will be available in early 1993.

- ◆ A 15-minute video describing the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses which will be distributed to every golf course in the country beginning in August.

- ◆ A expansion of the program for developers and golf course architects before a golf course is built. The foundation of this expanded program are the Audubon Sustainable Resource Management Principles, which cover a variety of areas of conservation and environmental awareness and make them part of



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Ron Dodson, founder, of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program



How to enlist in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

Want to be part of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program? Here's How:

1. Register by sending \$100 to the program in care of Audubon Society of N. Y. State, Inc., Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary, Route 2, Box 121, Selkirk, NY 12158.

2. The ACSP will send you a resource inventory questionnaire, which you will use to provide information on your property. You can augment this inventory with topography maps, photographs, elevation maps, etc.

3. Upon receipt of the resource inventory, the ACSP will review the information, call for clarification, if needed and then provide you with a conservation report that is specific to your golf course. The report will give suggestions and guidelines for environmental enhancement projects that will improve wildlife habitat, conserve water, etc.

4. After receiving the report, you will form a resource committee composed of your staff members, players, citizens in the area, the cooperative extension consultant, etc. This committee will review the recommendations from the ACSP to determine which projects are financially and logistically feasible. When this is determined, you then send the ACSP the list of your committee members and the committee's environmental plan of action.

5. If the committee determines that you want certification, you can obtain it by following the recommendations in seven areas:

- A. Environmental planning
- B. Public involvement
- C. Integrated Plant Management
- D. Wildlife cover enhancement
- E. Wildlife food enhancement
- F. Water conservation
- G. Water enhancement

6. You may work on one or two of the seven areas at one time, and then, as feasible, work for certification in other areas. The implementation of the ACSP suggestions remain with the golf course superintendent and the course officials.

7. For further information, call the Audubon Society of N.Y. State at 518-767-9051.

Florida's 44 members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

Alaqua Country Club	Longwood
Amelia Island Plantation	Amelia Island
Bent Pine Golf Club	Vero Beach
Country Club at Jacaranda West	Venice
Country Club of Florida	Village of Golf
Countryside Executive Golf Course	Clearwater
Deering Bay Yacht & Country Club	Miami
Disney World: Eagle Pines Golf Course	Lake Buena Vista
Lake Buena Vista Club	
Magnolia Golf Course	
Oak Trails Golf Course	
Osprey Ridge Golf Course	
Palm Golf Course	
Don Shula's Hotel & Golf Club	Miami Lakes
El Conquistador	Bradenton
Erral Country Club	Apopka
Feather Sound Country Club	Clearwater
Fiddlesticks Country Club	Fort Myers
Golf Club at Marco	Marco Island
Green Point Golf Resort Community	Eastpoint
Grenelefe Golf & Tennis Resort	Grenelefe
Hawk's Nest Golf Club	Vero Beach
Hole-In-The-Wall Golf Club	Naples
Hunter's Creek Golf Course	Winter Park
Island Country Club	Marco Island
John's Island Club	Vero Beach
Jupiter Hills Club	Jupiter
Lauderhill Golf Course	Lauderhill
Loblolly Pines	Hobe Sound
Loxahatchee Club	Jupiter
Mariott Orlando World Center	Orlando
Martin County Golf & Country Club	Stuart
Matanzas Woods Golf Club	Palm Coast
Meadows Country Club	Sarasota
Oak Tree Country Club	Fort Lauderdale
Oceanside Country Club	Ormond Beach
Old Marsh Golf Club	Palm Beach Gardens
Orange Tree Golf Club	Orlando
Pelicans Nest	Bonita Springs
Pine Oaks of Ocala	Ocala
Pipers Landing Country Club	Palm City
Quail Ridge Country Club	Boynton Beach
Sawgrass Country Club	Ponte Vedra Beach
Sebastian Municipal Golf Course	Sebastian
Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club	Tampa
TPC at Sawgrass	Ponte Vedra Beach

the construction of the course and its buildings. Those developers who cooperate in the program and utilize the staff recommendations for the project will earn Audubon Signature Status.

"We still have obstacles to overcome with the program,"

Dodson told the superintendents. "This ranges from apathy to concern that the Audubon Society will use the information obtained in the course survey to undermine the golf course. There has been the perception that we are sneaks and will use the information to stop permitting. But, as the program grows, and the superintendents become educated about it, I think this program will help change this perception."