

1996 Bird Survey

Wading birds actually prefer golf courses to natural lakes

BY C. ELROY TIMMER

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Inc.
(formerly Environmental Waterway
Management)*

In 1994, 1995 and 1996 our bird studies concentrated on water and wading birds. Those studies concluded that large numbers of these birds utilize our very productive golf courses.

In fact, the results indicate that wading birds often prefer golf course lakes over natural lakes. The bird counts were conducted in February in all three years, except one March survey was included in 1996.

In the 1996 study we attempted to focus on diversity. At each location we required two Audubon counters or experts to identify all the birds on the golf course.

This increase in expertise resulted in additional interesting data, even though it involved a large escalation of time and ability to secure this data. (See the list of participating golf courses).

This quote from Ron Hill, Director of Amelia Island Plantation golf Course Operations, summarizes the goals of the surveys well: "Once again, I recruited the help of Mrs. Carol Wyatt, a resident, to

help with the surveys. "Actually I helped her. Mrs. Wyatt's knowledge was immeasurable. The surveys allowed me an experience which was a great help in a number of ways: It allowed me the opportunity to view the golf course from a new perspective; It was a tremendous learning experience being a novice birder at best. It allowed me to see what a diverse inventory of wildlife and birds in par-

only some portions of the total number of birds are actually observed). The diversity includes 127 species. According to some authors this represents many more species and numbers than generally acknowledged for urban habitats.

This partial list includes some of the uncharacteristic finds.

Perhaps it could be argued that bird habitats are constantly being destroyed, and they are using what remains, struggling to survive. I believe however that golf courses provide:

1. Marginal habitat. This habitat contains small areas of forested land surrounded by open areas and water, adding to the availability of food items, diversity and productivity.

2. A variety of fruit and nut crops. Many forested areas do not naturally contain these often

planted and perhaps exotic varieties of fruit bearing trees and bushes that can be utilized as a welcome food source.

3. Perhaps some freedom from predation. Killdeers are often seen with their brood close to human habitation. This is probably an indication of years of successful breeding, with offspring coming back to the same type of location where they were raised. Except for feral cats and birds of prey, nesting birds may be exmy



One of the four limpkins counted in the 1996 Aquagenix Bird Survey. Photo by Elroy Timmer.

ticular we have at Amelia."

These surveys do not represent all the courses equally, as the golf courses are extremely varied in habitats. Many are more productive per acre than natural areas as detailed in the 1994 and 1995 bird studies.

From Anhingas to Yellowthroats the total number of birds counted in 1996 was 9,965, an average of 554 birds per course, (when counting smaller birds,

empt from natural predation such as snakes, rats, raccoons, opossums and other predators less frequent to city life.

4. A source of food not available in natural sites. Residential bird feeders, scraps from pets, dump sites, exotic fish and even nutrients used on our lawns and green spaces are often channeled into productivity when they reach the waterways.

If birds do not find "bed and breakfast" in the residential areas, I believe they would fly to dinner in more productive, safer areas. Adaptation takes place over a period of years but perhaps birds by their mobility are given an opportunity to adapt more quickly.

Many birds may have found a niche that we have forced on them, and seem to be facing up to the challenges well. To me it's obvious that golf courses are prime habitat and not green deserts that some concerned citizens have alleged.

The habitats we surveyed on the 2,456 acres of the 18 golf courses included 236

lakes covering 439 acres, 583 acres of forests or woodlands, and 78 acres of littoral zones.

Not only do golf courses provide habitats but also nesting opportunities. I have observed areas where least bitterns have been very successful nesting on the golf courses.

Bald eagles, ospreys, and owls are also nesting on our courses. Killdeers often frequent wet golf course sites to raise their young. Least terns are nesting on our roof tops.

Sand hill cranes are raising their young in our back yards. Common moor hens have been successful raising two or three broods every year for several years in my own back yard. Limpkins have been raising their young on Palm Aire golf course for several years, and the list goes on and on.

It is important that we not be complacent but be aware of the needs and impacts that we have on our bird neighbors; important that we think about their needs

AMONG THE SIGHTINGS

- 6 bald eagles
- 101 gray catbirds known for their "creative habits"
- 173 blue-gray gnatcatchers, a forest dweller
- 28 hawks, three species
- 24 glossy ibis
- 150 killdeers
- 23 ospreys
- 97 rufous-sided towhees, a woodland species
- 1020 warblers, eight species
- 136 wrens, three species
- 195 woodpeckers, four species

and long term future impacts we have on them; important to be cognizant of the amount of birds a golf course supports. As we become aware of these factors, we can better know how to manage our environment. I am convinced from the data,

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GOLF COURSE BIRD SURVEY

GOLF COURSES

Species	HR	CR	CL	MP	HW	CK	KG	AL	AP	BI	BM	BC	JH*	CH	LB	DC	RP	PN	TOTAL
Anhinga	11		1	16	4		11			4	12	2	5	3	2		8	1	80
Bittern, Least																	1		1
Blackbird, Red-winged		1		20		2	21	8	14	21	27	19	1	24	1	2	1		162
Bluebird, Eastern						4													4
Bobwhite, Northern												1							1
Bunting, Painted													1						1
Cardinal, Northern		3			2	8	1	55	28	11	5	16	35				2		166
Catbird, Gray		4				9		1		48	7	18	14						101
Chickadee, Carolina								25											25
Coot, American	2	2	1	7		14	57			18	6		54	8		3	10		182
Cormorant, Double crested	24	29	1	4			10	15		11	27	8	5	2	3	4	50	25	218
Cowbird, Brown headed									1										1
Crane, Sandhill	2			2									3						7
Crow, American	5					11		30	45	2	15	1					5		114
Crow, Fish	1	9		14	3		175	18	24	38	8	28	13	19		15	30		395
Dove, Common Ground													5						5
Dove Eurasian Collared																	2		2
Dove, Mourning	4	12		8	3	11	7	18	8	32	30	83	26	11	2	1	15	15	286
Dove, Ringed Turtle	1													18					19
Dove, Rock														19		2			21
Duck, Mottled	16		2	7			21			5	2					5		5	63
Duck, Muscovy		2					1							7					10
Duck, Wood								5											5
Eagle, Bald											3			1	1		1		6
Egret, Cattle	8									2			14	6		1	15	2	48
Egret, Great	3	7	2	4	1	2	9	14		5	5		2	6		1	5	1	67
Egret, Snowy	2	4	2	2			4	1		4	8	1	1	5			8	2	44
Flycatcher, Great crested					1													2	3
Flicker, Northern					1		1			12	3	11	1	1			1		31
Gallinule, Purple														17					17
Gannet, Northern								5							1				6
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray		3		4	5		3	8	3	45	55	25	4	9		5	5		173
Goldfinch								12									1		13
Goose, Chinese														7					7
Goose, Domestic														22					22
Goose, Egyptian	5																		5
Grackle, Boat-tailed	20	4		50			49			2	5	58	8	99		30	15		340
Grackle, Common	10	12				3	12			5	3	36	2	57		5	1		146
Grebe, Pied-billed	5	14	11	10		5	6		3	6	2	9	3	8		1	10	6	99
Gull, Bonaparte's	2													7					9
Gull, Laughing								2	12					7					21
Gull, Ring-billed	8	2					34	8	35	1	4	3		18				3	116
Hawk, Red-shouldered		3		1	1	5	1	2		4	1	3					2	2	25
Hawk, Red-tailed										1	1								2
Hawk, Sharp-shinned										1									1
Heron, Black-crowned Night				3															3
Heron, Great Blue	3	1	2	2	2	1	5	6		1	5	1		17		1	4	1	52
Heron, Green-backed				2		1	5			6	5	2	2	2			13	5	43
Heron, Little Blue	2		4	6		3		1		5	11	7	3	1			2	8	53
Heron Tricolored	1		2	6	1		6			1	2		2	8	2	1	3	3	38
Heron, Yellow-crowned Night								1											1
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated					2												1		3
Ibis, Glossy		10	1	4			2							1				6	24
Ibis, White	61	2		10	4		2					1	1	36		15	38	15	185
Jay, Blue	1	5			4	2		24		11	16	21	18	9		4	3		118
Jay, Scrub														2					2
Kestrel, American	1				3	2	1	1	4	1	3	1	7			3	3	1	31
Killdeer	10	4		20	4	3	12	6	18	22	18	7	4				16	6	150
Kingfisher, Belted		1	2	2		1	1	6	5	1		1		2		1	3		26
Kinglet, Ruby-crowned								12	8										20
Limpkin														4					4
Mallard							10	3						40		1			54
Martin, Purple				1		1		2		2	1		1			6	5		19
Meadowlark, Eastern				4															4
Merganser, Hooded								16	17										33
Merlin																2			2
Mockingbird, Northern	4	1		7	2	9	6	24	18	22	14	40	25	9		4	4		189

Species	HR	CR	CL	MP	HW	CK	KG	AL	AP	BI	BM	BC	JH*	CH	LB	DC	RP	PN	TOTAL
Moorhen, Common	2	10	21	53	5	24	62			21	19	1	10	27	2	5	39	1	302
Oriole, Northern																	3		3
Osprey	1	2				1	2			7		2		2		1	1	4	23
Owl, Great Horned								1									2		3
Parula, Northern					2					1			9						12
Peacock														17					17
Pelican, Brown								25	17										42
Phoebe, Eastern				2		4	2	42	2		3		1	1			2		59
Plover, Black-bellied													1						1
Redstart					1														1
Robin, American	1	2		305		13	3	150	60		2			32			20		588
Sandpiper, Spotted							2			2	1							1	6
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied						1												1	2
Shrike, Loggerhead	2	1		3			4				2	2		2		1	1		18
Skimmer, Black														30					30
Snipe, Common	1		1					2										8	12
Sora							5												5
Sparrow, Chipping						6													6
Sparrow, Sharp-tailed									12										12
Sparrow, Song									10										10
Sparrow, Swamp										4									4
Sparrow, White-throated									2										2
Starling, European	6	9			3					12	18	2		10		5	40		105
Stork, Wood	1	7	1	7					3					1			3		23
Swallow, Tree		5		2500		65			26	30	94			46					2766
Swan, Mute														23					23
Swan, Tundra																1			1
Teal, Blue-winged							31			5	7								43
Tern, Forster's								2		2				22					26
Tern, Royal								4	2										6
Thrasher, Brown								1	2					3					6
Thrush, Hermit						1			2					1					4
Titmouse, Tufted						2		34	14	3									53
Towhee, Rufous-sided		3				2				53	16	22	1						97
Vireo, Solitary		1			1	1		1	2	2	3	2	1				2		16
Vireo, White-eyed		2						2	2		1	1	1						9
Vulture, Black	2	6		4		2				1	4							1	20
Vulture, Turkey	2	3		2	1	12		4		9	5	4		2	2		6	5	57
Warbler, Black-and-white					1			4		1									6
Warbler, Black-throated Green											1								1
Warbler, Orange-crowned									1										1
Warbler, Palm		5		23	1		5			54	15	11	9	7		4	9		143
Warbler, Pine		2		1		6			4	16	5						7		41
Warbler, Prairie											1		3				6		10
Warbler, Yellow										1									1
Warbler, Yellow-rumped		35		1	10	45		125	85	231	75	127	33	19		13	13		812
Warbler, Yellow-throated				1						1	1					1	1		5
Waterthrush, Northern									2										2
Waxwing								15	16							7			38
Widgen, American						1													1
Woodpecker, Downy		2						8	8	3	4	4	2				2		33
Woodpecker, Hairy															1			2	3
Woodpecker, Pileated					1		1	10	1	3		1						3	20
Woodpecker, Red-bellied	1	2		1	2	7	2	33	18	25	15	16	2	2	1	4	8		139
Wren, Carolina			1		1	2		73	36	11	1	4	2	1					132
Wren, House								2	1										3
Wren, Marsh								1											1
Yellowlegs, Greater																		6	6
Yellowlegs, Lesser				1										1				4	6
Yellowthroat, Common		3				3		2	2	6	4	3	1						24
Total Count	231	236	54	3120	71	295	594	868	573	852	603	610	337	755	18	155	456	137	9,965

GOLF COURSE HABITAT DATA GOLF COURSES

Feature	HR	CR	CL	MP	HW	CK	KG	AL	AP	BI	BM	BC	JH*	CH	LB	DC	RP	PN	TOTAL
Number of lakes	17	10	22	15	5	14	23	12	4	13	10	13	12	7	18	7	15	19	236
Total Lake Acreage	20	39	15	28	9	40	43	24	6	22	16	26	6	20	25	30	20	50	439
Forested Acreage	0	0	60	10	40	0	30	6	7	3	35	6	150	20	15	1	200	0	583
Littoral Zone Acreage	0	0	6	3	1	0	9	0	1	22	16	14	2	0	1	1	2	0	78
Golf Course Acreage	110	78	211	196	140	90	90	170	130	85	69	73	180	206	121	137	160	210	2456

A Comment About These Annual Bird Surveys

Participating Golf Courses

- AL Amelia Island Plantation, Links
- AP Amelia Island Plantation, Point
- BI Bonita Bay, Bay Island Course
- BC Bonita Bay, Creekside Course
- BM Bonita Bay, Marsh Course
- CL Calusa Lakes Golf Club
- CH Cleveland Heights G. & C. C.
- CR Collier's Reserve
- CK Cypress Knoll Golf Club
- DC Deer Creek Golf Club
- HR Heritage Ridge Golf Course
- HW Hole-in-the-Wall G. C.
- JH Jupiter Hills Club
- KG Kelly Green G. & C. C.
- LB Lemon Bay Golf Club
- MP Myakka Pines Golf Club
- PN Pelican's Nest Golf Club
- RP Royal Poinciana Golf Club

my observations, existing programs and future programs that we will provide for even greater compatibility between man and the wildlife.

The number of respondents to the studies only strengthens my belief that golf course superintendents are pro-active and are willing to let the facts speak for themselves. The superintendents send in the surveys whether the bird counts are high or low. Superintendents, more than most, shoulder the responsibilities as stewards in their areas of influence.

I want to personally thank all those who have contributed to these bird counts in the past and particularly this year. I knew from 36 years of experience in aquatics, 23 managing aquatics on golf courses, and being a lover of nature, there were a lot of birds on the golf course but I was very surprised what the surveys taught me. I hope it also makes others aware of our creation and our need to be involved in it, to conserve it, and to improve it, wherever we can.

(Editors Note: Participation in these surveys isn't just about getting warm and fuzzy feelings about how great golf courses are as wildlife habitats. As the following comments from Dr. Newman indicate, these surveys and other environmental efforts by golf courses provide hard data to refute unsubstantiated claims, erroneous assumptions and misconceptions. They are proof positive ways to enlighten regulators with the cold hard facts.)

The survey that has been conducted by Elroy Timmer of Aquagenix for the past three years has important applications for the golf course development industry. Recently, federal and state fish and wildlife agencies reviewing applications for new residential/golf course developments have requested additional upland buffers from the wetland jurisdictional line to protect fish and wildlife, particularly wading birds.

These agencies have recommended nondevelopment upland buffers to be greater than 66 feet, which greatly exceeds the normal upland buffers required by local counties and water management districts. These buffers generally range from 15 to 30 feet.

The stated purpose of these additional buffers is to protect the foraging of federally or state listed wading birds such as wood storks (*Mycteria americana*); great egrets (*Casmerodius alba*); little blue herons (*Egretta caerulea*); snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*); white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) and other wildlife. The scientific basis for these recommended buffer widths is literature reviews of studies on the response of wading birds to human activity in the natural environments such as wildlife refuges. The implication is that wading birds are not compatible with the "built" environment such as golf courses.

Timmer's surveys show what every golfer and resident of a golf community knows, wading birds are a common component to ponds, lakes, and drainage ditches of golf courses and residential developments. The presence of these and other wildlife is actually considered an environmental amenity to this "built" environment.

I have been conducting observations on the foraging behavior of wading birds in residential and golf course developments. Wading birds show considerable acclimation to unbuffered human activity while foraging. Certain tangential human activities, including movement of golf carts, automobile traffic, walking and jogging, etc., generally have no effect on nearby foraging wading birds.

Intentional human activity such as directly approaching wading birds may affect certain individual birds more than others, depending upon the type of human activity, the distance from the bird, the presence of buffers such as hedges or fences, and the amount of acclimation which the individual species has developed. Some wading birds may show no effect, some individuals may move away and continue foraging, and others may be disturbed and stop foraging. In spite of this disruption, the foraging site will be used again once the disturbing human activity ceases.

Certain design features (i.e., habitat features) can enhance or diminish foraging for different species. The importance and compatibility of golf courses and residential communities with lakes and ponds for wading bird populations including those considered threatened or endangered should not be underestimated and need to be better understood by wildlife agencies.

James R. Newman, Ph.D., Principal
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**AUDUBON COOPERATIVE SANCTUARY PROGRAM
CERTIFICATION STATUS IN FLORIDA**

Golf Course	Environ Plan	Out & Ed	Wildlife Mgt.	Water Cons	Water Enhance	IPM	Fully Certified
Amelia Island Plantation	10/11/96						
Bear's Paw CC	7/27/94	7/10/95	7/10/95	8/5/94		8/5/94	
Bonita Bay Island Course	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95
Bonita Bay Creekside	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95
Bonita Bay Marsh	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95	11/17/95
Card Sound GC	5/17/96						
City of Cocoa Beach GC	6/13/95	4/19/96	8/6/96	8/18/96	11/17/95	8/18/95	8/6/96
Club at Pelican Bay	8/26/96						
Floridian	11/5/96						
Foxfire Country Club	7/10/95						
Hole in the Wall Golf Club	12/30/92	12/30/92	2/25/93	2/25/93	1/4/94	2/25/93	1/4/94
IGM @ Aquarina	11/11/96						
Lemon Bay Golf Club	11/13/96	11/13/96		11/13/96			
Loblolly Pines	2/22/95	7/7/95	7/7/95	2/22/95	2/22/95	7/7/95	7/7/95
Medalist Golf Club	2/7/96						
Old Marsh Golf Club	3/29/95						
Olde Florida Golf Club	6/24/94	10/23/95	10/23/95	10/23/95	10/23/95	10/23/95	10/23/95
Palm Beach Gardens Municipal GC	12/5/94						
Panama Country Club	9/12/96						
Pelican's Nest Golf Course		9/12/996	12/5/96				
River Hills Country Club	3/25/96			3/25/96		4/27/95	
Riverwood Golf Club	2/3/97		4/20/94				
Royal Palm Country Club	12/2/93			1/13/94			
Royal Poinciana Golf Club	7/3/96	12/27/96	12/27/96	12/27/96	12/27/96	12/27/96	12/27/96
St Lucie West Country Club	10/31/96			1/27/97		10/3/96	
Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club	3/31/93	3/31/93	9/11/92	9/24/92	9/11/92	9/11/92	3/31/93
TPC at Eagle Trace	4/25/95						
TPC at Heron Bay	1/16/97						
TPC at Prestancia	2/3/97	2/3/97					
TPC at Sawgrass	11/16/95	2/1/96	11/16/95	2/1/96	2/1/96		
TPC at Tampa Bay	5/17/96	11/26/96	10/22/96				
Windstar Country Club	12/3/96						
Bradenton Country Club	1/8/97						

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BY ROB KLOSKA

*Golf Course Superintendent
Jupiter Island Club*

How many times did you hear this phrase when you were growing up, "If you give just a little of yourself, you will get a lot in return?" Mother Kloska must have said that a million times (not just to me, I have five sisters and a brother). The standard answer was always, "Yes, mother, sure, I know."

Golf course superintendents, always seem to be on the latter side of that phrase. We are usually the ones giving so much. We are at the beck and call of our members, committees, owners or general managers.

So often, they ask for things that seem to them to be so small, yet it requires large

portions of our time and energy to fulfill their requests.

Recently, I have had the opportunity of being on the former side of that phrase. It started last spring when I got a phone call from Shelly Foy inquiring about my interest in the Audubon School Program.

I was familiar with the Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses from my experience as golf course superintendent at the Champions Club at Summerfield.

In 1994, we became the second Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Course, behind Collier's Reserve.

Getting the Jupiter Island Club into the Audubon program was one of my goals for the upcoming year. Shelly asked me if I would be interested in "adopting"

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Hobe Sound Elementary School.

She was very clear that this would not be a drain on my time. Initially, it would be about four to five hours one day a month.

Hobe Sound Elementary School has an HSE Day once per month. HSE, the school initials, has become Helping Save the Environment and is the school theme. On these days the entire student body, faculty, staff and community volunteers participate in a number of activities from weeding beds, planting gardens, composting, mulching and environmental education projects.

Shelly knew that I had the resources to donate trees to the school's plant enhancement efforts. The club graciously donated 14 Royal Palm trees to be planted by the 5th grade.

My first HSE day came, and I spent time planting trees with the 5th grade and staking sunflowers with the kindergarten class. I have been back almost every HSE Day since.

I never expected this to blossom into

the relationship I have with the school today. I look forward to HSE Days and helping Shelly plan activities for upcoming months.

In addition to the Royal Palm trees, we have helped plant a pine tree nursery, donated mulch and other materials needed for HSE Days, loaned needed equipment, improved the irrigation system, and have a list of HSE Day projects that will take us well into 1998.

Yet, it really does not ask that much of my time. Activities are scheduled well in advance and a majority of the work occurs when I can afford the time. This has been an extremely rewarding experience, and I urge you to become involved if you are asked.

The schools need your experience and resources more than your time.

There are many projects that a superintendent can contribute to just by reviewing plans or surveying a site to give suggestions.

Any help we can give is always appreciated. The members of the Jupiter Island

Others work with schools

If you are interested in learning more about how golf courses in Florida are working with schools, here is a list of superintendents you can call:

George Coleman, Lost Lake Golf Club, 561-220-4833

Darren Davis, Olde Florida Golf Club, 941-351-4441

Adam Feltman, The Champions Club, 561-223-5590

Tim Hiers, Collier's Reserve, 941-597-7063

Rob Kloska, Jupiter Island Club, 561-546-1184

Bill Lanthier, Mariner Sands Country Club, 561-283-3644

Roy McDonald, Hobe Sound Golf Club, 561-546-7243

Craig Weyandt, Yacht & CC of Stuart, 561-283-0199

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RUB OF THE GREEN

What's In A Name?

Since we ran a picture of some of the old mowers and equipment from St. Andrews in this issue, I thought it might be appropriate to have a little quiz on the old names for golf clubs. The number 1 wood is still called the driver by most players. Match the club on the left with its modern day counterpart on the right. Answers on page 83.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| 1. Baffy | a. 2 wood |
| 2. Brassie | b. 3 wood |
| 3. Cleek | c. 4 wood |
| 4. Jigger | d. 5 wood |
| 5. Lofter | e. 3 iron |
| 6. Mashie | f. 4 iron |
| 7. Mid Mashie | g. 5 iron |
| 8. Niblick | h. 8 iron |
| 9. Spoon | i. 9 iron |

Club support my efforts and are even allowing us to hold a fund raiser at our Beach Club for Hobe Sound Elementary School's Audubon programs.

This is a program that your membership or owner should be very interested in. It brings a lot of positive image to a club.

Other local superintendents — Bill Lanthier, Roy McDonald, Adam Feltman and Craig Weyandt — are enjoying the same satisfaction that I am from being involved with local schools. I'm sure that the same holds true for them. They are giving a little, and getting a lot in return.

Thanks, Mother Kloska, for the sound guidance.

A note from the principal...

"Not only has Rob been an integral part of our involvement with the Audubon Co-operative Sanctuary Program, but he has also become a contributing member of our

School Advisory Council. He assists the school in completing the state mandated School Improvement Plan and has provided leadership in the area of campus beautification and development. We are extremely grateful to Rob and the Jupiter Island Club whom he represents."

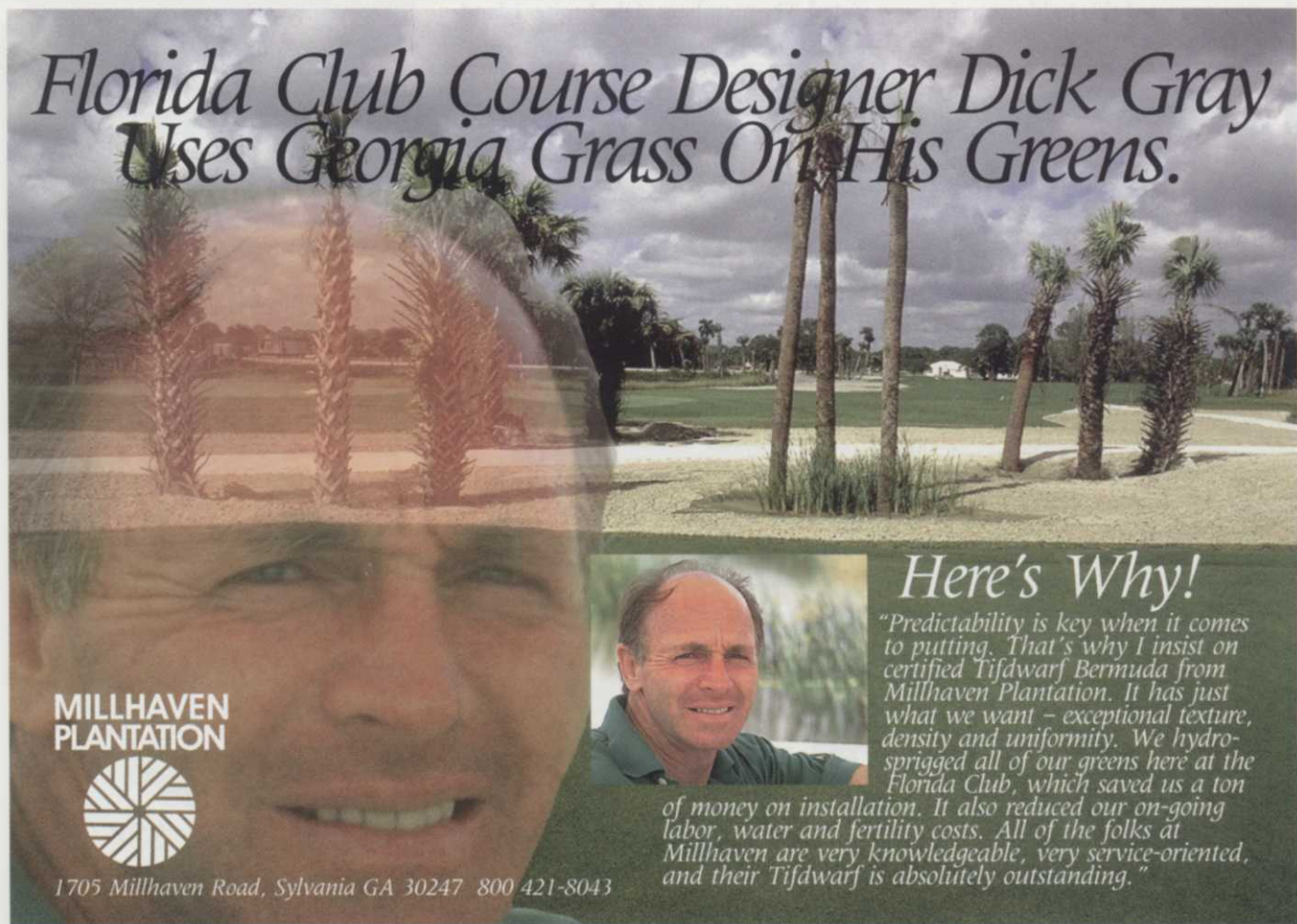
Don Merritt, Principal,
Hobe Sound Elementary School

...And the teacher

"It's so much fun to watch Rob interact with the kids. His enthusiasm is contagious to both teachers and students. He is always there for us when he says he is going to be. We can rely on him to follow through with all of our planned projects. He is great to work with and is a teacher to all of us."

Sandy Pisano
5th Grade Teacher
Hobe Sound Elementary School

Florida Club Course Designer Dick Gray Uses Georgia Grass On His Greens.



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