

Stewardship Notes

# FIFTY in FIVE

By Shelly Foy

Audubon International's "Fifty in Five" campaign was designed to get 50 percent of all golf courses in the U.S. to become members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses within the next five years.

Let's see, if there are more than 17,000 golf courses in the U.S., and only 2108 are currently enrolled in the program - or only 13 percent - it leads to the question, "Can this be done?" Absolutely! However, it will take work from a lot of people to make it happen.

Back in February at the GCSAA Conference & Show in Atlanta, Catechee Golf Club in Hartwell, Ga. hosted AI's first International Environmental Leadership Summit. Catechee is an Audubon Signature course designed by Mike Young, a long-time Georgia friend.

This summit was designed to put together a Golf Advisory Council of influential members of the golf industry. According to Kevin Fletcher, AI's director of programs and administration, "The Golf Advisory Council's job is to lend industry support for AI's environmental education and outreach efforts, while opening new doors and creating new ways of making environmental stewardship the norm in the golf industry". There are currently more than 35 members of the Golf Advisory Council and they include golf course superintendents, architects, owners, manufacturers, distributors, golf media, association representatives and educators.

One goal identified so far is to document the business value of ACSP affiliation. Does it save you money, and how? Another goal is to explore the possibility of creating business incentives. For instance, is it possible to receive supplier



Joining the ACSP program provides a simple plan for documenting and getting recognition for the environmentally friendly things courses are already doing. Photo by Joel Jackson.

discounts for ACSP members and would it be possible to get reduced insurance rates?

The "Fifty in Five" campaign is ambitious, with very high goals. However, it is pretty much a given that without something to strive for, no one would ever get anywhere.

A year ago, the Delaware State Golf Association was the first to decide to step up to the plate. They met with the Delaware GCSA and agreed to fund membership of all of the Delaware golf courses into the ACSP. Granted, there are only 30-plus golf courses in the state, but they did it. Curt

Riley, executive director of the DSGA said, "There is no better way for golfers in the state to keep up-to-date with the latest programs to protect and enhance wildlife and the environment. We are willing to continue this funding each year and hope that other states join us."

Okay, so Florida has more than 1300 golf courses, which is significantly more than 30, but when has that ever stopped our Florida golf industry when it comes to taking the lead?

Joel Jackson recently took the time to break down the Florida ACSP membership by FGCSA chapters. Joel presented this information at the FGCSA board meeting in May and asked everyone to take the information back to their chapters and encourage all non-ACSP chapter members to join the program.

So, just how easy would it be for the FGCSA to participate in the "Fifty in Five" Campaign? Let's take a look.

When you break a big project into smaller pieces, it doesn't seem as hard any more. If each chapter recruited only a few ACSP members a year over the next four years, the FGCSA will have successfully accomplished the "Fifty in Five" goals.

### Ideas To Increase Chapter Participation In The Acsp

1. Write a letter to all non-ACSP chapter members encouraging them to join the program. The information Joel provided at the board meeting lists every ACSP member by chapter.

### FGCSA Participation in ACSP

Chapter	# Members	# ACSP Members	Percentage ACSP	Needed for 50%	Add Per Year
Everglades	63	48	76%	15 for 100%	4
West Coast	52	21	40%	5 new members	1-2
Central Florida	101	37	37%	14 new members	3-4
Calusa	44	16	36%	6 new members	2
Seven Rivers	37	13	36%	6 new members	2-3
Treasure Coast	78	28	36%	11 new members	3-4
Suncoast	59	17	29%	13 new members	3-4
North Florida	62	15	20%	16 new members	4
Coastal Plains	10	2	20%	3 new members	1-2
South Florida	81	16	20%	25 new members	6-7
Palm Beach	119	20	17%	40 new members	10
Ridge	39	6	15%	14 new members	3-4

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Numbers are best approximations based on Class A & B member names. Lifetime and Class C names were omitted during member counts per chapter. There may be some duplication or incorrect listing depending on dual chapter membership, or names on ACSP list but not in FGCSA Directory. This gives an overall snap shot plus or minus a few percentage points.*

2. Appoint one of your board members, or members, to give an ACSP membership update at each chapter meeting.
  3. Have the ACSP for Golf Courses as one of your monthly chapter educational programs. Speaker ideas:
  4. USGA Staff - John or Shelly Foy, Todd Lowe
  5. AI Staff - just give them a call (518) 767-9051
  6. AI's Florida Stewards (see list on sidebar)
  7. Consider incentives for new ACSP members, for example offer a reduction in chapter dues for one year, etc.
  8. Promote existing and new members in your chapter newsletter and at monthly meetings.
  9. Encourage ACSP members to write articles about their environmental programs and projects in your newsletter, or invite them to make five-minute presentations at monthly meetings. A side benefit is the more involved and comfortable your members feel about writing or making presentations at meetings, the more likely they are to become involved in other things.
  10. Put articles in your newsletter about the ACSP. But don't reinvent the wheel! AI and the USGA have information on their websites that you can copy into your newsletters. USE THEM!  
www.audubonintl.org and www.usga.org
  11. Free Meeting or Event registration: Join the ACSP and come to the next golf outing for free, etc.
- Bottom Line: Be Creative!

**Taking the Plunge**

After 11 years of working with this program, I will tell you that you have three steps that you need to take to really get started.

**1. Join the Program.** This is the easiest step. Call me at 772-546-2620 or e-mail me at sfoyl@usga.org and I will mail you a membership application. You can also join on-line at www.audubonintl.org/store/memberships.acsp

**2. Gain Support** from golfers, members, club officials. Here again, don't try to re-invent the wheel. There is a ton of information on AI's Web site that you can download and use for your club newsletters, etc. Please note the sample memo from

SAMPLE MEMO

To: All staff  
 From: Project Manager  
 RE: Participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses

We have recently decided to get involved in an exciting environmental improvement program for our golf course. The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) provides information, guidance, and support to help golf courses conduct proactive environmental projects that benefit people and the environment. We have many sound environmental practices in place already and this program will help us expand upon these and gain recognition for our efforts.

The program addresses five key environmental areas: Wildlife and Habitat Management, Chemical Use Safety and Reduction, Water Conservation, Water Quality Management, and Outreach & Education. Our first step is Environmental Planning. During the next month, we'll be filling out a Site Assessment and Environmental Plan to tell Audubon International staff about our organization and the types of projects we want to pursue. They will then have a better sense of who we are and what our goals are.

Once we have implemented a variety of projects in each environmental component, we can apply to become a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. This exemplary distinction is a national recognition of environmental excellence bestowed on organizations that are taking a leadership role in conservation projects. We believe we can achieve certification within the next year - but we need everyone's involvement to achieve success!

As we begin this program and start the planning process, we welcome your input. We will be hosting a short information meeting on (Date/Time) for all interested employees, members. If you have ideas to share or just want to hear more about the program, please come!

Environmental quality is important to our golf course. We hope you'll support this effort every step of the way.

**Common Myths About ACSP**

There are a number of "myths" and misconceptions about the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP). Here is a short list of these common myths along with the correct information in response to each of these them.

**Myth #1: Being in the ACSP is too difficult, and it's too tough to get certified.**

It is not difficult, and you may already be taking actions that can lead to certification. Often, members look at the entire certification process instead of simply taking it one step at a time. Focus on fulfilling the Site Assessment and Environmental Plan. When a member gets through that first step, rather than worrying about all of the steps at once, they will be more likely to become invested in the program.

**Myth #2: Our course won't be able to join or work towards certification; we don't have the staff, money, or time.**

Any existing golf course can join and work towards earning the Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary designation. A course doesn't have to have lots of acreage or habitat to get certified; it just has to practice and document good environmental management, and we're here to help. Likewise, ACSP certified golf courses range from small nine-hole facilities and lower-budget public courses to country clubs, high-end resorts, and PGA facilities.

**Myth #3: We're not ready to go the distance (i.e. the certification material must be sent in all at once and be perfect in order to get certified).**

The ACSP is not like a test and your certification request is not like a paper handed in to be graded. Instead, we work with you to find ways to meet certification guidelines based on the unique strengths and weaknesses of your site. We're here to help, not create roadblocks.

**Myth #4: Due to our golf course policy, there is no way we could ever have children tour our golf course/ put up nest boxes/naturalize all our shorelines, etc., so we cannot get certified.**

Out of all the Standard Management Practices that Audubon International would like to see on every certified golf course, we know that some may not be applicable to a given situation, especially in the Outreach and Education category. That is why the ACSP is a flexible program. If there are any questions about suggested or required projects, please contact us.

*Continued on opposite page*

AI's "Guide to Environmental Stewardship" on the Golf Course that you can use for your newsletter or club mailing. AI also has PowerPoint presentations you can use, all you have to do is ask. Call an AI Florida Steward (listed above) or USGA staff member to make a presentation to your membership or to your Green Committee.

**3. Take the First Step** toward certification. After joining the program, everyone starts with step one: Site Assessment and Environmental Plan. Taking it right from the Certification Handbook: "The Site Assessment and Environmental Plan are

resources and current conservation practices and develop a plan of action to guide your stewardship efforts. After you complete this step, we will also get to know your course and be able to work more closely with you to implement conservation projects on your golf course."

### Part 1: Site Assessment

This form is designed to tell us about your golf course property and its significant resources. By filling out information regarding turf, natural areas, gardens and water features, you will

golf course landscape.

Typical questions:

- Number of holes
- Number of members
- Number of rounds/yr
- Number of golf maintenance staff
- Length of golf season
- Estimates of number of acres of turf surfaces, gardens, ponds and lakes

People, there are some fill-in-the-blanks and a lot of check boxes. Believe it or not, it is okay to estimate or maybe even leave it blank. AI is just

## Common Myths About ACSP

**Myth #5: There is no way we will ever be able to afford a new irrigation system; a \$40,000 recycling equipment wash pad; have an aerial photograph taken of the course, etc, so we cannot get certified.**

These are a few of the many projects that we have heard people tell us they need to complete to get certified. This is simply not true. Once again, if there are any questions about suggested or required projects, please contact Audubon International. We can also send you a list of the Standard Management Practices that we prefer to see on every golf course.

**Myth #6: An environmentally managed golf course is a brown golf course.**

We understand that in order to have a playable course, chemicals will be used. We do not require that you stop these practices outright. Rather, we look to help you manage a playable course with as little chemical input as possible. Working on certification in the ACSP can help you reduce the amount of chemicals needed (which can save you money), and reduce the adverse environmental impact from their use and application (i.e., runoff and water quality). Likewise, 54 members of the ACSP and the Audubon Signature Program were ranked among America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses by *Golf Digest* in 2002. The list's top ten included six ACSP participants, two of which are certified.

**Myth #7: I already have too much to do.**

Joining the ACSP and working on certification through onsite projects can be a rewarding experience. Our most recent Managed Lands Survey confirmed this fact with 99 percent of golf superintendents responding that job satisfaction had improved (49 percent) or at least been maintained (49 percent) since joining the ACSP. (You can get PDI Class A and CGCS CEUs from GCSAA for completing these projects as well)

*Continued on following page*

# Bring Forth the Wonder

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**Part 2: Environmental Plan**

This form will help you evaluate your current environmental management practices and determine appropriate conservation projects for your golf course. It includes goals, objectives, and environmental practices that safeguard and enhance the quality of the environment."

It is simply check-off boxes! Read each item and check: Yes, Partial, No, or Planned Projects.

Under "Planned Projects," all you have to do is list a proposed start and completion date if you are currently working on or plan to work on the listed project.

Let me "let you in" on a little secret here about the goals and objectives of the Environmental Plan. You are already doing the majority of these things and have been for years - it is the nature of your job. The things you will check "No" to are the things you really should be doing. The Environmental Plan is as much for you as it is for AI staff. It won't take a rocket scientist to immediately see your strengths and

**The Audubon Steward Network - Florida**

**Shelly Foy**, USGA Green Section, 772-546-2620, sfoya@usga.org

**Bob Karnes**, superintendent, Osprey Ridge Golf Course, 407-824-2886, robert.karnes@disney.com

**Charles Buddy Keene**, superintendent, Gainesville Golf & CC, 352-376-8174, ckeeneII@aol.com

**Jeff Klontz**, superintendent, Country Club of Florida, 561-732-8317, suptklontz@aol.com

**Todd Lowe**, USGA agronomist, 941-828-2625, tlowe@usga.org

**Donald Merritt**, principal, Jensen Beach Elementary School, 772-219-1555, meritd@martin.k12.fl.us

**Lynne Page**, compliance coordinator, The Habitat, 321-676-6125, Lynepage@aol.com

**Matt Taylor**, superintendent, Royal Poinciana Golf Club, 941-261-4987, matt@rpgolfclub.com

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**Fred Yarrington**, member, Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Club, 239-261-6317, flyarrington@aol.com

weaknesses.

One thing that I repeatedly tell superintendents is, "You do not have to do all of this yourself." That's why you are the boss and get paid the big bucks. Dole it out! Delegate!

If you are too busy, no worries.

If you have an office assistant, assistant superintendent, irrigation technician, or an IPM person, make certification in the ACSP a part of their yearly job evaluation. The goals are measurable. Give them a set time to complete each section and don't forget to set up a regular time to go over the certification information with them and offer assistance. After all, you are the person that should know more about the property than anyone.

Offer an incentive: a day off; pay for them to attend workshops; give them an extra \$100 bonus; etc.... Be creative!

Don't have enough staff? No Worries.

Find a golfer or member who is interested in the program and give that person the Certification Handbook. What about your Beautification Committee or your Green Committee? For goodness sakes, don't overlook the Resource Advisory Committee you are going to form to help you with this! Again, don't just dump it on someone and forget about them. Meet regularly and offer suggestions!

Some other creative way to "Get it Done"

- Check with a local college or high school to see if they have a student(s) interested in helping out.
- Find a university staff person like Jan Weinbrecht, UF/IFAS, who has a lot of experience working with golf courses on the ACSP Certification.
- Your spouse or significant other might relish the opportunity to spend a few hours a week with you. This would give them the opportunity to be a part of and learn more about what you do.
- Don't forget community resources. Ornithologist George McBath, Naples, works with many golf courses in Florida.

Just remember that the key to success with this program is in the value of the education and outreach. This is a great tool to teach your staff, course officials, and golfers/members that golf and the environment can co-exist, and that the programs and projects you implement are important and do make a difference.

For anyone who has to ask the ques-

tion, "What's in it for me?" my advice is don't join the program, it's not about you. It's about working to ensure that the golf industry is regarded as an environmental asset. It's about sensibly protecting the use of the products we rely on to manage turf. It's about making sure the history of golf stays intact. It's about making sure the world is a better place for your friends and family, and it's about feeling good about yourself and knowing that you are personally doing the right things for the environment.

As always, feel free to call or e-mail me you comments!

## IFAS Study Says Water Birds Benefit from Golf Course Ponds

*By Amy Gravina*

Golf course ponds significantly enhance food sources, shelter and habitat for resident and migratory water birds, according to a recently completed two-year study conducted by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Nine championship golf courses within four master-planned communities being developed by The Bonita Bay Group were included in the study that involved on-site monitoring of 12 Southwest Florida golf courses.

"The study was developed to evaluate the extent to which created wetlands within golf courses are used as habitat by resident and migratory water birds," said Dr. Martin Main, wildlife ecologist and assistant professor at the University of Florida, the principle investigator in the study. "As increasing human pressures continue to reduce the amount of wetland acreage nationwide, we wanted to know if created wetlands would become increasingly important as alternative habitats to wetland-dependent species."

LeAnn White, the co-principle investigator, conducted bird counts in the field and monitored 183 golf course ponds. "I did eight field surveys January through April in 2001 and 2002 and identified a total of 42 species in six categories," she

### Common Myths About ACSP

**Myth #8: My golfers are the worst golfers in the world; too particular; too uptight; etc., and will never accept the changes I would have to make to become a certified course.**

We have many success stories of superintendents and assistants who have successfully educated their members and golfers on the ACSP. Once golfers understand why certain steps are being taken (i.e., grass is being kept higher around ponds and streams in order to buffer chemical runoff), they are likely embrace these changes. That is why Outreach & Education is a part of the certification process. Once again our Managed Lands Survey confirms this with superintendents reporting that golfer satisfaction had either improved (66%) or been maintained (34%) since their course joined the ACSP.

Note: Please use these simple "myth-breakers" as a way to reduce the barriers and get others involved in Audubon International's Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. If there are other "myths" that you need to answer, please let us know at 518-767-9051 ext 12, or via email at acss@audubonintl.org.

The USGA encourages all golf courses to participate in the ACSP for Golf Courses. We feel so strongly about the program that for the past 11 years we have given AI \$100,000 a year for program development and implementation, which is over \$1 million. I can tell you from experience that the USGA is a fairly conservative organization and we would not be supporting this program if we did not believe in it 100 percent.