

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

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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.

said - aerial, wading, and diving birds, ducks, moist soil foragers and open vegetation waders. The results show golf-course ponds benefit wading birds in several ways:

- provide permanent sources of water, which is critical during dry spells;
- reintroduce water and food sources for indigenous water birds in areas that once supported wetland areas, such as land used for agriculture;
- add water bodies to areas where none existed before;
- provide substantial food sources and foraging areas for all categories of water birds studied;
- potentially limit human disturbances of feeding and habitat areas.

The nine championship golf courses in The Bonita Bay Group's family of master-planned communities that were part of the study are Bonita Bay Club West's three courses designed by Arthur Hills; Bonita Bay Club East's two off-site golf courses designed by Tom Fazio; The Club at TwinEagles' Talon golf course co-designed by Jack Nicklaus and Jack Nicklaus II; and The Club at Mediterra's South Course, each an Audubon International Signature Cooperative Sanctuary or Cooperative Sanctuary Program certified golf course. In addition, two championship golf courses in The Brooks were part of the study - Spring Run Golf Club and Copperleaf Golf Club's golf courses, both designed by golf course architect Gordon Lewis.

Three additional Southwest Florida golf courses that are not Audubon participants were also chosen: Gateway, Burnt Store Marina and Wildcat Run.

"Bonita Bay Club West's Marsh golf course was the only one in the study that had a bird rookery," White said. The Club at Mediterra's South Course was the only property to host a population of hooded mergansers, an uncommon duck species rarely found in Southwest Florida.

According to Main, water birds travel great distances to find food, and the surface area of golf-course ponds aids the birds to locate sources. "The information gathered during the study demonstrates that golf courses will be an integral part of sustaining wildlife in the future."

The results of the UF/IFAS study are being used to draft recommendations about how to make the ponds even more productive in areas such as slope of the banks, water depth, vegetation type and density, and surrounding landscape features.

"The Bonita Bay Group has been a partner in the Council for Sustainable Florida since it formed in 1994, and they share our mission to promote best sustainable practices and encourage others across the state to implement them," said Executive Director Sharon Cooper. "When our partners are doing the right thing, and those practices are profiled and visible so other companies can learn, it's a great way to help ensure our resources will be here for future generations."



A UF/IFAS study documents that golf course water bodies are great habitats for waterfowl and wading birds. Great White Heron on the Copperhead GC at the Innisbrook Resort. Photo by Joel Jackson.

The Bonita Bay Group contributed \$10,000 in grant money toward the two-year study. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the United States Golf Association are also funding the study.

"The Bonita Bay Group is very happy to support and be part of the UF/IFAS study," said Dennis Gilkey, president/CEO of The Bonita Bay Group. "Our company is built on a foundation of environmentally responsible development, and we seek out opportunities that will allow us and our peers to do an even better job of being good stewards of the land. We thought the study was one of those opportunities." In 2000, The Bonita Bay Group earned an Outstanding Performance Award,

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the CSF's highest recognition, for Bonita Bay, the company's flagship community. The Brooks Commons Club Beach Club earned the top award in its category as a turtle-friendly amenity during the 2002 Sustainable Florida annual award competition.

This Tournament is Strictly for the Birds

By Jean McKay, Director of Educational Services Audubon International

An experienced team of bird watchers at Olympia Fields Country Club was up and out at 6 a.m., scouting for birds in the oak woodlands, restored prairies, and brushy areas of the 36-hole private golf course in Olympia Fields, Ill. Led by Marianne Hahn, Linda Radtke, Penny Kneisler, and Marlys Oosting, and fueled by sweet rolls and electric golf carts, the group was on a mission: to identify as many bird species as they could during this year's North American Birdwatching Open, hosted by Audubon International.

Birdwatching teams from 82 golf courses participated in the sixth annual North American Birdwatching Open on Saturday, May 10. Collectively, they identified 319 species in the 24-hour event. The average number of birds sighted per course was 41, with a range from 8 to 94. The results provide a snapshot of bird activity on golf courses at the height of bird migration in May.

"Golf courses offer much more than golf," explains Joellen Zeh, Staff Ecologist for Audubon International. "Non-play areas, which can account for 40 percent or more of a golf course, often consist of woods, meadows, and wetlands. These areas provide habitat for numerous species of birds."

Florida Courses and Bird Counts

Amelia Island Plantation	78
Heritage Pines GC	62
Hammock Dunes Club	60
Waterlefe G&RC	53
River Hills CC	48
Colony G&CC	48
Twin Eagles CC	47
IGM-Aquarina	47
Bonita Bay Island GC	46
Indian River Club	44
Majors GC	43
Bonita Bay Creekside GC	42
Royal Poinciana GC	41
IGM-Habitat GC	41
LaPlaya GC	38
Bonita Bay Club East	37

The early bird catches the worm, and the early birder gains a great advantage in seeing and hearing birds when they are most active. Mark Chant was also out at 6 a.m. to search Aspetuck Valley Country Club in Weston, Conn. In four hours, he listed 68 bird species. Across the country at Meadowood Napa Valley in Mt. Helena, Cal., Jim Root combed the golf course throughout the day and discovered 69 species. Among his most satisfying finds were six different species of swallows and six species of woodpeckers, including his favorite, the Pileated Woodpecker.

Experience also counts in birding, and many courses took the opportunity to introduce themselves to local bird clubs and invite them to see just how many birds can be found on golf courses

"What a great time! We had 35 people come out, including eight volunteers from Manatee County Audubon and Sarasota Audubon," wrote David Williamson, superintendent of Waterlefe Golf & River Club in Brandenton, as he turned in his results. "We found 10 birds that were not on our list previously (the course has tracked 91 species in all) and counted 53 species total for the day. That's fantastic considering our migrating birds are almost all gone this time of year."

In the end, birders know that perseverance pays off too. Undeterred by cold, rain, and a mid-morning thunderstorm, the team at Olympia Fields logged a full 11-hour day of birdwatching and turned in a list of 94 species to rank first in the friendly competition. Close on their heels - just three species shy - were birdwatchers at Eagles Landing Golf Course in Berlin, Md., who have ranked first for the past three years.

"That was a big surprise with all of the activity here getting ready for the U.S. Open," says Dave Ward, CGCS. "There are trucks and tents and guys hauling equipment all over, but the habitat is still there - and that's what is most important."

As those who participated in the Birdwatching Open can attest, getting to 90 species in one day on a single property is no easy feat. A diversity of vegetation and habitats is critical. Birders at Olympia Fields identified among their 94 birds: 22 species of warblers and five species of vireos, as well as numerous wading birds, swallows, and sparrows.

"We had so much fun doing it," says Marianne Hahn, "we just like the whole idea of providing good habitat. Our experience at Olympia Fields shows you can have all kinds of activity and still live with nature. You can do this in your yard and in your community and make the world a better place."

Best of the 2003 Birdwatching Open

Many birds migrate along fairly predictable routes known as flyways. These follow major rivers, coastlines, and mountain ridges. In addition to highlighting this year's highest ranking golf courses, we've divided our "2003 Best of" list along migratory flyways to account for regional variation, particularly in the Southern Zone (Florida



Florida led the nation in the number of courses participating in the 2003 Birdwatching Open sponsored by Audubon International. Roseate Spoonbill at The Moorings Club in Vero Beach. Photo by Craig Weyandt.

and the southern portion of Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Texas) where most migratory birds have already left by May 10th.

For additional information and maps of migratory flyways, go to <http://www.pacificflyway.gov/About.htm>. The site has excellent flyway maps that you can download. For a complete list of participants, visit our website at www.audubonintl.org/projects.

Best of the Birdwatching Open- Overall

- Olympia Fields Country Club, Olympia Fields, IL, 94 bird species
- Eagles Landing Golf Course, Berlin, MD, 91 bird species
- Gull Lake View Golf Club, Augusta, MI, 80 bird species

Best of the Atlantic Flyway

- Eagle's Landing Golf Course, Berlin, MD (91 species)
- Aspetuck Valley Country Club, Weston, CT (68)
- IGM - Marlborough, Upper Marlboro, MD (66)

Best of the Mississippi and Great Lakes Flyway

- Olympia Fields Country Club, Olympia Fields, IL (94)
- Gull Lake View Golf Club, Augusta, MI (80)
- Heritage Bluffs Public Golf Club, Channahon, IL (65)

Best of the Central Flyway

- Lake Quivira Golf Course, Lake Quivira, KS (79)
- Shadow Glen Golf Club, Olathe, KS (67)
- Prairie Dunes Country Club, Hutchinson, KS (42)

Best of the Pacific Flyway

- Meadowood Napa Valley, St. Helena, CA (69)
- Crystal Springs Golf Course, Burlingame, CA (63)
- Alta Sierra Country Club, Grass Valley, CA (32)

Best of the Southern Zone

- Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island, FL (78)
- Heritage Pines Golf Club, Hudson, FL (62)
- Whispering Pines Golf Club, Trinity, TX (61)