

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)