



White Pelicans, cormorants, wood storks, herons, egrets and ducks are regular residents at Orchid Island. Photo by Joel Jackson.

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Start with your members!

By Joel Jackson

This year Orchid Island became the 71st Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in Florida, so I was momentarily taken aback when Superintendent Matt Turner invited me to come down to Vero Beach in November and give a talk about the ACSP program to a group of the club's members. I figured they already knew.

Once I got there I found out that I was just one speaker in a whole series of environmental programs lined up this winter for the members. These programs fulfill the Outreach and Education requirement for the ACSP, and you are talking to people who have a vested interest in the course and the community. Additional speakers on plants and bird identification and a host of other

subjects will follow. Turner wanted me to explain how important the program is in the big picture. JoEllen Zeh from Audubon International sent me a Power Point presentation on the ACSP to use in the presentation.

I arrived several hours early and took a tour of the golf course with Turner and took some photos that illustrated some of the points in the slide presentation and, just before the program started, I downloaded the Orchid Island photos into the presentation so the members could see exactly how their course was fitting into the program. That turned out to be a great idea as they responded very well to seeing familiar scenes in the presentation.

The Orchid Island property is bordered on the eastern side of the property and highway A1A by a native

plant buffer called the Jungle Trail. To the west is the Indian River Aquatic Reserve and mangrove preserve maintained by Orchid Island. Also just off shore in the Indian River is the Pelican Island Wildlife Refuge. And speaking of pelicans, Orchid Island is the winter home to a large flock of white pelicans. Turner doesn't know exactly where they are from but my field guide said that they breed and live in British Columbia, northern California, Utah and Manitoba and winter in central California, the Gulf Coast and Florida south to Panama.

While the members were arriving and taking their seats, I also ran a Power Point presentation I made up last year titled Golf is Good for the Environment which was a collection of captioned photos showing primarily

wildlife, habitat and irrigation practices. It also included facts from the 2000 Golf Economic Impact Study. Many of the photos drew oohs and ahs from the crowd. About 35-40 people attended including General Manager Rob Tench and Membership Director Marci Arnold.

Because of the members' overall interest and enjoyment of the wildlife on the course, Tench encouraged Turner to make the certification project a high priority item and, to help him complete the project, Turner hired Peggy Ogden as a consultant. Ogden, who currently works at the Arlington Ridge Golf Club near Leesburg, has earned several ACSP certifications at other courses.

After the presentation there was a Question and Answer session, and the members had a variety of inquiries:

- Does the runoff from the course go into the Indian River?
- What is that blue stuff you are spraying on the course?
- Are the chemicals you use safe for the wildlife?
- What are some things we as homeowners can do to help the environment?

Answering the questions gave Turner a platform to explain his golf course maintenance program and the things he does to comply with Audubon certification standards. Turner had explained to me earlier that, like many superintendents, he already was doing many of the positive things, but the ACSP program gave him a way to document and verify his practices with the help of environmental authority. It also gave me an opportunity to provide the members with the big picture on environmental issues facing the golf

industry, and ask their help in being proactive for golf.

Those questions above show exactly why outreach and education, starting on the home course, is vital, and I had a chance to see some of the answers in action when we rode the course. Turner told me that all the runoff for the community is retained on property and mostly in the lakes on the golf course. The lakes are the source of his irrigation water, so the runoff is essentially recycled and filtered through the turf.

The waterways are buffered from golf course maintenance activity by observing a 25-30-foot no-spray-or-fertilizer zone along the lakes. Turner, his assistant and two spray technicians apply all products by spot treatment from 25-gal-

fertilizers are applied by licensed pest control operators and that they follow label directions.

Turner even told the story of how he stopped killing moles and began trapping them, 1100 to be exact. He said, "I just couldn't do it anymore (harpoon traps), so my assistant and I would lightly tamp down an active tunnel and come back six hours later and watch for their movement. Then we would just scoop them out. We relocated them way up the Jungle Trail far from the course."

Turner said he learned to use the moles and other critters as signals that the course was likely experiencing insect infestations that he might need to treat. The same went for wasps hovering around his tees. He said they were usu-

ally a good sign that sod webworms were working on his new paspalum tee tops. Others might be interested to know that Turner's new TifEagle greens and Tifway 419 fairways seem to doing quite well on his 1480 ppm TDL irrigation water. His irrigation lake is supplemented by a brackish water well that taps into the salt-intruded portion of the Floridan Aquifer near the coast.

As the meet-

ing was breaking up a few announcements were made: There would be a new journal in the pro shop for the golfers to jot down their wildlife sightings with date, hole number, etc. and one couple invited everyone over to help themselves to their backyard vantage point to view a pair of bald eagles that had been showing up daily in a large tree nearby.

And that is what the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program could be all about on your course too.



Native grasses buffer the lakes which also act as runoff retention ponds for the community. Photo by Joel Jackson.

lon electric Raven sprayers using hand wands only. They also hand-spread any fertilizer to make sure none gets thrown into the lakes.

Turner suggested that homeowners can help the environment by doing several things: use more native plants in their landscapes, install native plant buffers like the Spartina (cordgrass) used along the majority of the course lake banks instead of having manicured St. Augustine right down the the water line, and make sure that all chemicals and