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Big Cypress fox squirrels are losing their native upland pine habitat in the face of rapid development of Southwest Florida. Sixty Naples-area golf courses will be studied as urban habitats for the threatened subspecies.

Photos taken on Royal Poinciana G.C. by Rebecca Ditgen

**Golf courses with open park-like landscapes and a rich mixture of food and nesting trees can provide ideal habitat for these large and graceful squirrels.**

# Golf courses may hold key to survival of fox squirrels

BY REBECCA SELFRIDGE DITGEN  
Fox Squirrel Research Project  
University of Florida

**F**ox squirrels (*Sciurus niger*) are beautifully colorful natives of the open, upland pine forests of Florida. They are easily recognized by their long, full tails, their varying color patterns of glistening black, chestnut and brilliant blond, and their long and bounding gait.

As fox squirrels frequently forage and travel on the forest floor, they prefer areas where the understory is kept open by fire, grazing or mowing. Golf courses with open, park-like landscapes and a rich mixture of food and nesting trees can provide ideal habitat for these large and graceful squirrels.

Big Cypress fox squirrels (*Sciurus niger avicennia*) are losing their native upland

pine habitat in the face of rapid development of Southwest Florida.

Golf courses, with their relatively open forested landscapes, often provide habitat suitable for the threatened subspecies.

My study seeks to document the status and habitat use of the urban populations of Big Cypress fox squirrels on 60 golf courses in the Naples area of Southwest Florida and to provide guidelines for landscape design and management that favor the viability of these populations.

The study specifically considers the following attributes of landscape and golf course management as they relate to fox squirrels:

- tree species combinations that will provide forage throughout the year
- tree species suitable for nesting
- squirrel dependence on pines which are subject to die-off on courses in southwest Florida



*Golf course management directed to benefit fox squirrels may be critical to their survival in urban habitats.*

- ground cover treatment and management favorable to squirrel movement and travel
- suitable spacing and density of trees to create centers of activity
- size and configuration of courses and multiple course complexes that encourage larger populations and movement between smaller populations

The project has two components.

First, squirrel populations will be located through interviews with golf course superintendents. The number of individuals on each course will be estimated by censusing 3 times over the next 18 months.

During one census, landscape and vegetation attributes will be recorded for each course. Attributes favorable to fox squirrels will be identified using logistic regression analysis.

Second, two large populations on selected golf courses will be radio-collared and monitored for 18 months to determine their movements within the course and into adjoining habitats and to examine their use of specific habitats.

Location of all course populations will be mapped on a digital coverage created by the Florida GAP analysis of land cover and movement date of intensively studied populations will be mapped on digital coverage of those courses.

Big Cypress fox squirrels are a beautiful and colorful part of the native wildlife in Southwest Florida. Golf course management directed to their benefit may be critical to their survival in urban habitats.

I believe this study will add greatly needed information to golf course management efforts and landscape design, and thus increase the chances fox squirrels will remain in at least one major element of the urban landscape of the region.



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The Central Florida GCSA Chapter meets at the Alaquá CC where members learn the latest local, state and national information affecting golf course turf management.

## Reality Bites: The Learning Never Ends

*If you can't  
anticipate,  
communicate,  
appreciate and  
participate in  
the big picture,  
you will have  
wasted much of  
your education.*

**R**alph Waldo Emerson once said, "The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education, but the means of education."

We can argue till the cows come home about the pro's and con's of learning your basic skills in a two-year specialty program, or a traditional four-year program, or from the school-of-hard-knocks at a master craftsman's side.

No matter the varied paths we take to become a superintendent, it is how well we learn the important lessons along the way that matters most.

If you can't anticipate, communicate, appreciate and participate in the big picture, you will have wasted much of your education.

I have met outstanding superintendents from all walks of life and educational backgrounds. The one thing they all have in common is that they never stop learning or educating themselves. That education takes many forms. Reading. Traveling. Listening. Questioning. Conversing. Experimenting. Failing. Succeeding. Sharing.

These same successful superintendents can be found religiously attending their local chapter meetings, regional and national seminars, national and interna-

tional conferences and trade shows.

It is in these venues that the best minds gather. It is here that the good superintendent gleans the knowledge to feed his hungry mind. The good superintendent then takes new ideas and information back to his job and applies it for the betterment of his/her golf course.

We are obviously in the midst of an communication/information revolution. The wise will participate either for the adventure or at least for self defense and survival.

Those with closed minds, superintendents, owners and operators alike, will be swept away in time by the winds of change. It is education in all its forms that prepares us for the challenges of success.

*Joel D. Jackson, CGCS  
Disney's Magnolia G.C.*

### **Mockery is The Best Form of Flattery**

*by Darren J. Davis*

I once had a fellow superintendent tell me, "My success is not attributed solely to my knowledge and training." He added, "A large part of what I have done is based on things I have seen other superintendents do." He felt he was one of the best "copiers" in the business. If you knew who made that comment, I think you

would agree that it is an extremely humbling statement from a very intelligent person.

At the risk of copying him, I will tell you that I also have learned the art of copying! One of the best things about our profession is the free sharing of information that golf course superintendents practice on a daily basis.

I gain a vast amount of education from talking with my peers. I especially enjoy visiting the courses of some of my friends in the business. The following are a few of the innovative ideas they have shared with me.

**Mark Michaud,  
Golf Course Superintendent, Pebble  
Beach Golf Links**

At Pebble Beach, Mark grows Poa greens and ryegrass fairways. A lot of Mark's watering is done manually by "pulling a hose."

Mark wanted a method to transport the hoses around the course without taking up the needed space in his utility vehicles. To accomplish this, Mark has made a hose rack from two tire



*Mark Michaud, golf course superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links, inspects one of his mounted hose racks.*

## **Duststorms Got Members Trading Carts For Camels?**



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**What you can learn from your peers**

*Cordgrass, above, planted around the maintenance facility at Colliers' Reserve. Right, the trailer attached to the Hydroject at the Merion Golf Club. Below, the clipping basket at equipment wash area at Congressional CC.*



rims and a support bracket bolted to his utility vehicles. The metal supports are welded to both the front and back of the rims so that the hose will rest securely in the groove.

**Tim Hiers, CGCS,  
Golf Course Superintendent  
Colliers Reserve**

If you look up the definition of “environmental steward” in the dictionary, you would find Tim’s picture. Tim has been a mentor to my environmental awareness.

One of the things I have copied from Tim is the use of cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*) planted around the maintenance facility.

The cordgrass has many advantages. It provided a good wildlife habitat, forms a low level wind break, eliminates the need for pesticides, fertilizers, irrigation and mowing. Eliminating mowing not only saves labor hours but conserves fuel, oil, etc..

**Paul Latshaw, Sr.  
Golf Course Superintendent,  
Congressional Country Club**

Like many golf courses, Paul has an older maintenance facility. Paul was aware that he had a potential problem in the equipment wash area. He decided to bring his old site up to date since he is unable to currently build a new wash down area. The first step was to devise a way to capture solids/clippings.

He constructed a sump with a recessed lip and a stainless steel basket to fit in the sump. Once the grate is removed the basket can be pulled up with two handles. The bottom of the basket comes to a “V” and all four sides are stainless steel mesh. Using mesh sides decreases the weight of the basket making it easier to remove when it is full of clippings.

**Paul B. Latshaw,  
Golf Course Superintendent,  
Merion Golf Club**

When taking a tour of Paul’s equipment storage area I came across a unique item. Paul has designed a tow-behind trailer for his Toro Hydroject. The trailer eliminates the need for a second person, or for a vehicle. When the operator reaches his destination, the trailer is unhooked next to the quick coupler, the hose stretched out and the machine is ready to go.



A map of Florida is shown with various regional office locations marked by dots and stars. Lines connect these markers to their respective names and phone numbers. The text 'Golf Ventures' is placed near several locations. The names of the regional managers are listed to the right of the map.

Location	Phone Number	Manager
Alachua	(904) 462-4157	Jeff Hayden
Hastings	(904) 692-3726	Bob Schroeter
Lakeland	(904) 383-3139	Steve Sorrell
Mt. Dora	(904) 383-3139	Mel Hallack
Tampa	(941) 439-1551	David Cheesman
Dundee	(941) 439-1551	David Cheesman
Palmetto	(941) 722-3253	Frank Cook
Ft. Pierce	(407) 464-8660	Walt McMahon
Wauchula	(941) 773-3187	John Baniak
Belle Glade	(407) 996-6200	Brad Walters
Ft. Myers	(941) 657-3141	Glenn Zakany
Delray Beach	(407) 499-0486	Alex Kagny
Immokalee	(941) 657-3141	Alex Kagny
Homestead	(305) 245-0433	Alex Kagny



The trailer is actually quite simple. A manual hose reel is mounted above the trailer to store the 3/4 inch hose. Attached to the side of the reel is the incoming water line. This rests on the bed of the trailer with the quick coupler attached when not in use. There is storage space on the bed of the trailer for tools, filters or other items that might be needed.

Paul and his staff have also built some very handy tool storage lockers. The lockers are made of wood and are very roomy. On the side of the locker is a tool storage rack so that hand tools can be secured safely.

There is also room for personal protection equipment and other small equipment. Paul has found that by assigning each employee his/her own tools they take greater pride in them and are less likely to break or lose them. In the long

*An employee's individual small tool locker at the Merion Golf Club*

run the extra cost up front easily pays for itself.

**Conclusion**

It is often too easy to become wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of our very demanding jobs and not get out and visit our peers. While playing golf at other courses is one way of achieving this, it is certainly not the only way. I am amazed at what you can learn from your fellow superintendents by taking a riding tour of their courses, or by just walking through their maintenance facilities.

A wise person once told me something that made a lot of sense. He said, "The day you stop learning is the day you die!"

**Meetings and Conventions**

*by Scott Bell*

The strength of an organization or association depends on the participation of its members. The same can be said for the meetings and conventions put on by these groups. The need for good participation by superintendents is equal at all levels,

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