

Superintendents pioneer actions to enhance wildlife

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"Was I surprised to find superintendents were environmentalists?" asked Marla Briggs, staff ecologist at Audubon International who works with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ASCP) for Golf Courses. "Definitely. A friend said golf courses are pretty much biological deserts. And when I started here, I was hooked into that stereotype. But I've been here three years and it's been great."

Briggs, who owns a master's degree in environmental studies, said she found superintendents were working extensively with Integrated Pest Management, but few were enhancing wildlife.

"Therefore, this opens up a new world to them," she said. "That is the most satisfying part of my job, to talk to superintendents and hear them get excited."

Netwal, Ewoldt and Kerfoot are among the ASCP members who accepted the mantle of environmental stewardship and aggressively taken their message to the public.

"I relish the opportunity to show people the course," said Netwal. "When I first started here some of my toughest customers were the park rangers. But I asked their advice on some things, allowed them to participate and now they are among my biggest promoters. One said to me that in our whole system I probably do more in conserving things than [the rangers] combined. That's a high compliment."

"Most people in our industry work closely with nature," said Kerfoot. "When I first started 15 years ago, the chemical revolution was going on. They looked to chemicals to cure problems. For various reasons everybody's taking a closer look at the environment, looking for friendly chemicals and reducing their use. It makes me proud."

"Turf management is so much more sophisticated than farming," said Tom



Hank Kerfoot and wife Mary, an environmental education teacher, speak to schoolchildren at Carmel Country Club in Charlotte, N.C.



'We invited all the local environmental groups to ask them what we should do to make them happy... They were awed at what we were doing.'

— Don Ewoldt, director of grounds
Sand Creek Country Club

Mead, a former superintendent at Crystal Downs who is now a design associate with Tom Doak at Renaissance Design in Traverse City, Mich. "Superintendents on a whole are more tuned in to the environment than people in other fields."

That environmental awareness, he said, "has become mainstream and broad in the industry in the last three to five years."

With that widening has come more wide-ranging initiatives. To wit, Netwal at Glens Creek has:

- made it a primary cause to pass out bluebird boxes to visitors, including 60 superintendents who held a chapter

meeting there last spring. Each box contains information on mounting, placing, maintaining and monitoring it.

- built several shallow ponds for wildlife purposes, including one as an Eagle Scouts project.

• appears occasionally on a local television station's Earth Alert segment, "getting the word out about the positive things going on in golf."

Backed by strong support from General Manager Jerry Mobley, Ewoldt and superintendent Phil Lau at Sand Creek:

- initiated a Junior Conservation Society which, among other things, involves youths in Fantastic Tuesdays

— a time set aside for such activities as taking nature walks and building birdhouses, then monitoring them.

• signed up six of the eight area schools for AI's Adopt-a-School Program in which Ewoldt helps the schools improve wildlife habitat on their grounds. "We have a lot of fun with it," he said. "The kids do, too. I'm getting high schoolers monitoring the houses. Right now we're doing a lot of planning. We've got teachers interested and schools registered. They're talking about wildflower gardens and other projects like that."

• plan, starting in October, to carry out a stabilization project along about 3,700 feet of creek bank troubled by erosion. Now that the creek has been dredged, crews will build steps out of the banks and use netting and plant materials to stabilize them. "We will also build ripples and little dams and pools to encourage steelhead trout upstream," Ewoldt said.

• set up an informational billboard and display table in the clubhouse and had two books on Sand Creek and ACSP hardbound for the club's library.

At Carmel Country Club, Kerfoot:

- alongside his wife and environmental education teacher Mary, will work with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service on Project Learning Tree this fall. School teachers, Scout and 4-H leaders — "anyone involved with outdoor education and natural resources" — will be taught about wildlife.

• is exploring working with the National Quail Society (NQS) on a planting project to sustain a quail environment. The NQS will then transplant quail to the property.

• is working with the local power company on a long-range vegetative planting plan along its power lines.

Meanwhile, recycling has become a community-help project at Carmel

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GC at Newcastle is given env'l excellence award

SEATTLE, Wash. — The Golf Club at Newcastle, an upscale 36-hole public/private facility being built on a former coal mine, was one of five projects around the country to be recognized with an award for excellence in environmental health from the National Association of County and Health Officials (NACHO).

The 350-acre, \$40 million project was cited as an outstanding example of cooperation and innovative use of a former landfill.

The Golf Club at Newcastle, which will feature an 18-hole daily-fee course and an 18-hole private course, is being developed by the Bellevue, Wash.-based Oki developments.

The first of the two courses, both of which are being designed by golf course architect Robert Cupp, will open in 1997. Fred Couples assisted Cupp in the planning of the courses.