

**EUROPEAN BIRD WATCHING OPEN REAPS REWARDS**

DORKING, Surrey, England — The public image of golf courses as environmental showcases received a boost May 17 with the European Golf Association's Birdwatching Open. The EGA's Ecology Unit staged a similar event last year, The Birdwatching Ryder Cup, with 12 courses on either side of the Atlantic making up two teams. The lighthearted competition saw European courses scoring 217 different species of birds against 238 from the United States. Because of the percentage of species on the respective continents, Europe won the competition. This year the format changed. All courses in Europe were invited to participate, with the aim of logging valuable ecological data.

**North American Birdwatching Open proves point**

OCEAN CITY, Md. — The Club at Seabrook Island in South Carolina, Summerlea Golf & Country Club in Quebec, Canada and Rum Pointe Seaside Golf Links won the honors at an international birding competition held during early May.

In the North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open,

sponsored by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, those courses finished first through third, respectively, for most birds sighted, while Rum Pointe won the award for best birds.

Volunteers at 36 Audubon-registered courses across North America spent May 9 counting birds. The effort provided

Audubon with information on the importance of well-managed golf course habitats for wildlife.

"We hope that the true winners of the Golf Course Birdwatching Open will be all wildlife and, in particular, migratory birds," said Jean Mackay, education director for Audubon International. "The Golf Course Birdwatching Open will illustrate the potential that various types of land have as wildlife habitat in North America."

At the Club at Seabrook Island, 77 species were spotted, while at Summerlea 75 were sighted and at Rum Pointe there were 70 different species.

"We could have had a lot more species, maybe even another 20 or 25 that we normally see on the course," said David Ciekot, environmental coordinator for Rum Pointe, "but the weather was so bad. We had a Northeaster blow in that day, with heavy rain and 30-knot winds, so I'm still very pleased with the numbers."

"Certainly our site on the coastal bay near Assateague Island helped our sightings," said Ciekot. "We had a great number of gulls, waterfowl, and wading birds, like willets and several species of sandpipers. It was pleasantly surprising, though, that as a newer course still initiating habitat management plans, we sighted such a diversity of forest, upland, and meadow favoring species. Wood thrushes, towhees, and various sparrows and finches really helped our count."

Across North America the Birdwatching Open produced a wide range of results, from the top count of 77 all the way down to a low count of 14 species. Audubon International attributed the wide spread to a number of factors, including weather, diversity of habitats and the skill levels of the people conducting the counts.

"Everyone here at Rum Pointe is excited about our Best Birds award in the Birdwatching Open," said superintendent Chuck Poole. "This shows that not only can golf courses be good for a few types of birds, but that they can be quality habitat for a wide diversity of species as well."

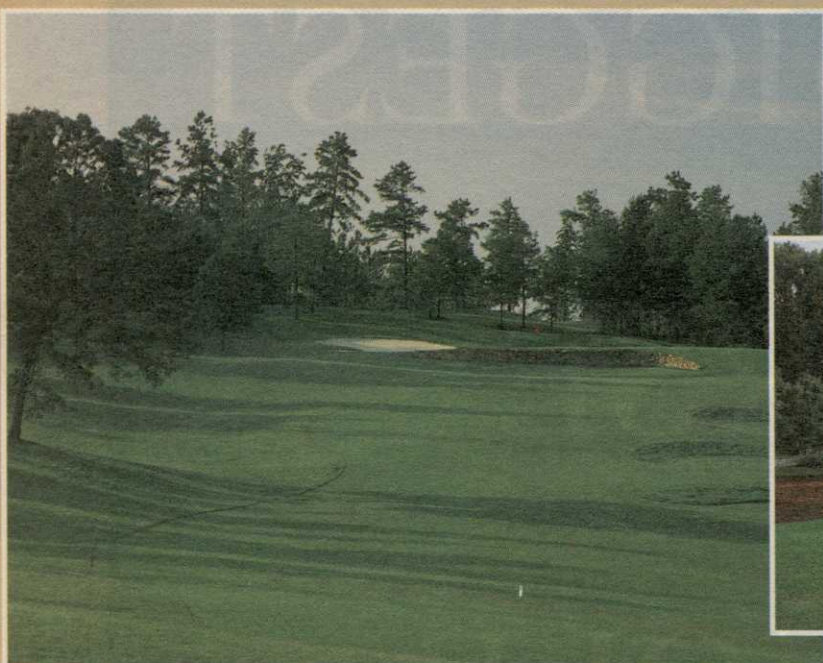
**Southern drought**

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damage at first is thin and dry turf. But that leads to other problems later on.

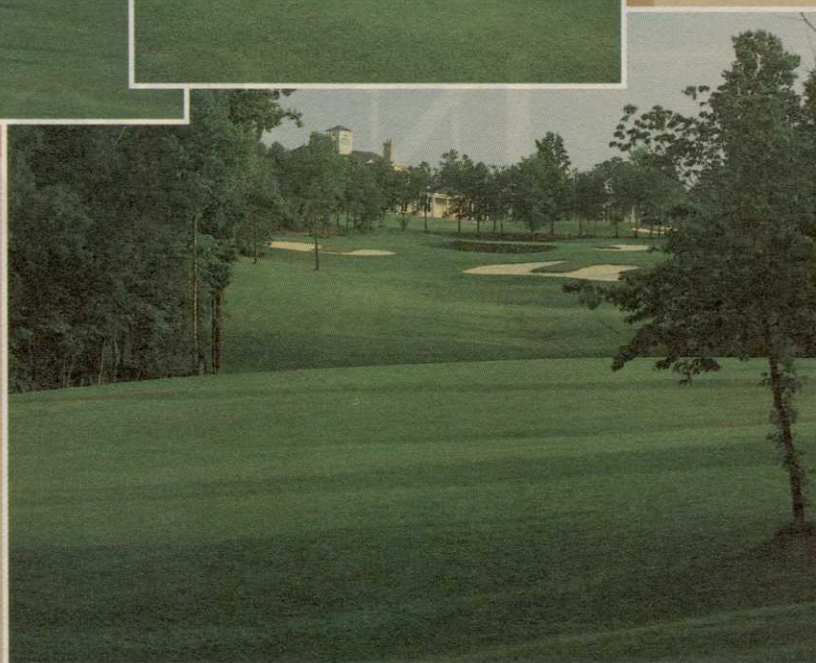
Soil as well as water quality has made a big difference from course to course, Moore said. "Some soils hold three times as much water as others. Obviously those survive a lot better."

"It promises to be a really long summer for superintendents when it comes to greens management," Moore added.

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