

## Preserving our natural heritage

By JEAN MACKAY

Where on Earth are plants most at risk of endangerment?

If you guessed the rain forests of South America or Asia, or the broad savannas and forested lands of Africa, or plants of Eastern Europe's blighted landscape, you'd be wrong. In fact, the United States is ranked first in the world, by far, among nations in total number of plants at risk.

According to the first comprehensive worldwide assessment of plant endangerment, conducted by the World Conservation Union, 4,669 species are judged to be threatened in the United States. That's 29 percent of the country's 16,108 plants species.

Scientists generally cite two main reasons why plants become endangered:

- destruction of large swatches of wild countryside by agriculture, logging, or
- development, and invasions of plants from one part of the world that run riot and crowd out native species in another part.

The World Conservation Union's findings, released last spring, required more than 20 years of work by botanists and conservationists around the world. The report's results raise many questions and have profound implications. Since plants form the basis of the food chain and are the primary producers of food for wildlife, what secondary impacts result from the loss of plant species? What mutually beneficial relationships are lost when

Continued on page 30

Jean Mackay is education director for Audubon International, headquartered in Selkirk, N.Y.



Superintendent Darren Moore has plenty of help from schoolchildren planting trees at Manila Southwoods.

## Manila Southwoods works toward certification

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CARMONA, CAVITE, The Philippines — Under the leadership of golf course superintendent Darren Moore, Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club is marching towards becoming the first golf course in the Asia/Pacific region to achieve recognition as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

Manila Southwoods, a 36-hole, Jack Nicklaus-designed course, was developed and is owned by Philippine real-estate giant Fil-Estate. Moore has worked with the Fil-Estate environmental affairs division in order to achieve certification in environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management and water conservation.

Having already developed programs to address the remaining certification requirements, Southwoods is well on its way to full certification. "We are in the home straight now," said Moore. "We

*I expect the Integrated Pest Management certification to be interesting. On one hand, they don't use a lot of herbicides because they have workers that pick out the weeds, but on the other hand they have workers who eat endangered species.*

— Audubon biologist Joellen Zeh

aim to have all of the components completed before we host the Philippine Open on May 27."

Moore has been hard at work to make sure that happens.

In preparation for the outreach and education certification, Moore has been holding monthly "eco-field trips" for local school children. During the field trips, youngsters learn about wildlife

Continued on page 31

## 2nd Birdwatching Open scheduled

Birdies will be the order of the day on May 8 when Audubon International sponsors a special birdwatching competition on golf courses.

The second annual North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open presents an ecological twist to golf's traditional U.S. Open tournament. The event will take place on Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries and Audubon Signature Sanctuaries on Saturday, May 8, to coincide with International Migratory Bird Day. Birdwatching teams will record bird species during a 24-hour period to record data on migratory birds on golf courses.

The North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open is a light-hearted competition to raise awareness about the importance of golf courses for birds, especially migratory species that breed in North America and spend the winter in Central and South America. Many of these species stop at golf courses to rest and "re-fuel" during their long-distance flights, but others stay to breed and raise their young in a variety of non-play habitats, such as woods, prairie, or wetlands on golf course properties.

Last year's North American Birdwatching Open gathered valuable data about the great diversity of birds on golf courses that are managed with wildlife and the environment in mind. Thirty-six certified Audubon courses competed for the greatest number and diversity of bird species and when the results were tallied, we recorded a total of 273 species on golf courses. This included many common species and a few unusual sightings

Continued on page 30

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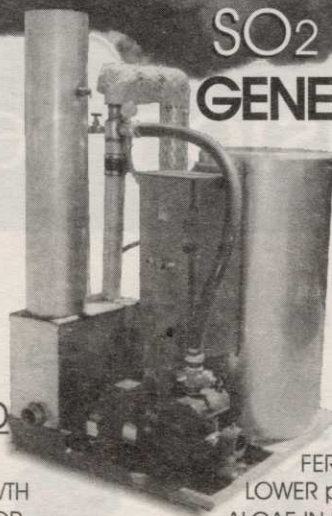
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## Preserving our heritage

Continued from page 29

plant populations decline or become extinct? How few are too few — at what point have we simply lost too many individuals for a species to recover? What are the long-term impacts of plant endangerment on people, wildlife and natural systems in general?

Protecting native plants is directly dependent upon preserving and managing native habitats throughout North America.

For golf course superintendents, owners and developers, making a commitment to preserve, nurture and showcase native plants in the landscape is a significant step toward hold-

ing the line on increased loss of our native flora.

But landscaping with native plants has economic as well as environmental benefits. Reduced water, fertilizer and pesticide use are among the most tangible results. Decreased equipment wear and tear and labor savings can also be sig-

nificant when highly maintained areas are replaced with more natural habitat and native plants.

Native plants can be used in almost any landscape design to highlight the uniqueness and natural beauty of the property.

By making a commitment to good environmental stewardship, we can all play a part in preserving our diverse and beautiful natural heritage.

## Pine Valley fully certified

PINE VALLEY, N.J. — Pine Valley Golf Club has achieved designation as a certified audubon cooperative sanctuary by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS), the educational division of Audubon International, endorsed by the United States Golf Association. Pine Valley Golf Club is the 7th

in New Jersey and the 167th course in the world to receive the honor.

"We are very excited about our certification status," said head superintendent Richard Christian. "This past year we have devoted many hours towards becoming certified. The entire

Continued on next page

## Birdwatching Open planned

Continued from page 29

including a common murre, a great grey owl, and an American avocet. During 1998's event, 10 courses spotted osprey, eight saw loggerhead shrike, 12 saw eastern meadowlarks, and four counted bald eagles.

Though the information gathered highlights the type of species occurring repeatedly on golf courses across the continent, it also indicates the potential value of golf course for bird conservation. While scientifically credible inferences are difficult to draw from such a one-day birdwatching event, the data clearly show that courses that are actively managed to provide quality wildlife habitat do in fact achieve that goal. It also stands to reason that a greater number of golf courses participating in conservation activities would have a significant positive impact on wildlife and the environment.

In addition to data collection, an added plume of the North American Birdwatching Open is that it fosters communication between golf courses and local naturalist and environmental groups. Community outreach through the event is not only non-threatening, it's fun and educational. Bird watchers are constantly on the lookout for new places to explore, and the local golf course usually isn't on their list of birding hot spots.

The North American Birdwatching Open is an invitation for birdwatchers to see just how valuable golf courses can be for birds, and subsequently, to spread the good news to others in the environmental community.

The results of the 1999 North American Birdwatching Open will be available from Audubon International in late June.



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