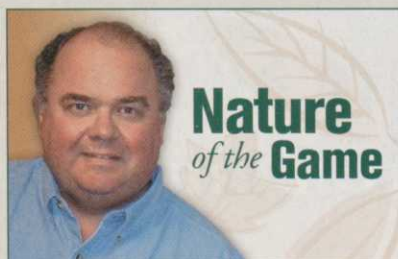


Do Golf Courses Provide Valuable Wildlife Habitat?

BY RON DODSON

Editor's Note: This column will appear bimonthly in *Golfdom*. Dodson, the CEO of Audubon International, can be reached at rdodson@auduboninternational.org.



Golf courses can be havens for all sorts of interesting wildlife. Golfers often say they enjoy seeing wildlife on the courses that they play. But questions are often asked about the actual value of the habitat that is created by golf courses. In other words, are golf courses providing valuable wildlife habitat, or are the species that are often seen on golf courses merely an illusion of a course being wildlife friendly.

These and other golf- and wildlife-related topics are at the root of the Wildlife Links program, a grant program administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and funded by the United States Golf Association (USGA). The USGA has been providing \$200,000 a year to look into these and other questions.

The Wildlife Links program was started in 1996, and more than 15 projects have been funded since that time. In addition to generating scientific data concerning wildlife on golf courses, educational materials have been developed and are being disseminated to those interested in becoming involved in wildlife conservation on golf courses.

The projects include:

► Golf Courses and Bird Conservation: A Management Manual;

► Wetlands Management Manual for Golf Courses;

► Data Management System for Information on Wildlife Habitat on Golf Courses;

► Conservation of Native Pollinators on Golf Courses;

► Pesticides and Nutrients in Surface Waters Associated with Golf Courses;

► Effects of Construction on Amphibian Movements and Population Size;

► Avian Community Response to a Golf Course Landscape Unit Gradient;

► Corridor Establishment for an Endangered South Florida Butterfly;

► Enhancing Amphibian and Reptile Biodiversity on Golf Courses Through the Use of Wetlands;

► Are Forests, Such as Golf Courses, Hotspots for Biodiversity in the Desert Southwest?;

► Native Biodiversity and Golf Courses in Midwest Landscapes; and

► Burrowing Owl Conservation on Golf Courses.

For information about the Wildlife Links Program, contact: Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta 30345, 404-679-7099 or e-mail him at peter.stangel@nfwf.org.

In addition to working with the National Fish and Wildlife Founda-

tion, the Wildlife Links Program has an established committee to review all proposals and a group of technical advisors to help with specific proposed projects. Groups on the Wildlife Links Committee include: Audubon International, the USGA Fairfax County Park Authority, The Wildlife Society, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Defenders of Wildlife.

The Technical Advisory Group is comprised of representatives from Antioch New England Graduate School, The Xerces Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Birding Association, Sutton Avian Research Center and the European Golf Association.

For a summary of the results of the funded project efforts, go to www.nfwf.org or to the USGA Green Section Web page at www.usga.org/turfenvironmental_programs.

