



Pacific Grove has launched a formal program to do just that. In February, it began an extensive branding and awareness-building campaign to revamp its image to better compete against the array of courses on the Monterey Peninsula. The course changed its name from Pacific Grove Municipal Golf Course to Pacific Grove Golf Links with the tagline, “Experience golf as it should be.”

While Gho hates to admit it, municipal golf courses are often stereotyped for having less-than-stellar conditions, a notion that often isn’t true.

“When people hear ‘municipal,’ they think they’ll be playing on fairways that don’t have turf, and on greens that are bumpy,” Gho says. “You might get that at some places, but we take pride in what we do here. We’re trying to make this the best course we can.”

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Daniel Gho has helped take Pacific Groves Golf Links to a new level.



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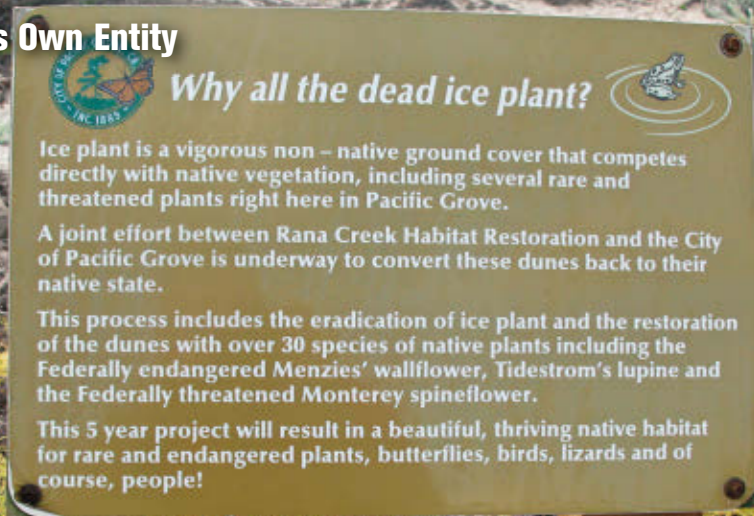
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Its Own Entity



Gho and his crew have been busy eradicating invasive ice plant from the course.

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Ironically, Jack Neville, who designed the back nine at Pebble Beach Golf Links, also designed the back nine at Pacific Grove in 1960. The front nine, designed by Chandler Eagan, opened in 1932. Eagan helped redesign Pebble Beach Golf Links with Alister Mackenzie in 1929.

Pacific Grove's city government is backing the course financially because it realizes it can make money on the operation. City officials have allowed the course to make equipment purchases and upgrades, and market itself with advertising and promotion.

"That wasn't done in the past," says Joe Riekema, Pacific Grove's clubhouse pro, noting that other courses in the area have bigger budgets for upkeep and marketing and advertising. "But we're making money for the city, which is a good thing."

A turnaround

Gho attended Chico State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in recreation, parks and resource management in 1999. Upon graduation, Gho took a job as a greenkeeper at San Juan Oaks Golf Club in Hollister. Gho worked his way up to spray technician and then second assistant. He then became first assistant for about five years.

"I don't have a formal turfgrass de-

gree, but I worked my way through the ranks," Gho says.

Gho arrived at Pacific Grove about two years ago, and immediately saw the tasks he and his crew could do to provide a better golfing experience.

Gho says the course had "zero definition" between fairways and roughs. Not anymore. Cho and his crew have carved in clarity where it's needed so golfers know where to target their tee shots.

Gho and his staff are also restoring the sand dunes on the back nine, mainly to rid them of invasive ice plant, a vigorous non-native ground cover that competes with native vegetation. The five-year project will result in a thriving native habitat for rare and endangered plants, butterflies, birds and lizards.

"This area was just covered with ice plant," Gho says. "It's the biggest project we have going."

In addition, Gho is leading an in-house restoration of its 19 bunkers.

It's a lot of work for a small but hard-working, veteran staff, says Gho of his eight crew members, who also must maintain 60 acres of turf on a tight budget. Gho's maintenance budget, excluding staff, is \$341,000 for services, which includes water and utility costs, and \$81,000 for materials and supplies.

What drives Gho to do the best job possible? The answer is simple. "The

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Its Own Entity

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end product and seeing people enjoy it," he says. "That's what keeps me going."

Gho has made a positive impression on his crew. Robert Hernandez, Pacific Grove's assistant superintendent for the past 18 years, says the course has never looked better.

"Dan has turned this place around," Hernandez says, noting that Gho implemented new fertilization, mowing and irrigation programs upon arriving in 2008. "The course is better than it was two years ago and better than when I started here 18 years ago."

Holding steady

While rounds have decreased at Pacific Grove over the past few years, business remains steady in this tough economic climate. The course recorded 65,580 rounds in fiscal year 2009 (July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009) and 54,592

“I wish they could have the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach every year.”

— Daniel Gho

rounds in fiscal year 2010 (July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010). While rounds were down 17 percent in fiscal year 2010, it was expected because the course restructured the terms of its annual pass.

Local golfers had been paying \$700 to play unlimited golf, and were playing up to 40 percent of the course's rounds. Some locals were playing so much they paid an average of only a few dollars per round. Hence, the annual pass was replaced with a discount card to allow for increased revenues, even if rounds diminished.

Revenues in 2010 were down only 1 percent, and that was attributed to decreased golf car rentals and less range

play. Revenue from green fees was actually up 3 percent.

Riekema says the course is one of the busiest on the Monterey Peninsula, along with Pebble Beach Golf Links, and Spyglass Hills Golf Course. Pacific Grove was never busier than during the 2010 U.S. Open, held at Pebble Beach Golf Links in June. Fans who came to watch golf at Pebble Beach also came to play area courses—and plenty of them came to Pacific Grove, which averaged more than 300 rounds a day during Open week.

"The golf course held up well," Gho says. "I wish they could have the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach every year."

There's a lot for golfers, whether locals or tourists, to like about Pacific Grove besides its price. All they have to do is open their eyes. Gho, for one, never tires of the vistas.

"It's a great place to come to work every day," he says. ■

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Manufacturers
discuss herbicide
technology now and
in the future

Talking Herbicides

Question: What are golf course superintendents asking for in herbicides and new herbicide technology?

Kyle Miller, Senior Technical Specialist, BASF Turf & Ornamentals

• There seems to be a need for products that eliminate grassy perennial weeds out of desirable turfgrass, so in other words taking a perennial weedy grass out of a perennial turfgrass. This would include controlling orchardgrass in fescue, torpedograss in warm-season turf or eliminating dallisgrass from several cool-season turfgrasses.



Adam Manwarren, Product Manager of Turf & Ornamental, FMC Professional Solutions

• Superintendents are asking for MSMA-replacement, easy-to-use products and ways to lower total pounds of active ingredient applied without sacrificing results. Also, if a new herbicide can result in lower overall management costs (labor, future chemical expenditures, or water/fertilizer resources), it's a winning proposition.



Editor's note: In September, October and November, Golfdom features a three-part question-and-answer series on herbicide technology. In each segment, representatives from the industry's vast number of chemical companies will be asked one question in regard to herbicide technology. The representatives' answers will be listed along with their photos.

Russ Mitchell, Product and Marketing Director, Quali-Pro

• Products that work and, if possible, are broad-spectrum and specific to superintendents' needs. For example, if a superintendent in the North needs to reseed his bentgrass fairways in the fall, he needs to make sure he uses a spring pre-emerge that's effective, but doesn't last too long to inhibit seed growth in the fall. Superintendents in the South may need to use a product that controls broadleaf weeds at the same time they're removing overseeded ryegrass. Another may only need broadleaf weed control. Needs are very specific and that's why there are so many options available. Another large concern is a cost-effective replacement for MSMA for warm-season turf to control post-emerge crabgrass and goosegrass. They're available but are more expensive, and it takes several products to control both.



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Talking Herbicides

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Jason Fausey, Regional Field Development Manager, Valent Professional Products • Superintendents need safe and effective products for selective grass control. In both warm- and cool-season turfgrass, controlling established perennial weedy grasses can be an issue. There needs to be a high level of safety on the desired turf, yet still selectively eliminate a weedy grass that is growing in the same area.



Matt Bradley, Herbicide Marketing Manager, Bayer Environmental Science • Turf managers are looking for solutions that will control weeds that may be missed by pre-emerge herbicide applications or do not have any currently effective solutions from a post-emerge standpoint. Some of the most popular products on the market now are products that provide broad-spectrum weed control with excellent turf safety, providing superintendents with the utmost in peace of mind.

Nancy Schwartz, Marketing Manager of Turf and Ornamentals, DuPont Professional Products • They have grown accustomed to the limitations of most of the available herbicides but will welcome anything new that makes their job easier. They're looking for newer chemistries that provide reliable and broad-spectrum control of common and tough-to-control weeds. Superintendents also expect newer products to allow application flexibility, regardless of the weather or reseeding plans.



Doug Houseworth, Technical Service Manager, Arysta LifeScience North America • Superintendents want herbicides that work fast and provide long residual control. They're looking for flexibility in timing so they can work the applications into their schedules instead having to time the applications based on the stage of development of the weeds. They want post-emergence products that also contain pre-emergence activity for the full season. They want products that are safe to the turf and don't have restrictions on reseeding.



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Todd Bunnell, Turf and Ornamental Research Manager/Golf Market Manager, SePRO • Superintendents want selectivity while providing excellent turfgrass tolerance with minimal disruption to turf quality and playability.



Owen Towne, President, Phoenix Environmental Care • Superintendents are looking for herbicides that provide cost-effective solutions to their weed problems. Most “new” products are either combinations of existing products or chemistries that provide incremental control over existing products. And most new herbicide chemistries provide control of weeds in niche markets.



Mark Urbanowski, Portfolio Marketing Leader of Turf and Ornamental, Dow AgroSciences • Superintendents continue to desire products that help control the weed problems, so effectiveness of new technologies is still top priority. Then there is a balance on cost-effectiveness and environmental safety. Budgets have gotten tighter recently, so there is a balance on picking the best product for cost and reduced environmental impact.

S. Gary Custis, Manager of Field and Technical Services, PBI/Gordon • Most are looking for products that work quickly but effectively. Safety is a big issue. Selective grass control on bentgrass greens is important. Sedge control on cool-season grass remains important as well as an effective annual grass control.



Scott Cole, Golf Market Manager, Syngenta • Superintendents today want herbicides that deliver much more than just dead weeds. They need time- and labor-saving solutions that offer superior efficacy, reduced risk, better water utilization and flexible use patterns. ■

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NATURAL REFUGES

Golf Courses as Bird Habitats

Though research on golf course wildlife has increased dramatically in the past decade, researchers still don't know a lot about how animals adapt to golf courses. The high levels of human disturbance, pesticide use and habitat alteration often found on golf courses concern wildlife conservationists. Realistically, while golf courses are not "natural," they can rival the habitat features of parks, backyards, farms and military reserves as an integral part of the current landscape mosaic (Terman 1997). In many ways, golf courses are a better-than-nothing option in highly urbanized areas and subsequently may function as natural refuges depending on the rarity of natural landscape in the area (Jackson and Cristol 2010).

Research has focused on either estimating how many animals are using golf courses (diversity) or how successful wildlife is at raising offspring on golf courses (reproductive success). Though this research has helped tremendously with our understanding of how golf courses affect wildlife, scientists don't fully understand how animals move around and make use of the various habitat types on a golf course. Several studies have touched on this subject, looking at study species ranging from salamanders to wolves (McDonough and Paton 2007; Shepherd and Whittington 2006). Researchers on one Connecticut golf course used radio-tagged salamanders to demonstrate that these small amphibians have no problem crossing fairways to reach their desired breeding ponds (McDonough and Paton 2007). In Canada, a local golf course had problems with elk and other large game that were destroying habitat and creating problems for players. Researchers determined that the elk were staying close to humans to avoid being hunted by their natural predators, wolves, who are more wary of coming close to human activity. With the construction of a habitat corridor to allow wolves to move through the golf course, the elk population was forced to move to other, less-developed areas (Shepherd and Whittington 2006). Each of these studies illustrates how understanding animals movements within the golf course can help inform management decisions in ways that benefit golfers and wildlife.

Researchers at the College of William and Mary have been studying eastern bluebirds on golf courses in southeastern Virginia since 2003 and have shown that bluebirds can nest successfully on golf courses (LeClerc et al. 2005). However, until now there has been no information on what happens to the nestlings once they leave the nest. During this stage of their development, called the fledgling period, young birds must learn to find food and avoid predators. Their parents

Study examines home ranges and movements of Eastern bluebird fledglings

By Allyson K. Jackson and Daniel A. Cristol

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One of the authors, Allyson K. Jackson, holds an Eastern bluebird fledgling.

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 help them for several weeks after leaving the nest, but then the fledglings are on their own (Gowaty and Plissner 1998). The fledgling period is not well documented, because they are secretive and have a low survival rate, and nothing was known about the fledgling period of birds on golf courses.

Comprehensive studies on fledgling movements have been lacking in the literature, as it has been nearly impossible to follow these cryptic birds, which have no fixed home range or territories. With the invention of radio transmitters that can be safely carried by small songbirds, fledgling studies have increased dramatically in the last five to 10 years (Brown and Roth 2004; Cohen and Lindell 2004; Yackel-Adams et al. 2006; Berkeley et al. 2007; Suedkamp Wells et al. 2008; Rush and Stutchbury 2008; Whittaker and Marzluff 2009, Moore et al. 2010). Through these studies, ornithologists have gleaned much new information about the habitat requirements of fledglings. Many studies have demonstrated that fledglings require different habitat than their parents, as they need more cover to hide from predators and food that's easy to find (King et al. 2006). This means that for baby birds to survive, they need to have multiple habitat types

in close proximity — first the nesting habitat used by the parents and then nearby fledgling habitat that they can use once they leave the nest. Fledglings that must travel further to get to suitable fledgling habitat are more likely to encounter dangerous circumstances than those that don't have to move very far.

Few studies attempt to estimate fledgling home range size, as it is complicated to analyze in fledglings because they usually don't set up or defend a territory. However, home-range analysis can be extremely useful in understanding how the fledglings use their space. The objectives of this study were to document the movement of eastern bluebird fledglings from the time that they fledged from the nest to approximately 40 days later. We will test whether home-range size differed between golf course and reference sites. If the habitat on golf courses isn't sufficient to support the fledglings' needs, we would predict larger home ranges.

Methods and study sites

We monitored eastern bluebird nests on three golf course and four reference sites in Williamsburg, Va. Golf courses were both public and private, and typical of the style found in Virginia. The reference sites included a wooded state park, two city parks and

PHOTOS COURTESY: INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATIVE BIRD BEHAVIOR STUDIES