



## Fawn-tastic Golf Courses

By Dean Musbach

Golf is an excellent game that one can play for a life time. It is a game that, when approached with the proper attitude, can be relaxing. It is a game of honor that builds character while also allowing the player to enjoy the outdoors.

Recently, golf courses have been criticized for using fertilizers and pesticides. Extremists and media continue to bash this industry with unsubstantiated and exaggerated claims of negative impact to wildlife.

The USGA has taken bold steps to counteract the negative press. By teaming up with the New York State Audubon Society, the USGA is proving that golf courses are excellent wildlife sanctuaries, especially in urban areas. This is a program that all golf courses should consider because it is an excellent tool that can improve our public image.

In the northwoods, there is an abundance of wildlife. Does this mean that golf courses here need not explore the Audubon Program? Absolutely not. Northern Wisconsin is an area where the natural resource is its livelihood, and it is important that we help create and protect habitat for wildlife. The Audubon program is a means to certify to the public and to the critics that golf courses are committed to preserving and enhancing wildlife.

Over the past five years at TRCC, I have seen many beautiful creatures.

My favorite encounter happens every May when the deer have their fawns. About three years ago, I came upon a fawn sunning himself between the 2nd and 3rd holes. I quickly went home and picked up a camera and my kids, (I had only two kids back then) and took them back to see the fawn. What a photo opportunity! I calmly positioned my kids and took a quick picture. I didn't want to alarm the fawn's nervous mother who was gazing at us from the woods 70 yards away. Believe me, I've learned from experience, it is best not to alarm the mother because she might charge you.

The first couple years we lived in the northwoods, my kids would scream if they saw a deer. But now they don't get excited because they see deer so frequently. On the other hand, if they see a cow on the way to Milwaukee, watch out. They go nuts!

Last fall, I had to listen to deer hunters crying the blues about their hunting woes. I made hunters sick when I told them that on any given night I can find 50 to 100 deer around Timber Ridge. Hunting is not allowed in Timber Ridge and the deer know it.

Does the course receive damage? Yes, the course does get damaged. But the damage is isolated. The most common form of damage occurs in the spring and fall when deer track across greens on frosty nights. This damage is

relatively minor because they just cross the green; they don't graze there.

I have a theory about why deer don't graze too much on the greens. I tank mix thiriam as part of my snow mold recipe. Incidentally, thiriam is used by nurserymen as a deer repellent. Although turf application rates are much lower than nursery rates, I think it irritates the deer enough to keep them away from greens. Anyone who has gotten thiriam in the eyes or nose will certainly know why the deer avoid it.

The most severe deer damage has occurred in the clubhouse landscape. The 200-foot arborvitae hedge was defoliated from the ground up to six feet. To prevent this, I run 600 feet of eight-foot fence around the area. A member once told me that he couldn't believe that the rabbits could cause such terrible damage. He didn't believe me when I explained that it was deer doing the damage, not rabbits. He was persistent in his belief. My final comment to him was "if it wasn't deer, then we have some pretty big rabbits around here." Nonetheless, the fence does an excellent job protecting the landscape.

There are many forms of wildlife to enjoy on a golf course. I could write a book about the different wildlife encounters that I've had at Timber Ridge. The fawn encounters are still my favorites.

To sum things up: golf is a game that allows people to enjoy the outdoors. Incorporating wildlife in the course really enhances the golfing experience. Yes, the wildlife can damage the course, but most problems can be resolved through creative thinking. Also, check out the Audubon program. This is a great way to enhance your golf course while promoting our industry's image. ♣

