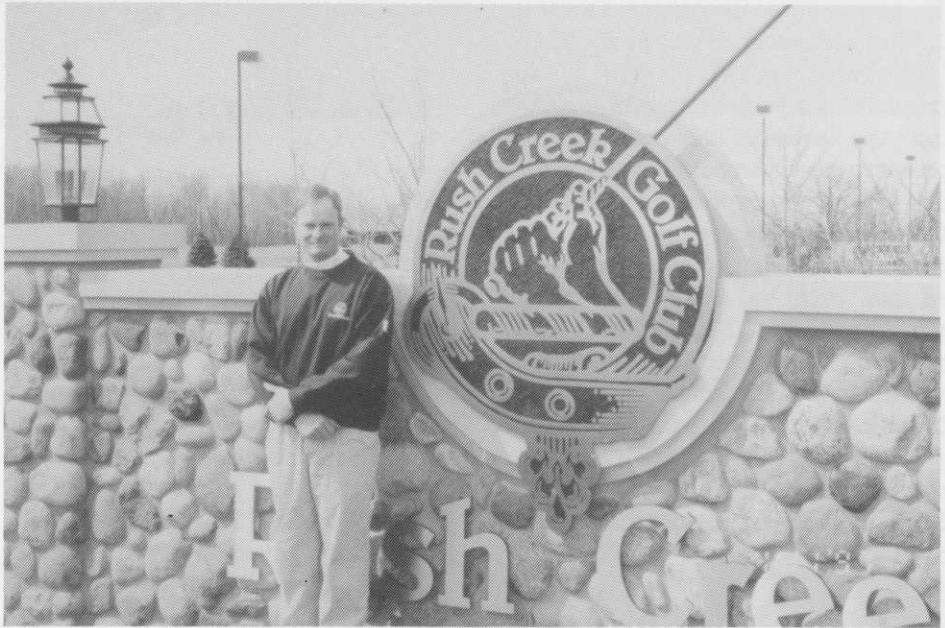


# Environmental Efforts Taking Place At Rush Creek Golf Club

By Mike Nelson  
*Rush Creek Golf Club*

**R**ush Creek Golf Club is a new golf course that opened in June of 1996. I have been fortunate in that I have been on staff as the Assistant Superintendent since the very early stages of this project. It has allowed me to experience all aspects of construction and grow-in. My turf management career began as a seasonal employee at Midland Hills Country Club in St. Paul. I enjoyed what I was doing and took a strong interest in Golf Course Management. From there I went to the turf management program at Anoka Technical College and after graduation became the assistant at Stillwater Country Club. I was there for three years before moving to Rush Creek.

During the off season at Rush Creek Golf Club we have taken time to better organize our environmental efforts and have become involved in the Audubon Program for Golf Courses. The property Rush Creek sits on has a wide variety of habitats and is home to many different wildlife species. One such species that has been sighted is the rare Trumpeter Swan. The Trumpeter Swan is the largest waterfowl species native to North America. Most Trumpeters weigh 21-30 pounds. The male is called a cob; the female is called a pen. With a wingspan over seven feet, these snow-white birds are truly spectacular. Standing on the ground, an adult trumpeter stands about 4 feet high. Trumpeters have broad, flat bills with fine tooth-like serrations along the edges that strain water when the birds eat aquatic vegetation. Their long necks allow them to up-root plants in four feet of water. Trumpeter Swans were once fairly common throughout most of the Northern United States and Canada, but hunting and millinery trade rapidly reduced the population, and by 1900 it was believed that the species had become extinct. Fortunately there were populations that survived in remote parts of Alaska, Canada and Montana. In 1935, the U.S. government established Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge in Montana to protect the remaining Trumpeter population. Habitat conditions quickly improved when restrictions were put on livestock grazing and hay cutting in the marshes, and more recently prohibiting the use of lead shot and lead fishing sinkers



**RUSH CREEK ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT MIKE NELSON** at the entrance of the golf club which will host the MGCSA Amateur Championship on August 18.

because of the danger of lead poisoning. Over the next 30 years, Trumpeters were moved to several western refuges as far east as Hennepin County. Hennepin Parks has been involved in restoration since 1966.

Due to Rush Creek's commitment to the environment and our desire to provide for a rare species, an option for us is to purchase trumpeter swans from a breeder and introduce them to the property in and around the golf course with hopes the birds will imprint at an early age and then return in coming years and someday possibly nest. I began researching the possibilities by telephone conversations with the DNR and people at Hennepin Parks. The immediate response that I received from both agencies was that golf courses are not a good situation for these birds due to all the fertilizer and pesticide runoff. They were also very skeptical as to our motives because they had a very stereotypical view of the golf industry, that is we're providing an artificial situation and our main concern was looking good no matter what the cost to the environment. I assured them our motives were driven by wanting to co-exist with the environment and that Rush Creek and the majority of golf courses today are taking measures to enhance the environment. When I asked how is it they viewed golf courses in this way, they said it was just their opinion and had no facts.

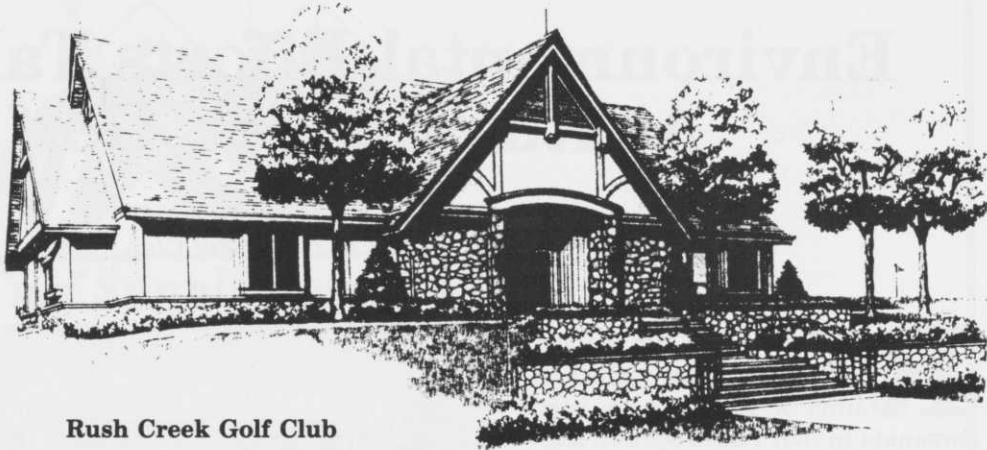
*(Continued on Page 10)*

# Rush Creek—

(Continued from Page 9)

They are on the other side of the fence and I've come to find out they don't even know why! I challenged them to take a closer look at the golf industry because there are a lot of good things going on out there regarding the environment.

I scheduled a meeting with a wildlife specialist at Hennepin Parks to further discuss the Trumpeter Swan. I presented her with aerial photographs of our property while explaining the precautions we take to preserve the surrounding habitats. She was very receptive to what I had to say and approved of our efforts, which was encouraging. She provided me with valuable information regarding the swans along with a list of Trumpeter Swan breeders. We agreed to keep in contact and to let them know how our own restoration project turns out. It was a profitable meeting from various standpoints. Not only did I learn about the swans but I was able to share the efforts the



Rush Creek Golf Club

golf industry is making toward a safe environment.

Heightened public awareness of environmental impacts and the demand for environment quality has affected all of our lives. Golf has been no exception. Questions regarding golf's impact on the environment are increasingly being asked by environmental groups as well as the general public. We often find ourselves surrounded by those in the turfgrass

industry and we hear a lot of the same opinions. To be confronted by someone who is differing in opinion gave me the opportunity to share some facts and do some educating which I found very rewarding.

*(Editor's Note: Thanks go to Mike Nelson for contributing this article. Reminder to all members that Rush Creek is the host course for the MGCSA Amateur Championship on August 18.)*

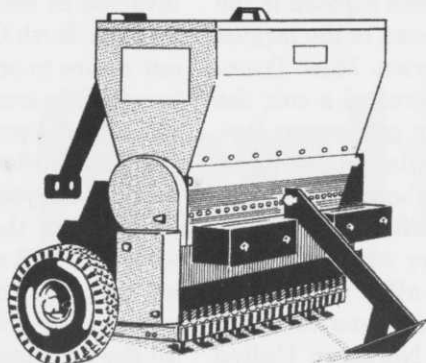
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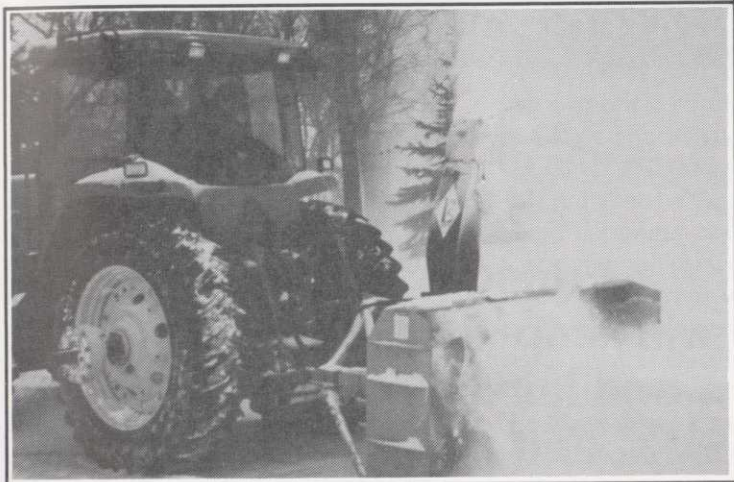
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*Dave Sime uses a canoe to "get around" the course to inspect the greens. This is No. 14 green with only 1/4 of it showing.*



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