

Cragun's Course Is First in Minnesota Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuary

Legacy at Cragun's South Course has become the first golf course in Minnesota and the 17th in the world to be certified Signature Sanctuary by Audubon International, Henderson, Ky.

Certification is granted only to new developments which have been designed, constructed and managed according to Audubon International's minimum standards and environmental disciplines, according to Ron Dodson, president and CEO of Audubon International.

Through his partnership with Audubon, Dutch Cragun, owner and developer of the property which is located about 14 miles north of Brainerd, has preserved old growth forests and wetlands, restored prairie habitat and protected wildlife.

Audubon International is an environmental organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life and the environment through research, education and conservation assistance. The environmental priorities of the mission are water conservation, water quality protection and the conservation and protection of biological diversity. To achieve that mission, the Signature program is designed to work directly with the landowner to develop a comprehensive approach to sound land management practices and positive approaches to appropriate land use changes based on sound scientific research.

Cragun's developed a **Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP)** including an analysis of existing conditions, a conceptual design plan and a plan for maintaining the quality of the large tract of wetlands based on the environmental framework provided by Audubon International.

The NRMP addressed wildlife conservation and habitat enhancement, water quality monitoring, management and conservation, integrated pest management, energy conservation and waste management. Certification was contingent upon the quality and completeness of the NRMP and its implementation.

The golf complex at Cragun's was laid out on the 280-acre, medium-growth, mixed hardwood forest with Oak, Birch, Aspen, Norway Pine, Sugar and Silver Maple dominating the site. More than 160 acres of unimpacted wetlands and vegetative buffers are interspersed throughout the site and provide corridors for the uninhibited movement of wildlife throughout the property.

The predominant water feature on site is the 104-acre, spring-fed Stephen's Lake. Only four to five feet deep, the lake is sandy and provides a resting place for waterfowl during their migration through the Brainerd region. The lake is buffered by a no-spray zone of native vegetation and a grass filtration runoff zone of 25 feet minimum. Among the 5,000 waterfowl spotted on Stephen's Lake during fall migration were Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Blue-winged Teal.

In an effort to restore habitat for ground dwelling birds, grasses such as Blue Grama, Little and Big Bluestem as well as wildflowers such as Yarrow, Joe-Pye Weed, Wild Lupine and Bergamot were planted in corridors between golf holes.

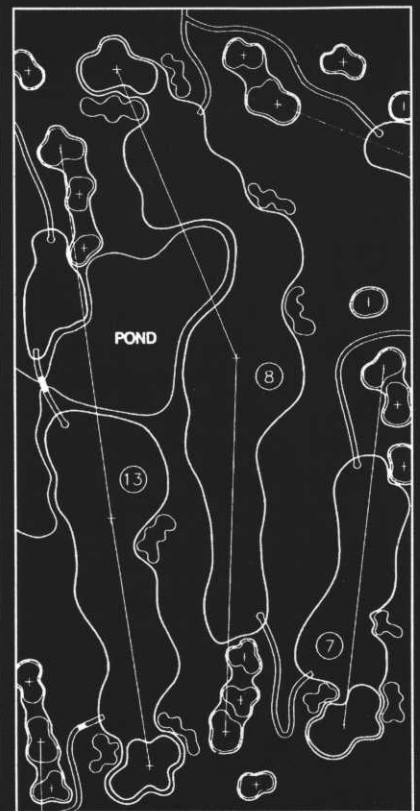
Dutch Cragun will continue to add to his golf complex, and each new golf hole will be built according to Audubon's principles for sustainable resource management. Site inspections will continue throughout the construction period of the remaining holes.

Audubon hopes that other developers will follow the lead of Cragun's to create sustainable developments that are integrated with the ecosystems in which they are built.

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(Editor's Note: To learn more about the Signature Program, contact Nancy Richardson at 270-869-9419 or write to Audubon Signature Program, 230 Second St., Suite 311, Henderson, KY 42420.)

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