

# Great Horned Owl Discovered at Minikahda

By JEFF JOHNSON  
*The Minikahda Club*

Since 1996 The Minikahda Club has been a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. In that time, the club has played an active role in promoting and protecting its status in this special group of golf courses throughout the country. In order for certified courses to remain certified, they must continue to show environmentally sound practices in their maintenance programs on a yearly basis.

There are basically six categories that must be maintained. Those categories are Environmental Planning, Outreach and Education, Integrated Pest Management, Wildlife Habitat Management, Water Conservation and Water Quality Management. Once the certification process has taken place, maintaining these classifications is not as difficult as it may seem. Audubon International wants to make sure that each golf course is making a positive impact on the land.

**Out of the six categories** we do admit to having a tough time meeting the requirements of Outreach and Education. But, two ways that we have been able to meet these needs is through our annual birdwatch, which coincides with Audubon's U.S. Birdwatching Open in May, and our sponsoring of Creek Valley Elementary School in Edina for the Adopt-a-School Sanctuary Program.

Although we are meeting the requirements requested by Audubon International, we are always looking for ways to improve our program. In February of 1999 such an oppor-



ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT JEFF JOHNSON, presenting the Great Horned Owl to Creek Valley Elementary students.

tunity basically dropped into our laps, or should we say dropped onto our golf course. I was walking my dog on the golf course when I noticed her tugging on something on the ground. Upon further inspection, it was a Great Horned Owl that was revealed. This bird had recently died and was in excellent condition. I picked it up and brought it to the maintenance building, placed it in plastic bag and put it in the freezer.

**The next task was to decide what to do with this bird.** Our first thought was to have the bird mounted and place it in our maintenance facility for our enjoyment. After call-

*(Continued on Page 7)*

# Great Horned Owl at Minikahda--

(Continued from Page 5)

ing a taxidermist, we were informed that this would not be possible, as it was a federally protected bird. First we needed a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and second, if we were granted a permit, the bird would need to be placed on public display.

After rethinking our somewhat selfish ways, we called our contact person at Creek Valley Elementary to see if they would be willing to display the bird.

They were delighted by the idea. Because the school was going to be displaying the bird, they needed to apply for the permit. Once the permit was in their hands, it was given to us so we could bring the owl to a taxidermist.

**From that point it was in the taxidermist's hands.** Due to a few problems at the taxidermists, he eventually had the finished product ready in May of this year. We contacted the school and arranged for a formal presentation. The week before the last day of the school season, Doug Mahl and I presented the Great Horned Owl to the school principal during the video-taped morning announcements. The students were in awe of the beauty and size of this magnificent bird. The Great Horned Owl is now being displayed in the school's media center, a location where students, teachers and parents can all enjoy the beauty of this bird.

In the beginning our Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses took time and a great deal of effort to establish. Even though this aspect of the maintenance program does take extra time, the rewards have outweighed any possible downfalls.

Before Minikahda began this sanctuary process, a Mallard duck was a rare sighting on the course. Since that time, a total of 96 different bird species have been identified. In 1997, *Links Magazine* awarded The Minikahda Club with a "Best of Golf" award for our commitment to environmental awareness and in 1998 we were awarded an Environmental Stewardship Merit Certificate from the Golf Course

Superintendents' Association of America.

If you are not currently a member of Audubon International's Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, now is the time to join. The benefits to the environment, the golf course and yourself will be well worth your time and effort.

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