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# HOLE NOTES

Official Publication  
of the  
Minnesota Golf Course  
Superintendents' Association

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## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

**Proud of Our Past,  
Thankful for Our Present,  
Look Forward to Our Future**



The holidays are always a time to reflect on the PAST, give thanks for the PRESENT and make wishes for the FUTURE.

It's hard to believe that GCSAA's past trade show (1976) was held in the old Minneapolis Convention Center in an area not much bigger than today's. Praises should be presented to all the associate members who made this year's trade show a big success! Upon initial glance, I thought I was at the National in Orlando. Fred Taylor and the Conference Committee worked diligently to give us a great "biodiversity" of speakers and topics that transcended all professions and participating associations. The future looks bright for continued growth of the conference through the persistent support of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association, Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation and the Trade associates.

\* \* \* \*

It is great to see past recipients of MGCSA turf scholarships progressing in our industry and contributing to its future. Congratulations to those students presented with 1995 MGCSA scholarships as you proceed with your educational and professional goals. As we look to the future, the MGCSA looks forward to helping promote and support the Trans-Mississippi Turf Scholarship Fund on a Minnesota level.

\* \* \* \*

As our profession has benefitted from past MGCSA funded research, we look to our present GCSAA, USGA and University of Minnesota research to bear dividends that will help our golf courses become even greater recreational and environmental assets. Minnesota's turf research looks bright with visions of a University of Minnesota Rosemount Turfgrass and Grounds Research & Education Center becoming clearer and clearer each day.

\* \* \* \*

The MTGF has passed its infancy and presently encompasses nine allied associations representing a unified Minnesota Green Industry. MGCSA hopes to continue to be a part of and embrace the MTGF as it matures into a future educational and research leader of the turf and grounds industry.

\* \* \* \*

I would like to thank the MGCSA past presidents for their continued support and input into our association. And as Kevin Clunis presented me with the MGCSA gavel, I offer my gratitude for his investment and leadership of the MGCSA in 1995. Thanks also to Bill Cox, Tom Kientzle and Monty Montague for their insight and involvement on the Board. I look forward to working with the recently elected and current Board Members to continue to serve the members of the MGCSA. Please contact me if you are interested in serving on any committee. Our future depends on your input.

So, as you have read, the MGCSA is proud of its past, thankful for its present success and looking forward to an exciting future! SEASONS GREETINGS!

*James D. Gardner, CGCS  
President*

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**JACK KOLB** receives the Watson Award from *Hole Notes* editor Tom Johnson.



TAKE TIME TO SEE

*It seems so hard to understand  
As I look out across the land  
That all I view belongs to me  
I ought to take more time to see!*

*The distant hills and mountains high,  
The rolling clouds and bright blue sky,  
No one can take these views from me  
As long as I have eyes to see.*

*A timid deer with haunting look  
Who stands refreshed by yonder brook  
Knows not that he belongs to me,  
Oh, what a thrilling sight to see!*

*The song of birds so gay and clear  
That fill the morning air with cheer,  
And fragrant flowers of every hue,  
That stand erect bedecked with dew,  
All these and more belong to me,  
If I but use my eyes to see.*

*The Leitner Company wishes you a  
Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year*

# Woodchucks:

## *Their Ecology And Control*



The woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) is a common large rodent found throughout Wisconsin. Other names for the woodchuck include groundhog, whistle pig or marmot. Woodchucks are shy and wary, and when approached, will usually retreat into a den. The animal's retreat may be accompanied by a loud, shrill whistle or a low "chucking" sound. If cornered, woodchucks can be rather bold and have been known to hold their ground and even rush people.

The woodchuck's claim to fame is Groundhog Day. As legend has it, on February 2 the woodchuck emerges from its burrow. If the woodchuck sees its shadow and is frightened back underground, it means six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't see its shadow and stays out, an early spring is likely. America's "official" groundhog (Jimmy) lives in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and every Groundhog Day is cause for community celebration. Woodchucks do not "chuck" wood. Therefore, the age-old tongue twister (How much wood could a woodchuck chuck . . .) will remain forever unanswered.

Woodchucks can be beneficial, as their abandoned burrows provide homes for rabbits, opossums, foxes and weasels. However, they can also be a serious nuisance for the farmer, gardener, homeowner and property manager.

### Identification

Woodchucks belong to the squirrel family. They have short legs, a rotund appearance, and weigh 5 to 10 pounds. Woodchucks are brown overall, but they have a "grizzled" or frosted appearance because of bands of black and white on individual hairs. The head and body measure from 16 to 20 inches and the densely-haired, dark tail adds another 4 to 7 inches. The sexes appear identical. Their powerful forefeet are equipped with long, curved claws which make them experts in digging burrows. The woodchuck has typical rodent incisors. These chisel-like front teeth are extremely sharp, and can inflict a painful bite.

### Range

The woodchuck lives throughout Wisconsin, but it is more common in agricultural areas where abundant food can support larger numbers. Their populations fluctuate irregularly, but in general, woodchuck numbers have increased since the turn of the century. During periods of abundance, woodchuck densities may reach one animal per two acres and possibly higher.

### Habitat and General Biology

Woodchucks prefer dry, well-drained soils in open woodlands, field edges and rocky slopes. They have also adapted well to urbanization and live in rock walls, gardens, parks and golf courses. Don't be surprised to see a woodchuck high in a tree — they are capable climbers.

They are active primarily during the day (diurnal) and spend most of their time feeding or basking in the sun near their burrows.

Their burrows, which are used for several seasons, can be quite extensive, as deep as five feet and more than 60 feet in length. Woodchuck burrows have two or more openings of two types: the main entrance, and plunge holes or "back doors." The main entrance will be surrounded by freshly excavated dirt, a result of construction and the woodchuck's habit of cleaning its burrow several times a week. Fresh soil is an excellent indicator of an active burrow. The plunge holes rarely have any dirt present because they are dug from below the soil surface. They serve primarily as escape routes.

A woodchuck usually stays within several hundred feet of its den. However, the distance may vary in response to food availability. One exception occurs during the spring mating season, when males will travel considerable distances in search of mates.

The mating season lasts from March through April. A female produces one litter per year of two to six (usually four or five) young born after a 32-day gestation period.

The young are independent in about six to eight weeks and leave the den in mid-July. They occupy abandoned dens and, like adults, spend the fall feeding as they prepare for hibernation.

The woodchuck is one of the few true hibernators. That is, it relies entirely on body fat reserves for energy throughout its winter sleep. Woodchucks enter their state of torpor (sleep) sometime in mid- to late October and remain in hibernation until March or April. Disappearance and emergence may differ by a month or more from southern to northern Wisconsin. Woodchucks will occasionally make a brief winter appearance during a thaw.

Adult woodchucks are quite capable of defending themselves, but young ones are preyed upon by hawks, owls, coyotes, badgers, weasels and dogs. Highway traffic takes a heavy toll of woodchucks of all ages.

*(Continued on Page 7)*

# Woodchucks —

(Continued from Page 6)

## Food Habits

Woodchucks are primarily vegetarians. They feed on a wide range of fruits and green plants including vegetables, grasses and flowers. Vulnerable crops include peas, beans, corn, carrots, lettuce and other leaf crops, apples, and flowers. Woodchucks will occasionally strip and eat the bark of young saplings, especially during spring. They will eat insects, including grasshoppers, crickets and June bugs, and other invertebrates. They require salt, which they often obtain along roadsides where it accumulated during the winter.

## Legal Status

Woodchucks are protected by Wisconsin law. There is no specified hunting or trapping season. However, landowners or their designees may hunt or trap woodchucks at any time on their property. Apparently, the original motivation for protecting woodchucks was their value in creating cottontail rabbit habitat (burrows).

## Damage

Woodchucks cause problems in two ways: feeding and burrowing. As mentioned earlier, they are fond of garden flowers and vegetables, and can quickly destroy a garden. Their burrows can raise havoc with farm equipment. The mounds of dirt at their burrow entrances can damage cutter blades, and livestock can be seriously injured if they stumble in a hole.

In urban settings, they undermine sidewalks, driveways and parking lots, causing expensive damage when cave-ins occur. When they inhabit rock walls, their burrowing removes the dirt between the rocks, causing structural damage and the possibility of wall collapse. Burrowing along building foundations can also result in costly repairs.

As noted, woodchucks can be beneficial and if not causing a problem, they can be fun to watch. Select among the following control options, but please consider lethal control a last resort.

## Control

**Exclusion:** Not only are woodchucks proficient burrowers, they are also excellent climbers. Fencing them out is difficult but not impossible. Use heavy-duty chicken wire or other wire of similar mesh size. Place fencing 10 to 12 inches below and four feet or more above the ground surface. The fencing should have an outward pointing "lip" at the top and especially below ground.

If the fence alone doesn't work, electrify it. Often, a single strand of electrified wire will be adequate. Garden centers, hardware stores and farm co-ops can provide materials and advice for electric fences. Don't let vegetation touch the charged wire, as it could short out the sys-

tem. An electric fence will also deter raccoons and other four-footed garden pests.

**Trapping:** Woodchucks can be live-trapped fairly easily. A 24-inch cage-type wire-mesh trap with a 9" x 9" door opening (depending on the size of the offending animal) baited with fresh greens or green vegetables will effectively control a resident population. These traps are available at garden, hardware and sporting good stores, or possibly for rent or loan from a wildlife-removal contractor or public agency. Keep your fingers away from the trap when moving the captured animal. Be sure you have the landowner's consent or approval from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources before releasing the animal.

Where legal, you can lethally trap woodchucks. Conibear traps (size 160 to 220) can be very effective. Be sure to check with the DNR first; you may need a trapping or small game license. Do not use lethal traps where domestic animals could be harmed. We recommend consulting with or hiring a knowledgeable trapper.

**Poisons and Fumigants:** There are no poisons registered for woodchuck control. However, gas cartridges will effectively eradicate woodchucks. These are available at most farm co-ops, garden centers, and hardware stores. Be careful when using these devices, and follow label instructions closely. They are most effective when placed as far back into the burrow as possible, and when soils are moist.

DO NOT fumigate burrows under or around buildings. The fumigant could seep into buildings and endanger occupants.

**Shooting:** Where legal, shooting can effectively control woodchucks. This is fine for rural areas, but due to safety hazards and legal restrictions, it is not recommended in urban or suburban settings. Sport shooting of woodchucks using high-powered "varmint" rifles is quite popular in some states. Remember, woodchucks are very wary, so a long-range firearm is essential. Early morning is probably the best time to hunt them. Pick a high vantage point, and be sure you know what you are shooting at and what lies behind your target!

Check the DNR annual hunting regulations for more information.

**Contractors:** In recent years, small businesses that deal with nuisance wildlife have been established in many parts of Wisconsin. These businesses are usually quite effective at removing and relocating problem wildlife for a reasonable fee. Consult your local yellow pages or a DNR office for recommendations.

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**Authors:** Scott R. Craven is professor of wildlife ecology, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension. Stuart Keith is the owner of Wildlife Control Specialists, Inc. Produced by the Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Woodchuck illustration courtesy of Arwin Provonsha, Purdue University.

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IN A JOINT EFFORT

# Minnesota Group, Golf Course Superintendents Promoting More Scholarships

By Ralph Turtinen

A joint agreement has been developed between a trio of Minnesota directors of the Trans-Mississippi Golf Association and the board of directors of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association (MGCSA) to increase scholarships in Minnesota for young men and women pursuing careers in the turf industry.

Both organizations have provided scholarships in their respective areas for several years and will continue to do so.

"However, the expanded plan will promote additional scholarships since there is such a critical need for so many more qualified people in the turf industry," said Hank Wilkinson, chairman of the group.

MGCSA President Kevin Clunis noted that "anything that can be done to help Minnesota-connected students is a plus for the industry. We welcome the cooperation of the Trans-Miss."

Clunis is head golf course superintendent at St. Croix National Golf Club in Somerset, Wis.

Both agree that a concerted effort will more readily allow solicitations to be made to various Minnesota clubs,

companies and individuals to help young men and women with their college education.

A member of The Minikahda Club in Minneapolis, Wilkinson is working with Tom Garrett and D. Ward Johnson, both members of Somerset Country Club in St. Paul, in preparing brochures and other informational material to utilize in their fund-raising efforts.

A preliminary meeting was held between the MGCSA Board and the Trans group in November.

The Minnesota plan is to approach various clubs, companies and individuals in concert with the MGCSA. Along with lending their blessing to the plan, the superintendents' association has been asked to have individual superintendents meet with the Trans group when solicitations are made at their respective clubs and some corporate meetings.

"It makes considerable sense to work closely with organizations like the MGCSA since the benefits of the program are directed toward people developing careers in this industry," Wilkinson said.

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# Openings Now Available On MTGF Committees

By Greg Hubbard  
MTGF President

Determining the direction and leadership of the Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation has become a priority.

Openings are now available on the MTGF Expo Committee, the Editorial Committee, the Conference Committee and the Community Relations Committee for the upcoming year. These positions offer wonderful opportunities for forward-looking dedicated individuals who would like to influence the Foundation's future. Experience is not necessary. Contact your Association's Board Member if you would like to help.

Display advertising to help cover production costs is now available for each *Clippings*. For many of our members, this newsletter represents their only source of turf and grounds information. Keep us in mind for any written articles, interviews, photos or special events you may want publicized. Contact our Executive Director, Scott Turtinen, at (612) 473-0557 for display ad rates or editorial contributions.

The Foundation recently funded its first research request as \$1,000 was donated to the University of Minnesota's Science Display and Trial Garden. This special area demonstrates the relationships of turf, plant materials and landscape structures within an urban landscape. Stop by and see Brad Pedersen's fine efforts just north of Folwell Ave. on the St. Paul campus.

Our biggest and most time-consuming efforts, however, remain with the proposed research facility and park complex at the University of Minnesota's Rosemount Research Facility. Though still in the conceptual stage, our earliest visions have exploded as the MTGF, the University of Minnesota and others explore the many, varied opportunities available at this site.

Golf courses, sports field complexes, and interpretive/exercise trails may all share the proposed developments. New turf management and recreational management programs are also being investigated at both the University and technical college levels. Should this vision be realized, the MTGF and the University of Minnesota will be recognized as one of the finest research and educational leaders in the turf and grounds industry.

In support of these efforts, members of the MTGF Board and University faculty have recently visited four research sites across the country.

Preliminary investigations of research facilities, educational programs and their support staffs have taken place at Iowa State, Ohio State, Mississippi State and the University of Wisconsin. As we move past the early information gathering process, we expect more and more people will become involved as we develop consensus on the expectations and magnitude of this proposed project. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting, ever-expanding concept.

The MTGF has accomplished much in its short history. In two years, a constitution has been written, tax-free corporate status has been achieved and an extensive 6,000 member industry-wide mailing list has been developed. We have co-sponsored two summer expos, a successful winter conference and trade show, and spread the word about events and news throughout the industry via our newsletter. Through the help of many, our nine allied associations are successfully co-operating as one combined Minnesota Green Industry entity for the first time. As we move past our infant stages of development, we must muster more resources in time and money to meet our true mission: to support our industry in education, information and research. Our true work is only just beginning.

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