

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses

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Objectives:

1. Enhance wildlife habitats on existing golf courses by working with golf course superintendents and providing advice for ecologically sound course management.
2. Encourage active participation in conservation programs by golfers, golf course superintendents, golf officials, and the general public.
3. Recognize the people who are actively participating in environmentally responsible projects.
4. Educate the public and golfing community about the benefits of golf courses and the role they play relative to the environment and wildlife.

Start Date: 1991

Project Duration: ongoing

Total Funding: \$100,000 per year

Audubon International is a non-profit environmental organization that envisions communities becoming more sustainable through good stewardship of the natural environment where people live, work, and recreate through responsible management of land, water, wildlife, and natural resources. Since 1991, it has worked in partnership with the USGA to offer the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP), an award-winning education and certification program that promotes ecologically-sound land management and the conservation of natural resources on golf courses. Audubon Signature Programs provide comprehensive environmental education and planning assistance to new developments.

Today, more than 2,200 golf courses in 30 countries participate in the ACSP for Golf Courses. More than half of those enrolled have developed an environmental plan to guide management of the golf course and 723 have achieved certification for their outstanding best practices. We also awarded 664 "Certificates of Achievement" to recognize golf courses for outstanding accomplishments to improve wildlife habitat, save water, conserve energy, and reduce waste.

Audubon International provided environmental planning services to 161 projects (126 golf-related) development projects in 36 U.S. states and 10 countries, covering 75,000 acres of land, through the Audubon Signature Programs in 2007/08. Seventeen projects achieved certification, bringing the total number of golf courses that have been designated as Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries to 70 in 22 US states and 3 countries.

An analysis of environmental



Southern Chorus Frog. Out of Golf Digest America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses, 56% are members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses and undertaking voluntary action to protect and enhance wildlife habitats. Photo Credit: Marvin Bouknight, Oldfield Naturalist, SC

improvements on certified golf courses compared with golf courses that are enrolled but not yet certified revealed significant differences. Certified courses are 2-4 times more likely to be involved in environmental projects, such as exotic plant removal; prairie, wetland, and stream restoration; and endangered or threatened species reintroduction.

Efforts to enhance wildlife habitats on golf courses are done on a regional and site-specific basis. In addition to participation in the program's environmental management and certification activities, golf courses are invited to participate in wildlife monitoring events and activities. Birdwatching teams from 72 golf courses each identified an average of 46 bird species during the 2008 North American Birdwatching Open, a 24-hour bird count conducted at the height of bird migration in March, April, and May. (Start date based on location.)

Audubon International encourages active participation in conservation programs by golfers, golf course superintendents, golf officials, and the general public through a variety of outreach and education activities. In 2005, Audubon International, the United States Golf

Association, and The PGA of America launched the Golf and the Environment Initiative to foster environmental awareness, action, and positive results throughout the golf industry. A Web site, www.golfandenvironment.org serves as a clearinghouse of golf and environment information. In addition, a Green Golfer pledge drive to engage golfers has been launched. Currently there are over 6,400 Green Golfers who have taken the pledge and over 105 Golf Courses involved in the Green Golf Challenge.

Over 2000 people took part in seminars and field training conducted by Audubon International staff in 2007/08. More than 500 conservation organizations are directly involved with golf courses as a result of their participation in the ACSP.

Summary Points

- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP): 2,205
- Number of golf courses enrolled in the Audubon Signature Program: 237
- Total number of acres registered in ACSP for Golf Courses: 519,474
- Number of conservation organizations directly involved with golf courses as a result of their participation in the ACSP: >500
- Average number of bird species sighted on 72 golf courses participating in the 2008 North American Birdwatching Open: 46
- Number of Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Courses: 80
- Total number of golf courses certified in Environmental Planning: 1,780
- Number of golf course personnel and others educated by Audubon International in 2007/08 through seminars, conference presentations, and site visits: >2,000