



Supporting birds on the golf course is something the USGA Green Section has been advocating throughout its 100-year history.

ATTRACTING BIRDS TO GOLF COURSES

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Editor's Note: Promoting wildlife habitat on golf courses has been a part of the Green Section's work since its founding in 1920. Birds have always been of particular interest to the Green Section because golf courses offer so many excellent habitat opportunities for a wide variety of bird species. While birds today face increasing pressure from habitat loss, development and other modern challenges, we can look back at the article "Attracting Birds to Golf Courses" – published in the Bulletin of the Green Section of the United States Golf Association in 1921 – and find that many of the recommendations made then are just as relevant today. You'll see a lot of common themes between this article and the recently published "[How to Make Your Golf Course More Bird-Friendly](#)", even with the 99-year gap in publication dates. That reflects the fact that good ideas stand the test of time, and that our job is never done as we work to increase the environmental benefits of golf courses.

The preservation, encouragement and increase of useful birds is a national duty in which all organizations able to do so should cooperate. Federal and state legislation affecting the matter, in general, is satisfactory. National, state, cooperative, and private bird refuges are numerous and growing more so yearly. Individual bird protectionists are legion and their organizations for the cause are large and powerful.

Golf clubs, a class of organizations broadly interested in the out-of-doors, including its animal inhabitants, and alive to esthetic considerations, can ill withhold their support from a movement so well-established and meritorious. In fact, considering the well-known utility of birds in destroying insect and other pests, golf clubs will only be consulting their own interests in preserving and propagating these natural predators upon the foes of their greens and fairways.

Golf courses, without special modification, present several features that are attractive to birds. The broad expanses of short grass on the fairways furnish excellent feeding grounds for robins, meadowlarks, starlings, flickers, and killdeers. The longer grasses and weeds of the rough, and scattered clumps of trees and shrubbery open to full light, support an abundant insect population, an important source of food for our feathered friends. Many birds find nesting sites also in the arborescent growths present, and sally forth for food over the grassed areas, where they are often joined by numbers of those aerial feeders, the swallows and swifts, which find on these unobstructed reaches happy hunting grounds.

Such are the impressions recalled of a season's observations on a golf course well situated for birds. There are courses not so fortunate, but all have the fundamentals of valuable bird refuges and should be improved. The essentials of bird encouragement are protection, food, water and nesting sites. Protected to a considerable extent from trespass, and relatively free from natural enemies of birds, golf courses already have much of the safety required for sanctuaries. Birds promptly respond to protection; but it should be as complete as possible. So far as food is concerned, insects are plentiful on most golf courses, but it would help the birds and ornament the courses if shrubbery on the grounds were selected chiefly from species producing fruits fed upon by birds. Most golf courses, again, have water hazards at which birds can drink and bathe; but where these are absent or are far apart, bird fountains could easily be attached to hydrant supply pipes. These not only would be a boon to birds on hot summer days, but if placed in view of rest benches would be a source of interest and entertainment to members and visitors.

Protection, food, water these are the things that usually are present in some degree and which may very easily be supplemented; but nesting sites, especially for some of the most useful birds, are scarce or lacking on most golf courses. The trees and shrubbery (the latter best if in tangled masses) will accommodate many birds; but the birds that nest in cavities can hardly find a home on improved lands, especially where tree surgeons have been employed. Fortunately, these birds will occupy artificial cavities or nest-boxes. In most cases nest-boxes must be supplied if we would enliven and benefit our golf course with such beautiful and useful birds as the purple martin, bluebird, house wren, tree swallow, flicker, white-breasted nuthatch, and chickadee. At least twice as many other kinds of small birds have been known to occupy nest-boxes. These bird homes are manufactured by a large number of dealers in the United States and may be put up without much trouble. Placing nest-boxes is work which can well be done in winter, a season during which, at least on northern courses, employees are but little occupied, and members might welcome something to do out of doors. Names of dealers in bird boxes, bird baths and the like, and bulletins treating all phases of bird attraction methods, as well as advice in special cases, may be obtained by application to the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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