

**REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION
RESEARCH OFFICE**

**THE AUDUBON COOPERATIVE SANCTUARY SYSTEM
1999-2000**

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Executive Summary

Audubon International now has 2,200 golf courses enrolled in its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS) programs for golf courses, providing education and assistance to promote environmental stewardship, conservation of biodiversity, and sustainability in resource management. At FY 1999-2000 end, membership in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses had risen to 2,129 existing courses. Over the year, member courses earned 480 certificates of achievement in specific subject areas; 47 were certified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries, bringing the total to 239. The Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, for golf courses under development, enrolled 11 new members, for a total of 70. The number of certified Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuaries rose by four, to 19, during the year.

In this fiscal year, Audubon International also hosted the 4th Annual North American Bird Watching Open on golf courses and conducted its first *Managed Lands Survey*, gathering data on the impact of program participation in key environmental priority subjects and participant attitudes about the effects of participation. Audubon International staff educated 2,500 people through seminars and lectures over the course of the fiscal year.

In addition, this year Audubon International expanded the educational materials available for golf course environmental stewardship. Its President and CEO, Ron Dodson, published the book *Managing Wildlife Habitat on Golf Courses*. Audubon International developed an *Environmental Performance Audit* suitable for use in educating golf course superintendents on environmental stewardship, then, with USGA funding and in cooperation with the Club Managers Association of America, expanded that tool into a comprehensive *Environmental Performance Audit for Clubs*. The Audubon International Institute developed new *Sustainable Resource Management Guidelines* and a *Rapid Habitat Assessment* protocol to help in protecting natural resources at Audubon Signature Program member sites.

Over this year Audubon International also worked in collaborative efforts with many other organizations, including overseeing research on golf and the environment, producing materials to improve golfer environmental education, developing the international *Valderama Declaration* to promote environmentally responsible golf course management, and development of informational materials for public officials for environmental review of new golf courses. It also facilitated conservation partnerships between a number of Signature Program member courses and colleges and universities.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, 1999-2000

Overview

With the support of the United States Golf Association, Audubon International has enrolled 2,200 golf courses in Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS) environmental education and conservation assistance programs in the United States and abroad.¹ By teaching stewardship, conserving biodiversity, and achieving sustainability, Audubon International is helping the golf course industry apply environmental best management practices and take a leadership role in environmental protection and enhancement.

- **Teaching Stewardship** - The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP) educates managers of existing golf courses about environmental stewardship and motivates them to take action to enhance and protect wildlife and conserve natural resources.
- **Conserving Biodiversity** - The Audubon Signature Program extends the ACSS network to include properties not yet developed. By working closely with architects, contractors, and managers during design and development, Audubon International helps ensure that biodiversity conservation and resource protection receive proper attention during the construction, as well as the operation, of the golf course.
- **Achieving Sustainability** - Through the Audubon International Institute, Audubon International spearheads research and provides technical assistance to promote sustainable resource management and development. By actively working with other conservation organizations, government agencies, and developers, the Institute is creating national demonstration projects that showcase environmental master planning and ecological design.

Accomplishments In The 1999-2000 Audubon International Fiscal Year:

- The ACSP for Golf Courses now educates **2,129 members** involved in conservation activities that benefit more than a **half-million acres of land**. Audubon International awarded **480 Certificates of Achievement** for outstanding efforts to improve wildlife habitat, conserve resources, and educate employees, students, or the general public about environmental stewardship. **Forty-seven properties** were newly designated as **Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries** in 1999/00, bringing the **current total to 239**.
- Audubon Signature Program staff made **248 contacts in thirty-eight states and nine countries** this fiscal year. **Eleven new projects** entered the Audubon Signature Program, to bring the **total number of projects enrolled to seventy**. These projects

¹ More than 250 additional golf courses have enrolled in Canada, where the program Audubon International created is now administered under an agreement with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System of Canada.

represent properties undergoing development that will be built to Audubon International standards for **sustainable design, resource management, and education**. During the fiscal year, **four** golf courses achieved certification as **Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuaries**, raising the total to 19.

- Audubon International hosted the 4th Annual North American Bird Watching Open on International Migratory Bird Day and recorded 337 species of birds on golf courses, including 9 federally listed threatened and endangered species.
- Audubon International represented wildlife/environmental interests at USGA Research Committee Meetings
- Audubon International conducted an environmental *Managed Lands Survey* to assess the impact of program participation on a number of key environmental priority areas, which included wildlife habitat conservation, water quality, and chemical use and reduction. In addition, the survey included a brief assessment of participant attitudes about the impact of ACSP participation on golf playing quality, job satisfaction, and golfer satisfaction. Results of the survey help to confirm that the program generates tangible environmental benefits in terms of increased wildlife habitats, decreased chemical use, and improved management practices.

Seminars and Presentations

Audubon International staff educated 2,500 people through seminars and lectures during 1999/00—more than double our previous year's total. This extraordinary effort placed our educational, technical, and administrative staff in front of audiences from across North America. Highlights included:

- *Conserving Open Space*, Smart Growth Conference (sponsored by Urban Land Institute), Las Vegas, NV
- *Developing an Environmental Plan*, Rutgers University Golf Turf Management School, Rutgers, NJ (unit within Three-Week Preparatory Short Course)
- *Protecting the Environment Through Planning and Cooperation*, Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Summit, Eufaula, AL
- *Environmental Approaches to Golf Course Design*, U.S. Department of Interior-Bureau of Reclamation, Phoenix Area Office
- *Research Opportunities for Golf Courses and the Environment*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI
- *Defining Sustainability: Managing Our Growth, Sustaining Our Future*, Branson Lakes Chamber of Commerce, MO
- *Evaluating Environmental Performance*, Club Managers Association Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA
- *Integrated Environmental Management, Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation*, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Conference & Show, New Orleans, LA
- *Stewardship Where You Live, Work, and Play*, Professional Grounds Management Society Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD; New York State Turfgrass Association Regional Conference, Buffalo
- *Sustainable Design and Management*, Earth Maui Nature Summit, Maui, HI

Educational Materials Development

Assisting our members in helping the environment is a number one priority for Audubon International staff. This year, we worked on several projects to improve and expand educational materials to provide better guidance for members seeking to achieve certification in our programs.

- Published *Managing Wildlife Habitat on Golf Courses*, by AI President and CEO Ronald Dodson, which provides a framework for successful, environmentally sensitive land management practices.
- Developed an *Environmental Performance Audit* suitable for teaching superintendents to assess environmental management practices for golf courses. Then, in partnership with the **Club Managers Association of America (CMAA)** and with financial support of the **USGA**, Audubon International expanded that tool into a comprehensive *Environmental Performance Audit for Clubs*, to help club managers assess environmental management of all aspects of a club, including: buildings and grounds, dining, sport amenities, marinas, maintenance areas, and more. CMAA distributed the audit to 8000 members nationwide; Audubon International staff led a workshop at CMAA's annual conference to encourage use of the audit and participation in environmental management programs.
- The Audubon International Institute developed two new educational tools to help members of the **Audubon Signature Program** protect significant natural resources on site. New *Sustainable Resource Management Guidelines* assist members with early siting, design, and planning of sustainable development projects. A *Rapid Habitat Assessment* protocol helps Audubon International staff work with members to identify and preserve significant wildlife species and their habitats.

Collaborative Efforts

To be a catalyst for conservation, Audubon International partners with universities, organizations, and interested individuals at the local, state, and national level for the purpose of *helping people help the environment*. In addition, we encourage our members to form local Resource Advisory Groups that will spearhead conservation initiatives and facilitate communication and technical support. The following collaborations directly benefit golf courses:

- Environmental Approaches to Golf Course Management and Design
Since 1991, Audubon International has served as the leading environmental organization working with golf industry professionals and associations to champion environmentally responsible golf course design, development, and management. In 1999/2000, we continued and expanded our efforts to promote appropriate educational programs, industry-wide initiatives, and research.
 - Research- Served on committees and boards of directors, including: USGA Research Committee, Wildlife Links Program, and GCSAA Environmental Stewardship Committee.
 - Golfer Education- Worked in cooperation with the United States Golf Association and select golf courses hosting USGA Tournaments to prepare

media fact sheets to raise awareness about the stewardship activities and accomplishments taking place on these courses.

- International Valderrama Declaration- Worked with a consortium of golfing and environmental organizations from North America and Europe to promote environmentally responsible golf course management. The Valderrama Declaration was endorsed by the European and United States Golf Associations, the International Olympic Committee Sport and Environmental Commission, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and the United Nations Environment Program.
- Reviewing Golf Course Proposals: Materials for Local Officials- Served on the advisory panel of national experts who contributed to the development of this informational packet. The packet is designed to assist communities considering a golf course navigate the often-complex environmental issues involved in evaluating such projects. The packet was developed by Cook College's Center for Environmental Communication and the Office of Continuing Professional Education and funded by the USGA.
- Conservation Partnerships
Audubon International facilitates conservation partnerships between members of the Audubon Signature Program and local colleges and universities to facilitate research, education, and information exchange regarding ecologically sensitive design and management. Certified Audubon Signature Sanctuaries worked with the following colleges and universities in 1999/00:

Name of Educational Institution, Audubon Signature Program Member

- *California Polytechnic State University*, Cypress Ridge Golf Course, Arroyo Grande, CA
- *College of the Ozarks*, Top of the Rock, Ridgedale, MO
- *Cornell University* and *SUNY Morrisville*, Turning Stone Golf Courses, Verona, NY
- *Kent State University*, Sand Ridge Golf Club, Chardon, Ohio
- *Merced College-Los Banos*, Stevinson Ranch, Stevinson, CA
- *Rutgers University* and the *Center for Environmental Communication*, Sand Ridge Golf Club, Chardon, OH
- *University of Florida*, PGA Golf Club, Port St. Lucie, FL, and Bonita Bay East Club, Bonita Springs, FL
- *University of Georgia*, Catechee Golf Club, Hartwell, GA
- *University of Nevada at Reno* and *Truckee Meadow Community College*, Red Hawk Golf Club at Wingfield Springs, Sparks, NV