

# Golf Keeps America "Green"

February 7, 1994, Dallas, Texas

FOR THE 13TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Turfgrass Conference and Show. This year more than 1,400 people attended the Green Section's program on Monday, February 7, at the Dallas Convention Center. James T. Snow, National Director of the USGA Green Section, introduced the afternoon's program of 20 speakers who addressed this year's theme, "Golf Keeps America 'Green'." Following are the full proceedings.

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## *A New Attitude: Audubon, Our Golf Course, and the Community*

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by PETER V. LEUZINGER  
CGCS, St. Charles Country Club

I REMEMBER the first time I received a telephone call from a complete stranger wanting to know, "Who's in charge of chemicals on the golf course?" That person was convinced the golf course was responsible for a sudden queasiness he felt after he drove by the golf course earlier that day. I will never forget my feelings. Through the entire conversation I felt defenseless, off guard; yet the whole time I kept thinking, "Why me? I care. I'm a good guy. This isn't fair. We haven't done anything wrong!"

I'm not sure exactly what I said. I hoped it was the right thing. I do remember that I was terribly uncomfortable with that conversation. By the same token, I knew that I was not an environmental saboteur. Quite the contrary! I have always been happy with the opportunity to work outside on a golf course. I know Bob Newhart, television psychiatrist, would have handled a difficult conversation



*Peter V. Leuzinger*

on the telephone better than I did. It was important for me to fix my bad feelings.

That's why in 1991 I was so happy to see a reputable ally come to our side and help good golf course superintendents with good management programs defend their programs. The USGA provided funding to The Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. (ASNYS), to form the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP). Ron Dodson, President of The Audubon Society of New York State, golfer, and nature lover, knew that golf courses can make very good wildlife sanctuaries. He met with USGA officials and they decided to promote golf course management with wildlife and environmental quality in mind. Ron received a \$30,000 grant the first year, hired some staff, organized a program, and with the help of the USGA began to introduce the program to the nation's golf courses. With three suc-

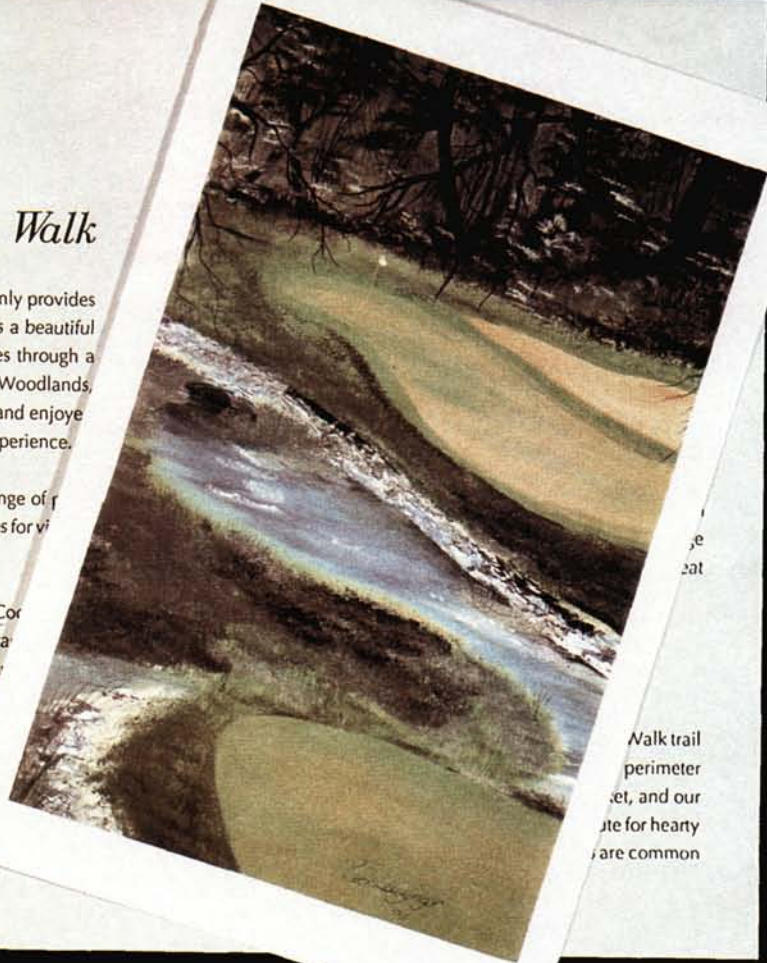
## St. Charles Country Club

### *Nature Walk*

The 60 wooded acres north of the Clubhouse not only provides a buffer zone for the golf course, but also contains a beautiful walk for nature lovers. Our trails provide 2.4 miles through a variety of habitats typical of Northern Kane County. Woodlands, waterways, wetlands, and prairie can be observed and enjoyed all four seasons of the year, truly an educational experience.

Diversity of habitats provides a home for a wide range of plants and animal species, offering year-round opportunities for visitors to expand their awareness of the natural world.

St. Charles Country Club is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. The Nature Walk is a key part of our program. We are very proud of the fact that our golf course and surrounding grounds are managed with wildlife in mind.



Walk trail perimeter set, and our site for hearty are common

*St. Charles Country Club has successfully established a nature trail, used by members and for invited group outings, such as Cub Scouts and grade school tours. A simple pamphlet details their Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program projects.*

cessive \$100,000 grants and three full years under their belts, over 1,100 golf courses have enrolled in the program.

This is how the program works: For a small fee, \$100 per year, your golf course becomes a registered member of the ACSP. You will receive a resource inventory handbook asking specific questions about your property (e.g., size, specific habitat, etc.) and a subscription to *Field Notes*, the Cooperative Sanctuary newsletter. Once the resource inventory handbook is completed and returned to ASNYS, you will receive an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Report prepared exclusively for your golf course, recommending appropriate conservation and habitat enhancement projects.

There are seven categories for certification in the ACSP:

1. Environmental Planning
2. Wildlife Food Enhancement
3. Wildlife Cover Enhancement
4. Public Involvement
5. Integrated Pest Management
6. Water Conservation
7. Water Enhancement

You can apply for certification in one or more categories. To be fully certified in all seven categories, each category must be reported to the ASNYS and the criteria met. Jean Mackay, staff ecologist at ASNYS and a good friend, tells me 15 courses are fully certified. They are:

Kapalua Bay Course, Hawaii  
St. Charles Country Club, Illinois  
Aurora Country Club, Illinois  
Village Links of Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Cantigny Golf Course, Illinois  
Evanston Golf Club, Illinois  
Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club, Florida

Prairie Dunes Country Club, Kansas  
Applewood Golf Course, Colorado  
TPC of Michigan, Michigan  
Apple Creek Country Club, North Dakota

Ozaukee Country Club, Wisconsin  
Breckenridge Golf Club, Colorado  
Semiahmoo Golf and Country Club, Washington

Hole-In-The-Wall Golf Club, Florida

Jean reports that 45 more golf courses have received 185 certificates, which means more courses are likely to receive full certification this year. We also are happy to see that the ACSP has established recertification



*Nest boxes not only provide homes for resident birds, but also send a subtle message about environmental awareness.*

guidelines to insure ongoing commitments from those certified golf courses.

I have been asked to share some ideas for the certification category projects. When it comes to trying new things, it is fun to find out what other people are doing. This is one reason a good resource committee works so well. Their talent and interests can add a lot to the program you are trying to get started.

You can form a resource committee to help you plan and implement your projects. A resource committee can be made up of fellow employees, golfers, and even people outside the golf course who bring expertise to the

group. There are many people out there who are willing to donate their time and add their name to a project like the ACSP. Our resource committee consists of a writer/promoter, a bird watcher, a handyman who builds and repairs bird houses and feeders, a craftsman, one outdoor lover, and a local landscape architect and folklore expert. Combine these talents with a golf course superintendent who is used to wearing many hats, and you will be surprised how fast your programs take shape!

Our whole program is based on the premise that our golf course is an asset to

the community. It is this kind of attitude that a good resource committee can really help generate. The resource committee's work improves the public's perception of the golf course as part of the community. Our ACSP is the best promotion we have ever had. Telephone calls coming into our office are congratulatory, rather than negative. We no longer feel defenseless. We have a good program and a whole new attitude.

For those of you who have a hangup with public involvement, I think we can help. A private country club especially needs to find ways to gain public trust. There are plenty of

ways to get the public involved without losing the privacy your club enjoys. How do we reach the public? Try any or all of these ideas. Remember, it is a matter of attitude:

**1. Press Releases:** The ACSP will help you reach local papers with announcements about your environmental programs. You may strike up some friendships and develop some very positive reaction from the press. There is nothing like a front-page picture to bring positive attention to your golf course.

**2. Brochure:** Make some simple pamphlets that detail your ACSP work. Leave the pamphlets at the reception desk, pro shop, and lounge. Make your pamphlet available at career day and the local garden club. Toot your horn a little!

**3. Speaking Engagements:** We all need to develop our communication skills. One wonderful way to do this is to begin talking to small groups, develop a slide presentation, and go on from there. For example, I never dreamed I'd be explaining the ACSP program to over 1,000 people attending the annual USGA Green Section Education Conference.

**4. Newsletter Articles** at your golf course are a natural. You need new subject material anyway. How many times can you talk about defending your green speed?

**5. Tours:** Very basic golf course tours have a great impact on public perception. A successful outing demonstrates goodwill that will spread by word of mouth. Tour

groups might be made up of grade-school children, young adults, biology clubs, Cub Scouts, senior golfers, women's golf leagues, college students, local golf course superintendents, and don't forget the "press." Not only will you spread the word about the ACSP, you may even recruit a future horticulture student.

**6. Nesting Boxes:** These can be used as a tool for reaching out to the community. Giveaways to golfers, schools, or the local cemetery association are greatly appreciated and stimulate interest in your ACSP. We make extra bluebird houses every year. We have 44 nest boxes on the golf course and roadway along the course. This subtle statement along the roadside is sending a message to local traffic around our course.

**7. Establish a Library:** Books on natural habitat, building nest boxes, butterflies, bird identification, and environmental issues are a worthwhile service to your golfers, and they can be checked out at the club.

**8. Outreach Programs:** Give the public an opportunity to use your grounds for something other than golf, e.g., local photography club, group art classes, and birders during the migration season can all benefit from the golf course.

**9. Wildlife Reports:** Have golfers get involved in reporting and monitoring wildlife. Provide the golfers with maps of the course and let them help you take inventory of the varied wildlife on the property.

**10. Craft Projects:** These projects may help provide funding for supplies needed for the ACSP. Wreaths made from wild grapevine and bittersweet are unique and popular. Just make sure to tag these as ACSP promotions.

These are just a few of the ideas we have seen work. Our new attitude is becoming infectious. *Coach* is a popular television show that always concludes with a meaningful anecdote. The following quotation by an unknown author is something we like to share with new friends.

#### Attitude

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company . . . a church . . . a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day. We cannot change our past . . . we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude . . . I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you . . . we are in charge of our attitudes."



*A golf course provides school-children an opportunity to explore and be intrigued by nature. You may even recruit a future horticulture student.*