



Crooked Oaks Golf Course has century-old live oaks and maritime forest on the property. Wildlife and habitat enhancement, in conjunction with naturalization areas, is a key component of our efforts in the Audubon program.

CERTIFICATION: A GRATIFYING EXPERIENCE

Seabrook Island and the Audubon Program become a natural fit.

by **ALLAN H. PULASKI**

I FIRST LEARNED of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program in late 1993. After learning more about this program, it became obvious to me that this was what golf needed — an organization that not only provided golf course superintendents with ideas and principles that could be implemented at almost any golf course to protect and enhance their unique environment, but also had the support of the USGA and many of the proactive environmental groups.

The Club at Seabrook Island is a private club located on a barrier island (Seabrook Island) about 30 miles southeast of Charleston, S.C., and is comprised of two golf courses. The golf

courses offer many different challenges both from a golfer's viewpoint as well as from a maintenance standpoint because of their natural settings and completely different designs. The Ocean Winds golf course is bordered by sand dunes and salt marshes, while the Crooked Oaks golf course is routed through century-old live oaks and maritime forest.

As I learned more about the ACSP, it was apparent that this program could be a valuable addition to our management of both courses. The ACSP would allow us to accomplish three major goals: 1) protect and enhance the environment that is an integral part of these golf courses, while simultane-

ously providing quality playing conditions; 2) educate the membership and citizens of Seabrook Island that the environment and golf can co-exist with prosperity; and 3) compile the necessary documentation to achieve certification status with the program and to have our management practices documented properly.

One of the main concerns with implementing such a program was how the membership, especially the golfing membership, would accept these principles. The first person I asked to volunteer some time was a tennis member. Ann Kent is a very knowledgeable person who provides a very non-partisan view. She also is involved

with many other organizations in the community. After two meetings we formally assembled our Resource Committee for the program. The remainder of the group are five golf members, staff, and one town official, who is also a member. For us, the *Outreach and Education* category for certification was the easiest category to obtain certification and is the most important category that allows this program to thrive with positive results here at Seabrook Island.

The Club at Seabrook Island became a fully certified member of the ACSP in July 1996. We were all very proud as it was the first golf facility to achieve this designation in South Carolina.

Wildlife and habitat enhancement, in conjunction with naturalizing areas of turfgrass and providing aquatic buffers, is a key component of our program. We are able to incorporate these projects into other categories of the ACSP such as *Water Conservation and Water Quality Management*. As part of our continuing efforts to enhance wildlife, an emphasis has been focused on birds. Seabrook Island is located along the eastern flyway for migratory birds. Inventories of birdfeeders (78) and birdhouses (27) throughout the golf courses have been recorded, bluebird houses erected and monitored on the golf courses, an osprey nest erected, and wood duck boxes are planned.

Projects like these have really helped influence participation in and the popularity of the Audubon Program here at Seabrook. Other events such as the Birdwatching Ryder Cup Championship conducted in May of 1997 and the North American Golf Course Birdwatching Open in May 1998 provided great opportunities for people in the community to see how golf courses can fill an ecological role while serving as a recreational facility.

Our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program is very detailed. This intense IPM program is a credit to the assistant superintendents and staff. Our goal is to protect and enhance habitat each year for this fragile environment we enjoy each day. At the same time, we must manage these two golf courses, making sound agronomical decisions that will allow for quality playing conditions and an enjoyable round of golf for our clientele. With the IPM program, my staff records golf course conditions daily. With this recorded information, we are able to compare and reflect upon past conditions and their impact on the decisions involved with managing these two golf courses. As we compile more data, our management practices become more consistent each year, with pest control becoming more site specific.

When I evaluate the value of the ACSP personally and professionally, it

is a *win-win* situation. Personally, it is an education process that is invaluable and allows me to experience nature firsthand. Professionally, the ACSP provides environmental guidelines and practices that golf course superintendents can use not only to enhance and protect the environment, but to enhance their value as knowledgeable stewards of the environment at local, regional, and national levels.

Mother Nature provides the settings, wildlife, and panoramic views we all enjoy at Seabrook Island. The ACSP has provided Seabrook with many ideas and practices to protect and enhance this unique environment. It has been the support of the club's membership and the efforts of the Resource Committee that have allowed the golf maintenance staff to implement these sound management practices. The experience has been very fulfilling for the Resource Committee at Seabrook. I guess that is why we work so hard to make it better every day.

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The Ocean Winds Golf Course is integrally intertwined with the sand dunes and salt marshes. Our maintenance is carefully managed to successfully protect and enhance these environmentally sensitive areas.