



STEWARDSHIP NEWS

Spring 2024

AMELIA ISLAND

Florida's Trendsetting Green Community

**Making a Difference on
Mainland China**

**How a Desert Golf Course
Is Saving Endangered Fish**

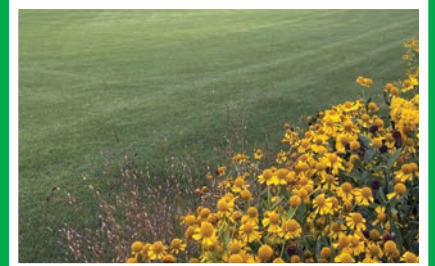
**Meet Our New Green
Lodging-Green Hospitality
Director**

Get Ready for BioBlitz 2024



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CEO CORNER

Great Stewardship Takes People Power

When Audubon International's environmental program managers and specialists head out across the country and around the world to visit our members for their certifications and recertifications, they look beyond our partnerships with the individual golf courses, hotel properties, and other business or public entities we work with to fulfill our mission.

They also see communities of involved and inclusive individuals. They see a collective commitment to sustainability spreading outside every property's walls. They see potential for big, positive, and lasting change for a noble and vital cause. Looking out across the landscape, they see intentional goals and actions on behalf of environmental sustainability for their local regions, and for our planet.

It all leads to growing demand for what Audubon International and its certification programs bring to these communities.

In this issue of Stewardship News, you'll see how that demand is transforming how regions, destinations, cities, and businesses work together for greater good. Take our cover feature on Amelia Island in northeast Florida, where a concerted commitment to the stewardship ethic began when it enrolled in our Sustainable Communities program. That certification led to several hotel properties joining the Green Lodging program, and over the past several years, several more hotels and resorts have joined that effort, spurred by the local Visitor Bureau's support. They are also investing in Green Hospitality partnerships through restaurants, retail shops and more.

You'll also read how Scott Turner, our Environmental Program Manager, discovered first-hand that Audubon International's ACSP for Golf certification programs translate well to far-flung places like China and South Africa.

Back in the Western Hemisphere, one of the world's top golf destination companies joins forces with Audubon International to make sure its growing portfolio of courses are at the vanguard of sustainable practices indoors and out. Stay tuned for more details as summer approaches.

Meanwhile, read how initiatives like Monarchs in the Rough and BioBlitz, which returns for a "wild" month May 18-June 17, remain powerful ways to bring people together in stewardship service.

The upshot of all this growth and interest? When stewardship culture gets ingrained in a community and filters down to individual club members, golfers, homeowners, employees, students, and families, incredible things happen. The 21st century's leaps in technology, coupled with a broad nod to the threats of climate change and a general appreciation for just how fragile our home is, has made sustainability not only a possibility, but an imperative. Air gets cleaner, water is conserved and respected, wildlife returns to live in harmony with humans, native vegetation returns—and people notice. Then they want to see such practices take place not only where they work and play, but where they live, now and for generations to come.

As we celebrate the onset of spring together and look forward to another year of sustainability success across America and beyond, I'd like to thank you, our members and partners, for your passion, your engagement, and your investment in doing the right thing for your business, your immediate community, and the world at large. Together, we are effecting great and crucial change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Kane".

CEO, Audubon International

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On the Cover: Sunset over Amelia Island. Photo by Deremer Studios LLC, courtesy of Amelia Island Tourism Development Council



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

ACSP Is the Difference Maker

Making your club, or community, or business a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary is something to do if you truly want to make a difference.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) helps make your club and community a true sanctuary – a safe haven for all. ACSP is an education and certification program that helps organizations and businesses protect the environment while enhancing their bottom line. Its “plan-do-check-act” approach offers information and guidance to implement an environmental management plan that improves efficiency, conserves resources, and promotes conservation efforts. Audubon International awards certification to publicly recognize and reward the environmental achievements and leadership of program members.

Christine Kane, Audubon International’s remarkable CEO, says it best, “Gaining ACSP certification for your property not only provides third-party validation for the important environmental work you’re doing, it also builds a strong culture and sense of pride among your members, fellow employees, customers, and neighbors.”

ACSP brings focus to clubs, communities, and businesses with lofty intentions. After joining the program, the next step is to take stock of environmental resources and areas to improve and develop an environmental management plan that fits your unique setting, goals, staff, budget, and time. Audubon International provides a Site Assessment and Environmental Planning Form to provide guidance, as well as educational information to help you with:

- Outreach and Education
- Resource Management
- Water Quality and Conservation
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Chemical Use Reduction and Safety

And, if you’d like to include your clubhouse, spa, and restaurants, Audubon International can connect ACSP with Green Hospitality certification to provide a full property approach to certification.

Based on your site assessment, Audubon International will provide a site-specific report and work with you to implement your plan. The final step for certification is a site visit by an Audubon International staff member to document that certification standards have been met.

By implementing and documenting your environmental management practices in these areas, a business is eligible for designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, enhancing its stature and reputation.

Members receive a copy of *A Guide to Environmental Stewardship*, an attractive membership art print, a subscription to Stewardship News, and a certification handbook to help plan, organize, and document environmental efforts. Membership also includes certification review and Audubon International staff support and direct consultation via telephone and e-mail.

Most importantly, ACSP members get results. They improve environmental performance and community relations, reduce liability, save money, and contribute to the conservation of our environment. Recertification is required every three years.

In strict financial terms, any of your efforts toward, and investments in, ACSP pay off immediately. Other efforts will have an up-front cost and have a definite payback period. While others will not be as easily measured in economic terms, the return on investment are realized in other ways that are just as meaningful, tangible, and important.

Becoming a more sustainable business–club or community – brings many long-term results:

- **Improved Image and Reputation**–Proven environmental performance can help a business differentiate itself from others in a crowded market and add value by improving public relations and marketing opportunities that attract new customers.
- **Customer/Employee Satisfaction**–Enhancing the nature of your business can enrich customers' experience and employee attitudes.
- **Financial Performance**–An effective environmental management program can result in reduced insurance premiums, as well as reduced costs for energy, water, pesticides, fertilizers, equipment wear, and labor.
- **Worker Safety and Reduced Liability**–Best practices for chemical management reduce exposure and liability risks associated with storing, handling, and applying chemicals.
- **Improved Efficiency**–Proper environmental management cuts down on waste and promotes efficient operations.
- **Environmental Quality**–The environmental management practices required for certification help businesses improve the quality of our land, water, and air, conserving natural resources for future generations.

Mahatma Gandhi, India's thinker, doer, lawyer, nationalist and political ethicist, taught us to "be the change that you wish to see in the world." ACSP makes big changes possible from the smallest of steps.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry A. Delozier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "D".

Henry Delozier, Chairman of the Board

We're thrilled to partner with Audubon International in creating sustainable environments



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GREG POIRIER
DIRECTOR OF GREEN LODGING/
GREEN HOSPITALITY CERTIFICATIONS

Audubon International is proud to announce that longtime hospitality industry executive Greg Poirier has joined the leadership team as Director of Green Lodging/Green Hospitality Certifications.

Fred Realbuto, Poirier's predecessor, will continue to work with Audubon International in a part-time consulting capacity.

Based in Boston, Poirier brings deep hospitality industry experience and connections to his new position—20 of operating hotels and 15 years of selling and consulting in the technology space. He has worked Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), ownership and management companies, and for the last five years has worked in energy management and savings, specifically in hotels, universities, and multi-dwelling units.

"I thought this is a good time to switch gears and work on a cause that is both fascinating and timely," he says. "This is an opportunity to parlay increasing hospitality industry enthusiasm in sustainability practices into action through our certification programs. That will help motivate today's kind of employees to want to work for good environmental stewards."

Audubon International Welcomes New Green Lodging Director

I'm happy to be a part of the efforts to rekindle that spirit."

Poirier sees that same spirit engendering a sea change when it comes to travelers' expectations. "Millennials and Gen Zs who are starting to travel for work and business want change and are affecting it. So authenticity is going to be key, and that's one of the opportunities we can afford people."

As a seasoned hotelier, Poirier says he has always found value with a focus on environmental sustainability and responsibility with his teams, "which has been in my blood since the first Earth Day in which I participated as a child with parental support."

He recalls managing his first resort along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1990s. "We hunted down 100% recycled paper and sustainable guest room amenity packaging, which was not widely available at that time, doing so with ownership support," he says. "We also hauled our own recycling to a town 20 miles away, our closest recycling facility. We did this while driving double digit business growth year over year. Yes, we did slightly increase some costs due to this and similar smaller investments in our operation, but did so consciously with metrics, proving it financially worthy with increased loyalty and more frequent past guest return visits driving revenue growth."

What's first on his agenda at Audubon International? Further increasing the Green Lodging/Green Hospitality profile across the board, starting with large brand operators. "I'd like us to get big hospitality ownership groups and management companies to allow us to be their preferred partner in helping their teams develop and maintain their sustainability practices," he says.

[Click here](#) to download fact sheets on Audubon International's Green Lodging and Green Hospitality programs. To reach Poirier, email him at greg@auduboninternational.org

Meet Our New Sustainable Communities Program Specialist

Jill Moore has joined Audubon International's staff as a part-time Sustainable Communities Program Specialist.

As the Sustainable Communities Program Specialist, Moore provides support to Sustainable Community Program members on the path to sustainable living practices and environmental stewardship and guides them through the certification process.

She currently resides in South Carolina and part time in Wisconsin. Along with working for Audubon International, Moore owns a nature-based company providing educational excursions and presentations.

She started her professional career as an elementary educator and then gained her experience in environmental stewardship as the staff naturalist for a private community. During that time Moore and the residents led the community to become one of the first private residential sustainable communities in the country through Audubon International; it's this rewarding experience that she hopes to share with others.

Moore has also served on the Lowcountry Master Naturalist board in South Carolina for almost 10 years and volunteers for many environmental initiatives like Kids in Kayaks and oyster reef restoration projects.

As a lifelong outdoors enthusiast, she enjoys kayaking, paddle boarding, boating, hiking and exploring new destinations either on her own or with her husband or three grown boys.



JILL MOORE
COMMUNITIES PROGRAM SPECIALIST

**Look for the
summer 2024
edition of
Stewardship News
for more new staff
and leadership
announcements!**



▲ The Plantation Course at Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii

ACSP Certified Golf Courses Featured Prominently on Major Pro Tours

Audubon International Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf (ACSP) Certified courses are big players in on the PGA TOUR, PGA TOUR Champions and LPGA Tour this year, with 25 of them welcoming the world's greatest golfers. That's nearly one-quarter of the 101 courses featured across the three Tours.

"As our ACSP for Golf footprint grows from year to year, it's good to see that our organization's commitment to sustainability is making an impact at the highest competitive levels of the game," says Frank LaVadera, Audubon International's Director of Environmental Programs for Golf. "Having our partner venues featured at events seen by millions of fans each week can only help further the cause for sustainable practices as an integral and vital part of golf's future."

Of the two dozen ACSP for Golf Certified courses featured on America's three top circuits, 13 host PGA TOUR events (seven of which are TPC Network properties), six host tournaments on PGA TOUR Champions and five host LPGA Tour events.

The PGA TOUR's 2024 campaign began Jan. 4-7 with The Sentry at the Plantation Course at Kapalua on Maui, Hawaii, one of the very first courses to win ACSP for Golf certification in 1994. Kapalua was also the leadoff course in the TOUR's

recently-introduced Signature Events series, while certified courses Pebble Beach Golf Links and Spyglass Hill Golf Course were featured in the second Signature Event, the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in California, Jan. 29-Feb. 4. Longtime certified course Harbour Town Golf Links, home of the RBC Heritage on Hilton Head Island, S.C., was the fifth Signature Event April 15-21, while yet another certified member, TPC River Highlands—home of the Travelers Championship—in Cromwell, Conn., is the final Signature Event of the season June 20-23. Other certified courses on the PGA TOUR include TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., (THE PLAYERS Championship); Hamilton Golf and Country Club in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (RBC Canadian Open May 30-June 2) and Castle Pines Golf Club in Colorado (BMW Championship Aug. 22-25), along with other certified TPC properties throughout the season.

"The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program has been an anchor and guiding force for TPC Network golf course environmental programs," said Collier Miller, TPC Network Vice President, Agronomy. "The TPC Network was an early adopter of this program in 1994 at which time we made an on-going commitment to achieve and maintain certification at all of our properties."

Pebble Beach makes a second appearance on the PGA TOUR Champions schedule at the PURE Insurance Championship Sept. 20-22, while two more certified TPC courses—TPC Scottsdale (Champions Course) in Arizona and TPC Sugarloaf in Duluth, Ga.—join other well-known certified venues such as Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio, The Club at Snoqualmie Ridge in Washington state and Ritz-Carlton Golf Club in Orlando, Fla.

Certified courses on the 2024 LPGA Tour circuit include the ShopRite LPGA Classic presented by Acer at Seaview, A Dolce Hotel (Bay Course) in Galloway, New Jersey; the CPKC Women's Open at Earl Grey Golf Club in Calgary, Alberta, Canada; the Portland Classic at Columbia Edgewater Country Club in Portland, Oregon; the FM Global Championship at TPC Boston in Norton, Massachusetts; and the CME Group Tour Championship at Tiburón Golf Club in Naples, Florida.

Once certified, each partner course has powerful proof of their sustainability efforts to report to members, customers, managers, owners, other stakeholders—and, with this year's PGA TOUR and LPGA Tour stops, the world's top players as well as the golf-watching public.

Audubon International Welcomes BioBoost Nest As New Corporate Sponsor

Audubon International is proud to announce New York-based company BioBoost Nest as its newest corporate sponsor.

BioBoost Nest joins such Audubon International sponsors as epar, Water IQ Technologies, and Porous Pave to support the organization's ongoing efforts to help lead golf courses and clubs, hotels, resorts, municipalities, private communities, and businesses establish and build on sustainable best practices through their various certification programs. The centerpiece of BioBoost Nest's partnership with

Audubon International is its sponsorship of BioBlitz, a month-long, nationwide wildlife observation and identification competition among golf courses, whose 2024 edition takes place May 18-June 17.

"As a non-profit organization, we truly value our sponsorship partners, and are happy to welcome BioBoost Nest to the family," says Christine Kane, CEO. "The sustainable practices at the heart of its business model is a great fit for our ongoing mission to help businesses and communities who own or manage properties make their operations as environmentally sound as possible through our certification programs. We especially welcome their support for our Conservation Initiative BioBlitz, which demonstrates the breadth of biodiversity on golf courses and welcomes new participants each year."

BioBoost Nest is a pond bioremediation unit that offers a chemical-free alternative to treating algae, odor, and murkiness in water features on golf courses and other outdoor commercial or municipal settings. The company's Nests provide the ideal conditions for beneficial bacteria to flourish and counteract nutrient overload.

BioBoost Nests have been installed in thousands of ponds across the country in settings such as golf courses, municipal parks, botanical gardens, and zoos. The company's bioremediation units play an integral part in many initiatives to reduce or eliminate chemical use and help create beautiful pond ecosystems that are safe for people, pets, fish and wildlife.

"We are committed to changing the way we clean water, one pond at a time, and we are delighted to support Audubon International in creating environmentally sustainable environments," says Jody Fitzpatrick, CEO of BioBoost Nest.

To learn more about BioBoost Nest, visit www.bioboostnest.com.

"We are committed to changing the way we clean water, one pond at a time."

**— Jody Fitzpatrick, CEO,
BioBoost Nest**

Audubon International Logs A Busy Winter On the Conference Circuit



▲ During the GCSAA annual convention in Phoenix Jan. 31-Feb. 2, Jim Culley, President of Seed King Enterprises LLC, (<https://www.seedkingenterprises.com/>) made a \$1,000 donation to Audubon International to help support BioBlitz 2024, which takes place at courses across the nation from May 18-June 17. The donation came from Jim pledging \$1 per pound of wildflower seed he sold to golf courses in 2023. He sold over 800 pounds, but rounded it up to \$1,000. Culley said he will do the same for 2025.

Audubon International made the golf club, turf management, and lodging/travel industry regional and national conference rounds through the first few weeks of 2024. Chief Executive Officer Christine Kane, Director of Environmental Programs Frank LaVardera, Environmental Program Manager Scott Turner and others helmed booths, engaged in panel discussions, and guested on podcasts while discussing the organization's sustainability certification programs and partnerships with golf course superintendents, club managers and business leaders.

Kane, LaVardera, and Turner attended the 2024 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix in early February as hundreds of golf course superintendents and executives visited the Audubon International booth. The upcoming BioBlitz program also got a big boost in Phoenix as Jim Culley of Seed King Enterprises donated \$1,000—the result of the company committing \$1 per pound of wildflower seed sold to golf courses in 2023 towards BioBlitz in 2024.

Later in February, LaVardera and Turner ventured north of the border for The Canadian Golf Course Management Conference in Montreal, while Kane took part in two PGA Magazine events at Georgia's McLemore Resort in late February, joining

in on two panel discussions at the Real Estate & Golf Development Summit and PGA General Managers Summit. Both featured a six-person roundtable with 30 minutes of insights from the panel and 25 mins of questions/discussion around the room.

From March 4 through 8, Turner and Fred Reabuto, Interim Director of Green Lodging Certification, manned the Audubon International booth at the Club Management Association of America 2024 World Conference and Club Business Expo at the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas. Meanwhile, LaVardera and Environmental Program Specialist Sarah Honan manned the booth for the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show March 5-7 in Providence, R.I.

Audubon International is dedicated to sharing its partnership successes and bringing its program opportunities to sustainability professionals in the golf, hospitality, municipal planning and business communities. If you would like to recommend an upcoming event for the organization to consider, call (844) 767-9051.

Pinelawn Memorial Park and Arboretum Achieves Historic Certification

Pinelawn Memorial Park and Arboretum has been certified as a "Classic Sanctuary" by Audubon International, a not-for-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

This certification sets Pinelawn apart as the first cemetery in the United States to meet Audubon International's environmental standards.

Pinelawn Memorial Park and Arboretum spear-

headed various initiatives to receive the status, including the replacement of underground fuel tanks with above-ground storage for enhanced safety and accessibility. Additionally, the introduction of a water recycling washdown station for Pinelawn's equipment fleet was implemented, ensuring the removal of contaminants such as oil, chemicals, pathogens, and weed seeds during the cleaning process.

Pinelawn also invested in a weather station to optimize its irrigation system, reducing water usage.

Canada's Fraserview Golf Course Hits 20-Year Certification Mark

Fraserview Golf Course is proud to announce its 20-year successful certification as an Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary. This recognition comes from its commitment to environmental stewardship and maintaining a comprehensive environmental management program. This program focuses on wildlife and habitat management, water conservation, resource management, and outreach and education.

"Fraserview boasts a long history of ecological significance. The golf course serves as a vital urban greenspace, fostering biodiversity and providing habitats for diverse wildlife," said Dennis Luick, Supervisor of Golf Operations, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. "We are honoured to be recognized as leaders in environmental stewardship with this esteemed designation. This recognition affirms our ongoing commitment to environmental management at Fraserview and our other golf courses."

Achieving certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf Courses requires maintaining high environmental standards in areas such as Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management. To main-

The cemetery also took steps to enhance wildlife habitat by creating buffer zones and habitat centers, while maintaining successful on-site community educational programs.

"Our goal is to minimize our impact on the environment," Justin Locke, President and CEO of Pinelawn Memorial Park and Arboretum, said. "Receiving this recognition is a reflection of our dedication to the environment. We are elated to be recognized for our environmental excellence."



tain designation, courses must undergo recertification every three years.

Through participation in the ACSP for Golf, Fraserview Golf Course has been involved in numerous environmental projects, including energy conservation, water use reduction, integrated pest management, naturalization of areas, and responsible resource management.

"We're very proud to count Fraserview Golf Course among our members," said Christine Kane, CEO at Audubon International. "They made environmentally sustainable golf course management an integral part of their operating principles long before it became an accepted option. Their leadership has already brought many benefits to their community over the past 20 years and will continue to do so long into the future."

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's other championship golf courses, [Langara](#) and [McCleery](#), also hold ACSP for Golf certification, a status achieved by less than five percent of BC golf courses.

Golf Courses Gear Up For BIOBLITZ

MAY 18-JUNE 17

Ninth annual competition to documents large diversity of species living on golf courses

After a successful 2023 post-Covid revival that saw more 500 volunteers visit golf courses worldwide identify and record more than 3,000 species of animals and wildlife, Audubon International's popular BioBlitz competition returns for its ninth edition May 18-June 17, 2024.

This event provides a unique opportunity for golf courses to engage their community members in activities designed to showcase and record the abundance of wildlife thriving on course landscapes across the US and Canada.

"Audubon International's annual BioBlitz is a great way for golf courses to create an awareness among society of their wildlife habitat value, especially in urban locations," says Christine Kane, CEO at Audubon International. "It's also a wonderful opportunity for community members from all walks of life to meet and learn about nature while getting outside and having fun."

Volunteers include men's, women's, and junior golf league members, scout troops, local birding groups, club members, golf course employees, com-

▼ Volunteers gather at the University of Maryland golf course in spring 2023 for a day of BioBlitz fun. Photo courtesy of the University of Maryland



munity members from surrounding neighborhoods, entire families, school children, and other nature enthusiasts.

For most participants, BioBlitz is key to keeping a course's admirable stewardship efforts front and center in their relationship with the surrounding community.

At the University of Maryland Golf Course, for instance, last year's competition provided a valuable educational dimension for students of all ages and opened new avenues of school outreach. "With this first event completed we are now developing ways to run smaller versions of the BioBlitz for our PGA kids and local high schools," said Laura Russell, the university's General Assistant. "We found it to be a fun activity with educational benefits and environmental value. This is just another way to be a leader among university golf courses, using the education resources of our faculty and students to improve the environment and strengthen community connection."

Along with the educational aspect, clubs and

courses vie for awards each year. The University of Maryland won last year's award for Best Photograph for participant Adrienne van den Beemt's shot of a *Dolichopus comatus* (long-legged fly). Southwinds Golf Course in Florida received the Community Engagement Award with a total of 247 participants, while Glencoe Golf Club in Illinois and the University of Maryland Golf Course took second and third place. Harbour Ridge Yacht & Country Club in Florida received the Biodiversity Award, with 607 species identified, while second place for Biodiversity went to Meadow Club in California with 444 species sighted, with Michigan's Ironwood Golf Course taking third place, reporting 405 species.

To learn more about BioBlitz, how golf courses, communities, lodging properties or resorts gain recognition for their environmental efforts, and to learn how to expand initiatives through Audubon International's numerous environmental certifications, visit www.auduboninternational.org or call toll free: 1-844-767-9051



TIME FOR YOUR STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS TO SHINE!

MAY 18-JUNE 17

**SIGN UP YOUR COURSE FOR
BIOBLITZ 2024 TODAY! SHINE!**





ASK THE EXPERT

▲ The BioBoost Nest underwater filtration system keeps golf course ponds algae-free.

By Jody Fitzpatrick, BioBoost

Many a golf course superintendent has faced the following question at this time of year:

“Help! Algae takes over my water features every spring. I don’t like using chemicals in the water, but what else can I do?”

The springtime reappearance of algae in your ponds and lakes is a result of your water’s high nutrient levels, which algae feeds on. Warmer weather means biological processes in ponds speed up again, including the breakdown of organic material, and this produces nutrients. A sudden spike in nutrients means an abundance of food for algae spores.

While a quick spray of herbicide is a tempting fix for spring algae blooms, it can create rebound pond problems. When you treat algae and weeds with chemicals, you cause an immediate die-off. The dying organic material rapidly increases your nutrient levels, which then triggers—you guessed it—an algae bloom.

This vicious cycle creates a dependency on repeated, often expensive, chemical applications and makes your pond a constant concern. However, you can get off the merry-go-round by naturally lowering your pond’s nutrient levels.

Mother Nature’s secret trick? Beneficial bacteria. Bacteria also consumes the same nutrients as algae, and if your population of beneficial bacteria is robust enough, it will outcompete the algae for the same food source. The bacteria will level your nutrients and essentially starve out algae so it can’t develop.

Nurturing bacteria in your water column is an

approach known as bioremediation that can reduce or even eliminate the need for chemicals. Optimize your pond for nutrient-hungry bacteria with three bioremediation tools: aeration, microbial inoculation, and bacterial habitats.

1. Aeration: Aerating your water introduces dissolved oxygen, which fast-acting aerobic (oxygen-using) bacteria needs to consume nutrients.

2. Microbial Inoculation: Regular microbial inoculation introduces fresh bacteria to your pond to keep the population varied and vigorous.

3. Bacterial Habitats: Subsurface bioremediation units house beneficial bacteria and boost its development so it can more effectively counteract nutrient overload.

Implementing bioremediation is a long-lasting, hands-off treatment and maintenance program that effectively treats algae, odors, weeds, murkiness, fish kills and bottom sludge.

Bioremediation is being adopted by more and more golf courses, municipalities and other organizations that are committed to environmental stewardship and preserving ecosystems for the enjoyment of people and wildlife.

Jody Fitzpatrick is CEO of BioBoost Nest. BioBoost Nest provides bacterial habitats for pond bioremediation. Learn more at bioboostnest.com

ON THE COVER



Photo courtesy of Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau/Dereemer Studios

▲ Amelia Island's marinas leave as light a footprint as possible on its network of salt marsh estuaries and wetlands.

Amelia Island: All In On Sustainability

If modern sustainable best practices require a delicate balancing act between economic and environmental needs, the northeast Florida enclave of Amelia Island is the “green destination” equivalent of a high-flying acrobat.

Located a 30-minute drive from Jacksonville, just across the St. Mary's River from Georgia, Amelia Island is southernmost in the Sea Island barrier chain, 13 miles long and two miles wide, tucked between pristine beaches of Appalachian quartz on the eastern Atlantic Ocean side and salt marsh estuaries on its western edge, which skirts the Intracoastal Waterway. The handsome Victorian-style town of Fernandina Beach anchors its economic activity, while a wealth of outdoor-oriented activities, from kayaking to fishing to birdwatching to golf, attract thousands of eco-oriented visitors every year.

But underlying the island's natural beauty and historic attraction is a stewardship culture that runs deep and wide. Leading the way is an array of chain and boutique hotels, lodges, beach houses, and other venues that, together with the Amelia Island Convention and Visitors Bureau (AICVB), comprise one of the most impressive, committed, and active

eco-partnerships anywhere in America. Audubon International's Green Lodging, Green Hospitality, and Sustainable Communities certification programs are at the heart of it all.

“They have a unique place there, and they realize how valuable and fragile that the ecosystem is,” says Fred Realbuto, Audubon International's interim Chief Operating Officer. “They want to keep it that way because there's almost no going back if they give it up. So they're careful about their signage, they're careful about their building codes and their rate of growth. They try to keep an old town community feel about the whole place as well.”

SOLID SUPPORT, BIG BUY-IN

Though the island's community leaders have made ecotourism a priority in its marketing model for years—they'd already been working with regional and local entities like Keep Nassau Beautiful—only one of the neighborhoods had attained Audubon International's Green Communities certification. So, the AICVB decided to up the sustainability ante by earmarking funds to encourage more hotels and resorts to enroll in the Green Lodging program.



▲ Omni Amelia Island, one of the destination's 10 certified Green Lodging properties. More are on the way.

By September 2022, five properties had achieved certification; by May 2023, five more came on board, and Realbuto—at that time Audubon International's Director of Green Lodging and Green Hospitality Certifications—was on hand to celebrate. “I’ve become a part of their community. I’ve gone to two Earth Days to clean up and enjoy the community effort they’re putting in. They’ve taken a little different pathway to get here because it’s all being paid for by the AICVB. That’s unusual.”

Maurie Dugger, Director of Community Engagement for the Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau, says the investment dollars are well spent.

“We partner with Audubon International to come in and do the initial certification, and then fund the certification for as long as our property partners maintain the standards,” she stresses. “It’s a worthwhile investment that allows us to confidently claim we’re doing this correctly. It is important that what we’re doing has a real, verifiable impact and isn’t just a ‘greenwash.’ Many travelers want to have a positive impact on the community they’re visiting, but they also want to travel to places that are

focused on the right things. The environment and fragile ecosystem that makes Amelia Island so special is important to everyone who calls this island home – especially everyone in the tourism industry – as we all enjoy it daily and look forward to sharing this rich treasure for generations of residents and visitors to come.”

That means setting an example at the individual, business, and community levels, which is why Amelia Island's Sustainable Communities certification, combined with those 10 hotels—at least two of which could eventually reach Audubon International's Platinum designation—is leading the way. With around 2,500 rooms in their lodging inventory, and many vacation rental options, there’s plenty of green-practices growth on the horizon.

DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH LAND AND WATER

Over the centuries, Dugger says, eight different national flags have flown over Amelia Island (It is called the “Isle of Eight Flags” for a reason), with



▲ Island communities are buying up tracts of undeveloped land to protect old growth forests and wetlands. Photo courtesy of Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau/Deremer Studios

several types of industries driving the economy, as the decades passed—agriculture, boating, fishing, timber, and since Henry Flagler’s railroad in the late 1800’s, tourism has flourished. The island’s deep-water port has long spurred solid visitation by sea, just as the proximity of I-95 keeps the by-land visits humming.

When folks arrive, they’ll have no problem sensing the breadth and depth of the island’s collective commitment to the sustainable life. Fernandina Beach’s quaint 50-block, Victorian-flavored downtown historic district is ground zero for this year’s push for Audubon International Green Hospitality certification. Packed with locally owned small businesses selling naturally sourced souvenirs (think cotton tea towels printed with organic ink and sunscreen that’s locally made and reef-safe), and local restaurant menus rife with farm-to-table ingredients, Fernandina Beach is the posterchild for “Shop Local.” When those same visitors venture out into the island’s incredible natural environment on foot, by boat, or on a bike, they’ll experience a clean, well-preserved banquet of soul-salving recreational possibilities, including outings like a Shrimp Eco Tour or annual celebrations such as the Wild Amelia Nature Festival and Right Whale Festival.

Meanwhile, both the City of Fernandina Beach and Nassau County continue to pursue land purchases for future conservation nature buffers and preserve designations. The island’s southern tip is a state park and protected recreation area; Fort Clinch State Park occupies the north end. In between is one of the Southeast’s most focused and enviro-friendly populations. “The whole community is registered to do good environmental work,” Realbuto says. “They’ve put their money where their mouth is.”



▲ Sea Turtle Watch is one of several ongoing wildlife conservation programs on Amelia island. Photo courtesy of Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau/Deremer Studios

On the hotel front, Dugger says, “The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island has their own environmental specialist on the ground, a naturalist on staff. The Omni Amelia Island Resort has its own naturalist and their nature center where they have invested in education. Both properties work hand in hand with our Beach Ambassadors, Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch, and other conservation groups. They are excellent community partners and advocates for the environment.”

That educational component is embedded in the island’s residential culture. “My kids were born here on the island,” Dugger continues. “They knew before they could walk that we pick up all our stuff from the beach, we fill in holes so turtles don’t get stuck, and we never leave anything behind. When they were old enough to take surf lessons, the surf camp instructors reiterated that. If you grow up as an island kid, you are taught it is your responsibility to take care of it. The AICVB is doing a new video series this year, using kids to tell the story of the environment, with themes such as leave no trace, protecting the habitat for our nesting turtles and shorebirds, keeping dogs on leashes, and installing amber lights on the seashore to help protect the island wildlife. They know that the beach should always be clean, flat, and dark.”

While other islands in the Sea Island chain have formed large-scale conservancies to oversee all sustainability practices, the Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau partners with a dozen local conservation groups to help bolster messaging and spur further action throughout the community, including the 3rd annual Downtown to Dunes cleanup with Keep Nassau Beautiful and Fernandina Beach Main

Street. “We spend half a million dollars yearly on beach cleanups,” Dugger says. “Last year alone, we picked up 61 tons of trash to make sure our beaches remain pristine.”

Also, Keep Nassau Beautiful has launched a new “Gardens of Amelia” program to ensure native plants and habitats are protected. In this first year, three lodging partners have gained arboretum status with more going through certification this spring. Large tours or convention groups get in on the act by recycling leftover notepads from meetings to local schools or donating excess food to the island’s non-profit social service organizations. Meetings groups have requested community impact activities and in addition to clean-ups and food nutrition activities, the Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island has begun a program planting seagrass in the dunes for additional protection.

MORE ROOM TO GROW

With a couple more boutique lodgers set to go for Green Lodging certification and the Sustainable

Communities program revving up to speed, both Dugger and Realbuto see Amelia Island only continuing to pursue its standing as an example of what vision, foresight, planning and partnership with local stakeholders—and, of course, Audubon International—can do in service to true sustainability.

“We want to become the first destination in Florida to have all of our lodging partners go through the Green Lodging certification,” Dugger said. “Is it a lofty goal? Absolutely!”

“I’d love to see us expand the campaign to get 60 or 80 percent Green Lodging participation,” Realbuto says. “Amelia Island has seen this subtle metamorphosis of growth. They said, ‘let’s start doing this,’ and now it’s a part of their culture. Every year they’re inviting more members or more potential members and using their relationships to springboard to other things. They’ve got that marketing advantage to say, ‘yes, we are an Audubon International all the way around.’ It’s a great message.”

For more information on Amelia Island and its environmental programs, visit the travel and tourism’s site, www.ameliaisland.com.

▼ Fernandina Beach, Amelia’s Island’s largest town, is ground zero for Audubon International’s continued Sustainable Lodging/Green Hospitality certification expansion efforts. Photo courtesy of Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau/Deremer Studios





▲ Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Golf Course, mainland China. Photo by Scott Turner

Making A Big Green Impact in China & South Africa

By Vic Williams

Audubon International's team of environmental specialists is busy indeed as they travel the nation and world to help members achieve and maintain their sustainability certification goals, but Environmental Program Manager Scott Turner continues to carry the organization's mantle of "extreme road warrior." The man is to frequent flier miles what spring is to green shoots and flower buds.

Consider Turner's nearly three-week overseas jaunt, from mid-November to early December 2023, to five ACSP for Golf-certified courses in mainland China and Hong Kong and one in South Africa. Along the way, he got first-hand, eye-opening experience on how other nations work within their political, social and economic systems—and their natural environments—to be the best stewards of the land and water they can.

SOUTH AFRICAN SWING

Turner ventured all the way to Val de Vie in western South Africa's Cape Winelands to check in on Pearl



▲ Scott Turner (right) with Xili Golf & Country Club Superintendent Howie Zhao.

Valley, a Top 100 Jack Nicklaus design where Superintendent Jaffie Erasmus brings plenty of familiar maintenance and sustainability standards to bear as he maintains his certification standards, even in the face of lingering drought and common financial constraints.

"They do their best to conserve water. Their main irrigation source is a river, so they are mindful of that, but they also have access to a well that incurs a cost."

So, water is a constant issue at Pearl Valley, and they cope with shortages as best they can.

Erasmus was extremely proud to show Scott Turner the results of having converted 25 hectares of once traditionally irrigated turf into xeriscaping and/or native vegetation. Irrigation heads were either capped or moved to other areas of the property to make sure overhead irrigation was even more precise.

Turner observed several other water-saving measures in place.

"They're removing thirsty Eucalyptus trees,"



▲ A drinking water filling station at Hidden Grace Golf Club. Photo by Scott Turner

he says, adding that Pearl Valley has also replaced overhead irrigation in all landscaped beds with both mist and drip irrigation. Such equipment enhances efficiency and reduces overall consumption, as water is not lost to evaporation, like what would happen with traditional overhead sprinklers. In addition, xeriscape was introduced and all non-native annual flora was removed to ensure limited water consumption. Finally, a new pump station was installed which has resulted in a reduction of 2,000,000 gallons of water per day across all of the property's many uses.

CHINA: CULTURE SHIFT, GREEN COMMITMENT

When he made his way to China, Turner was quickly immersed in a much different cultural experience. He paid visits to five Chinese clubs: [Guangzhou Foisson Golf Club](#) (Li Yong, Superintendent); [Xili Golf and Country Club](#) (Howie Zhao, Superintendent & Andrew Grengs, Work Shop Manager); [Hidden Grace Golf Club](#) (Allen Hu, Superintendent); [Hong](#)

[Kong Golf Club](#) (Darryl Koster, Superintendent); and [Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Golf Course](#) (Christine Chan, Superintendent). Owned and managed by large private companies or individuals, these are high-level operations, charging thousands of members seven figures to join and six figures in annual dues. Xili Golf and Country Club's billionaire owner is the founder of Shangri-La Hotels, for instance.

The upshot in terms of sustainability? A blank check—nearly inexhaustible funds to invest in infrastructure, equipment, and systems. That's a luxury enjoyed by only a handful of American courses and makes for powerful strides in sustainable practices.

Though in general China's government does not support or sanction golf, it does support modern environmental practices on a large scale. This puts pressure on China's industries, including golf, to invest in environmental stewardship. Audubon International's ACSP Certification program has provided these Chinese clubs a framework and guidance to pursuing environmental excellence.

During his visit to the country, Turner says gained a complete and inspiring picture of each Chinese course's stewardship efforts—and valuable affirmation of Audubon International's partnership in those efforts.

"While there has been a great understanding in the western world to promote environmental stewardship, in only recent years has this become adopted in Chinese society," he says. "All of our Certified members are required to implement outreach and educational initiatives. The purpose for this certification component is to ensure ongoing support for stewardship initiatives, strengthen local community connections and extend participation in environmental conservation activities."

Turner adds that Audubon International's Chinese members have done "a remarkable job extending the olive branch and have completed many phenomenal initiatives," such as implementing a honey bee and rehabilitation program for wildlife at [Hong Kong Golf Club](#); constructing a golf history museum – the only of its kind in China – at [Genzon Golf Club](#); developing agricultural farms at [Xili Golf and Country Club](#); hosting STEM programs with local students at [The Jockey Club](#); and advertising environmental achievements and excellence at [Foisson Golf Club](#).

"It is very common to see our ACSP members



▲ Turner (center) with superintendent Li Yong and staff at Guangzhou Foison Golf Club

invest in renewable energy, such as solar panels and battery-operated equipment,” he continues. “Alex Grengs [of Xili Golf and Country Club] showed off the club’s newly installed solar panels, which were across the entirety of the maintenance buildings. This investment has reduced the club’s reliance on the outdated, heavy polluting gas- and diesel-powered equipment. All patron carts were electric, along with many of the utility and maintenance equipment.”

Meanwhile, Foison Golf Club recently converted diesel powered buses to electric by installing lithium batteries. These newly converted shuttles are used to transport staff across the expansive property and to and from their residences to limit the use of gas and diesel.

China’s certified courses also continue to invest

in water conservation in a big way. “Much like anywhere on the Earth, water is an extremely important resource. All of Audubon’s International members had invested heavily into technology, equipment and practices to further conserve water,” Turner says.

All five members, for instance, irrigate entirely with captured rainfall and/or effluent water, through the addition of an onsite treatment plant. While not a cheap investment, treatment plants are able to provide clean and reusable water. In addition, closed-loop wash water recycling systems were present, along with weather stations, TDR moisture meters, thermal imaging equipment, and all irrigation equipment.

That ethic continues off the fairways, too.

“Several courses have their own hotels,” he continues. “Some tend small farms and organic gardens.



▲ Bee Boxes at Hong Kong Country Club with Superintendent Darryl Koster. Photo by Scott Turner

And there is a huge investment in solar panels. The roof of every building was lined with them. All carts, much of the equipment, such as shuttles, and even boats run on electricity. The Jockey Club in Hong Kong is on an island, accessible only by boat, so they invested in two solar powered catamarans for transporting staff and guests.” Certain modern gadgets aren’t employed, however, especially those that involve communication with satellites. China’s limitations of certain technology means drones and GPS on equipment—carts, sprayers, Trackman—aren’t available.

China’s level of state involvement leads to challenges in other areas of stewardship, including how golf courses maintain healthy wildlife habitats. “In the United States, for instance, if there’s a coyote on the golf course, a feral hog, whatever it may be, you would consult with fish and wildlife to see what options you had,” Turner says. “In China, courses tolerate sometimes large populations of animals. One course I visited deals with feral hogs and does its best to mitigate the damage they cause. They trap and then they relocate them, but there’s no fence and they don’t deter or spay the animal, so they just keep coming back.”

Turner observed a few other interesting differ-

ences between Chinese and Western courses.

Female employment: “Women are the primary workforce [on golf courses]. “Although only one was a superintendent, I saw dozens of female groundskeepers and caddies.”

More solar: “One course is planning to invest in a floating solar panel, like a lily pad, for lack of a better term. It’s phenomenal.”

Interesting neighbors: “Xili Golf Course and Country Club is right next door to the chairman of China’s summer palace; when he comes into town, they shut down the golf course. And there’s a military base right next door to the palace.”

Tour connections: “Hidden Grace Golf Club is a stop on the DP World Tour’s Volvo Open. One of their sponsors is water purifier company Blue Water. Throughout the golf course are water fountains, where members are encouraged to bring a thermos or a tumbler or whatever to refill their water—and they have the option for still and sparkling!”

In the end, Turner came away with one overriding impression of China’s sustainable golf culture.

“My biggest takeaway was that vast financial resources, coupled with concerted incentive to reduce every course’s environmental footprint, leads to incredible progress.”



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Black Desert Resort and Utah Division of Wildlife staff prepare to move endangered Virgin River chub into ponds on the golf course. Photo by Alysha Lundgren/St. George News ▲

Black Desert Resort Provides Endangered Fish Habitat

Black Desert Resort in Ivins, Utah, just outside St. George, is Audubon International's first-ever Platinum Signature Sanctuary Certification candidate, with sustainability its guiding principle at every level of development—from its award-winning, year-old golf course through its multibillion-dollar housing/lodging/retail complex currently under construction.

It's an ambitious, trendsetting project coming together in some of America's most starkly beautiful high desert terrain. But as a new partnership with a state wildlife authority shows, no detail is too small, no native species too tiny to have a place in Black Desert's march to stewardship success.

In an April 4 St. George News feature, writer and photographer Alysha Lundgren reports that on March 21, Black Desert Resort and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources partnered to release 400 endangered Virgin River chub into one of the six lakes located on the resort's 600 acres.

The effort, Lundgren reported, is led by Joseph Platt, a Utah Tech University adjunct professor and head of environmental affairs for Black Desert Resort, who has worked in ecology for over three de-

CADES, and who was featured in Stewardship News' Fall 2023 cover story on Black Desert.

Platt told Lundgren that before he began work at Black Desert about four years ago, he spent his first few years in St. George working in the Virgin River, studying the species that call it home.

"When I came to Black Desert, we had six lakes sitting here," he told Lundgren. "I started talking to them about using this site as a refuge — a refugio — where a population could be safe."

A Black Desert press release added that Utah Tech was vital to the process, "with students from the Department of Environmental Resources conducting studies on the lake's water quality and entomology," which provided data regarding food availability, which will be essential to how well the fish adapt.

"I am very pleased with Black Desert's commitment to environmental stewardship and proud to be a part of it," Platt said in the release. "Our collaboration with the DWR and UT's Department of Environmental Resources represents a significant step forward in both conserving endangered species and providing real-life research opportunities for students."

The year-old fish were raised at the division's Wahweap Fish Hatchery in Big Water near Lake Powell, Melinda Bennion, a DWR native aquatic biologist, told Lundgren. The fish were transported to the area via truck before being moved to large coolers filled with water and a liquid called Stress Coat, which contains aloe vera. The treatment creates a layer of slime meant to reduce the animals' stress and promote healing.

"Fish get very stressed," Bennion said. "This is all very different from being out on a pond and not being touched or messed with. We also keep the cooler shut because keeping them dark will actually reduce their stress levels."

Once the fish were placed in coolers, they were transported to the small lake, nestled in a green golf course, and surrounded by black lava rock and ongoing construction.

"We actually are going to acclimate the fish because the water they came in is different in temperature and other kind of water chemistry, like pH and how much salts and minerals are in the water that affect how the fish can acclimate."

Water was removed from the coolers and replaced with water from the lake until the fish were given a chance to adjust to their new environment. Once this process was complete, the fish were measured, placed into buckets or nets, and released into the pond, with multiple people taking an opportunity to set them free.

The lake in which they were deposited is connected to another across the golf course via a pipeline, and Platt said the fish could travel between the two.

Bennion told Lundgren that Virgin River chubs, known for their small olive and silver scales and deeply forked tails, are minnows endemic to the Virgin River. The species, listed as federally listed as endangered, has declined due to dewatering, pollution and invasive fish, like red shiners, outcompeting or preying on it.

"We're lucky enough to partner with the Black Desert Resort to provide these fish a kind of refuge on the golf course," she added.

Platt said they will conclude the experiment as successful if the fish begin breeding.

"If they're breeding, they're happy," he said.

The resort is also developing projects to help protect Mojave desert tortoises and Monarch butterflies.

For instance, Platt said they are planning to create pollinator gardens as habitat and food sources.

"It is part of Black Desert's ethos that we are a pioneering model of environmental stewardship across the board — from our golf course and resort to our residential spaces and environmental practices," Patrick Manning, managing partner of Black Desert, said in the release. "We have been working with Dr. Platt over the past four years, and there is no one better for the job. His unmatched dedication and passion for the local community drive our mission to make a meaningful difference."

Details and quotes in this story are reprinted from a story by Alysha Lundgren in the St. George News on April 4, 2024, with some details provided by Black Desert Resort. All photos shown are courtesy of Alysha Lundgren and the St. George News



▲ Dr. Joseph Platt is head of environmental affairs at Black Desert Resort and adjunct professor at Utah Tech University. Photo by Alysha Lundgren/St. George News



RECERTIFICATIONS

ACSP FOR GOLF-INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

Olds Golf Club
Donalda Club
Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club, Limited

COSTA RICA

Four Seasons Golf Club at Peninsula de
Papagayo–Ocean Course

TAIWAN

Wu Fong Golf Club

ACSP FOR GOLF-UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

Troon Country Club

CALIFORNIA

Callippe Preserve Golf Course
Crystal Springs Golf Course
Riverside Golf Course

COLORADO

Broadmoor Golf Club –East and West Courses
Maroon Creek Club

CONNECTICUT

Litchfield Country Club
Round Hill Club

DELAWARE

Deerfield Golf & Tennis Club: White Clay Creek State Park

FLORIDA

Estero Country Club
Hideaway Beach
John Prince Golf Learning Center
Maple Leaf Golf and Country Club
Moorings Club at Hawk's Nest
The Club at Olde Cypress
The Everglades Club
The Venice Golf and Country Club**
Wilderness Country Club

GEORGIA

Flat Creek Country Club
TPC Sugarloaf

ILLINOIS

Bolingbrook Golf Club
Countryside Golf Club

KENTUCKY

Kearney Hill Golf Links
Lakeside Golf Course
Tates Creek Golf Course

MARYLAND

Lakewood Country Club*
The Golf Course at Crossvines
TPC Potomac

MICHIGAN

Radrick Farms Golf Course University of Michigan

NORTH CAROLINA

TPC Piper Glen

NEW MEXICO

The Club at Las Campanas

NEVADA

Wildhorse Golf Club

NEW YORK

Schuyler Meadows Club

OREGON

Columbia Edgewater Country Club

PENNSYLVANIA

Cranberry Highlands Golf Course

SOUTH CAROLINA

Dataw Island Club
Old Tabby Links at Spring Island

SOUTH DAKOTA

Minnehaha Country Club

TENNESSEE

Buford Ellington Golf Course at Henry Horton State Park
Montgomery Bell State Park Golf Course
Tellico Village–The Links at Kahite
Tellico Village–Tanasi Golf Course
Tellico Village–Toqua Golf Course
TPC Southwind

VIRGINIA

Hermitage Country Club

WASHINGTON

Sun Willows Golf Course*
Useless Bay Golf & Country Club

* 10-Year Certification Certificate Winner

** 20-Year Certification Plaque Winner



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Audubon International

www.auduboninternational.org