

ON COURSE WITH NATURE

Inventorying Your Resources

by RONALD G. DODSON

President, Audubon Society of New York State, Inc.

ONE OF THE first steps necessary in reaching a goal is to take stock of the beginning point. For example, if we wanted to fly to Indianapolis, the first question a travel agent would ask is where we are beginning the trip. If we were driving, we would grab a map, look for our present location, and plan the shortest route with the best roads.

So it is with environmental and natural resource planning. It is critical that we take stock of the natural resources presently associated with our property. We need to know the ecological region in which the property is located, the size of the property, the acres of various types of general habitats found on the property, and a listing of the types of plants and animals presently found there. Starting the environmental planning process with natural resource information will result in a more successful implementation of the plan and provide a way to document the results. For example, if a plan is put in place to increase the population of purple martins, and it is not known if purple martins have ever been found in that part of the country or if adequate habitat exists for them, the conservation efforts *may* succeed, but it's not likely. On the other hand, if purple martins already exist on the property and we don't know it, or we don't know how many are there, how will we document the results of our plans to increase their population?

But, you may ask, how do I get started inventorying golf course resources when I am not a wildlife expert and I already have a full-time job?

First of all, you need a form on which you can list questions and answers. Questions and answers about the ecological region, habitat types, and kinds of birds, plants, and animals on the property will prove to be a useful reference point. Membership in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses includes a Resource Inventory form that has been designed for golf courses across the country. Or you can



Survey your golfers through the course newsletter or post a notice in the pro shop to ask for volunteers in conducting a wildlife inventory.

design one yourself based on what you already know about the natural resources of your property.

After you are clear about what questions to ask and a form has been developed, how do you find the correct information? Some golf courses have hired consultants or other experts to do this work. Although that's not a bad idea, there are many other approaches that may be even more beneficial.

1. Begin your efforts by starting a Natural Resource Reference Library. Some good books to start with include: *Landscape Restoration Handbook*; Peterson Field

Guides: trees, plants, mammals, etc.; *National Geographic Society Birds of North America*.

2. Contact your state Fish and Wildlife office. They are usually located in the state capital and have regional offices throughout the state. They can provide lists of fish, wildlife, and plants of the state and possibly information about your specific location through their Natural Heritage database.

3. Through either a written or oral survey, find out if any of your own staff are birders or amateur naturalists. They may surprise you.



Eagles & Birdies at Kapalua

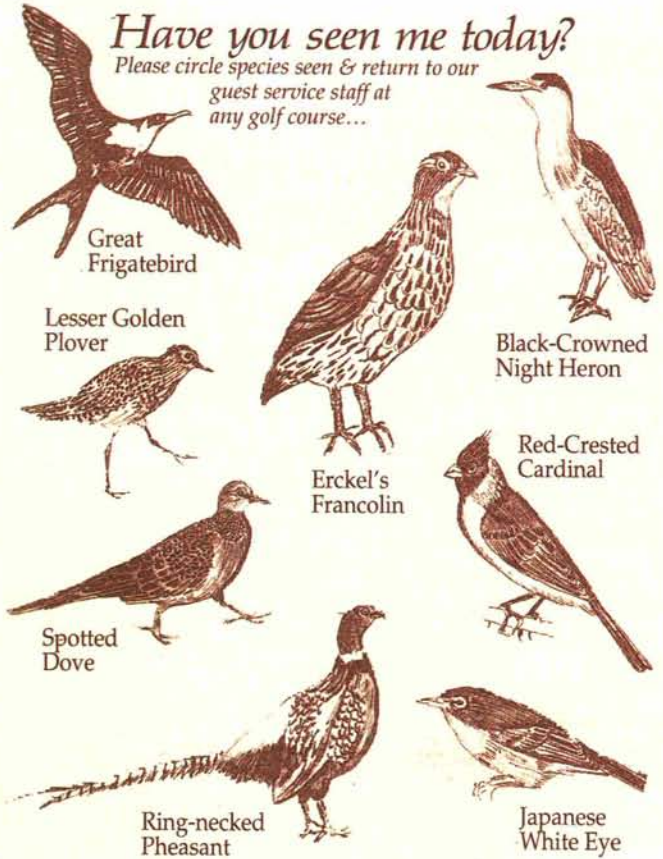
Just as birdies and eagles are prized by all golfers, Kapalua, too, places great value on the bird species that call our golf courses home.

Kapalua's Bay, Village and Plantation Courses are registered with the prestigious New York Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, a program coordinated by the New York Audubon Society in cooperation with the United States Golf Association.

In order to preserve the wildlife species on and surrounding Kapalua's golf courses, conserving water, providing food for wildlife species, and limiting pesticides are a few of the ambitious projects currently being implemented.

If you would like to help us with our ongoing preservation efforts, please keep this card next to your scorecard. As you track your birdies, keep track of ours also. On the back of this card, circle the birds you see today and return this card to our guest service staff.

We thank you in advance for your assistance, and have a great game!



Have you seen me today?

Please circle species seen & return to our guest service staff at any golf course...

Great Frigatebird

Lesser Golden Plover

Black-Crowned Night Heron

Erckel's Francolin

Red-Crested Cardinal

Spotted Dove

Ring-necked Pheasant

Japanese White Eye

Other Species _____

Golf Course _____

Mahalo!

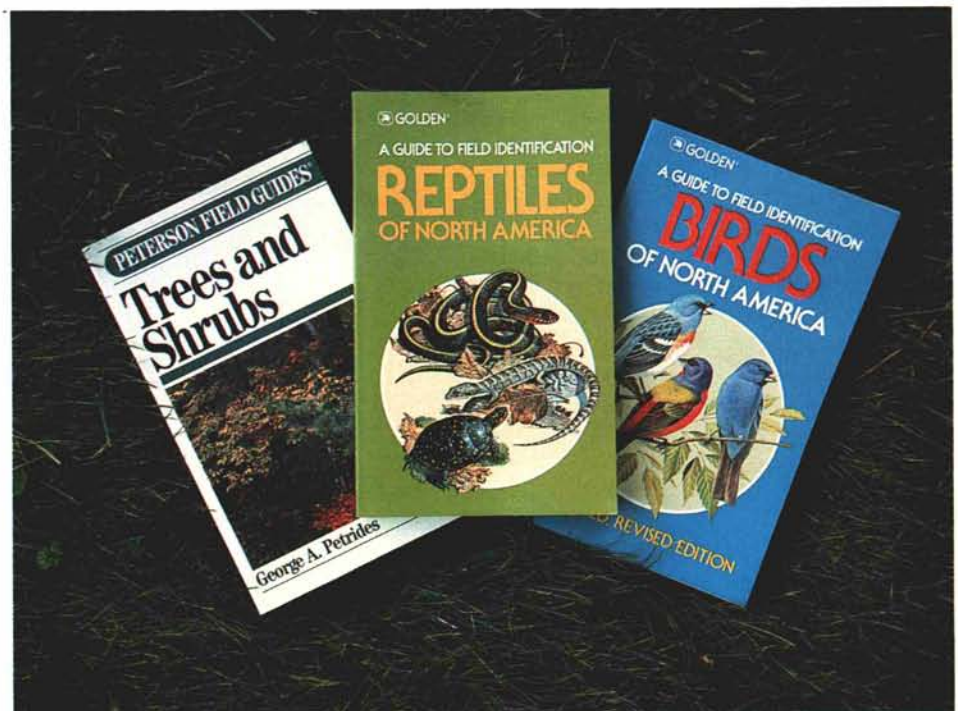
4. Survey your membership or course users, through a newsletter or notice in the clubhouse, asking for volunteer "Resource Surveyors."

5. Contact a local bird club, Audubon Society, or natural history group and ask for help.

6. Contact local high schools or colleges for names of teachers in the science area. They may be interested and they may have students who can help.

7. Local garden clubs, native plant groups, and nurseries can be good sources for help with plants.

By looking for and using volunteers, you will not only find out about the resources of the golf course, but lay the foundation for partnerships that will be valuable when you begin to implement your conservation plans. In addition, golf courses across the country are searching for ways to let people know that courses are valuable assets for wildlife and the environment. Involving others in your efforts to inventory your resources and establish a baseline of information helps all of us discover just how valuable golf course habitat is.



(Top) Completing a wildlife inventory on the golf course can be accomplished many different ways. Kapalua's golf courses (Kapalua, Hawaii) use an inventory card to involve golfers in the process. (Above) Begin your efforts to inventory resources on the golf course by starting a natural resource reference library.