

Involving the Public and Your Members

Hang out a welcome sign for John Q. and others who want to help.

by RONALD G. DODSON



Morro Bay Golf Course (California) has worked with an impressive list of environmental, service, and research organizations to maintain monarch butterfly sites on the golf course.

GOLF COURSE managers across the country have expressed their desire for the general public, as well as their members, to understand what it really takes to manage a golf course. They would like everyone to develop an appreciation for the value that a well-managed golf course can provide for wildlife and the environment.

It is often difficult, however, for people to understand or fully appreciate something unless they have an opportunity to experience or participate in what they are attempting to understand. It is for this reason that one of the certification areas of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for

Golf Courses is **“Public/Member Involvement.”**

This category and certification requirement was created to encourage course managers to undertake a necessary action that at first glance may not seem comfortable to them. To many course managers the first thought may be, “Oh, man! That’s all that I need. Another person — or even worse, a committee — looking over my shoulder.” However, this is neither the goal nor the intention of the public/member involvement category. Remember, if your members or the public do not know what you do, how can they possibly understand or appreciate it? In addition, you just might discover

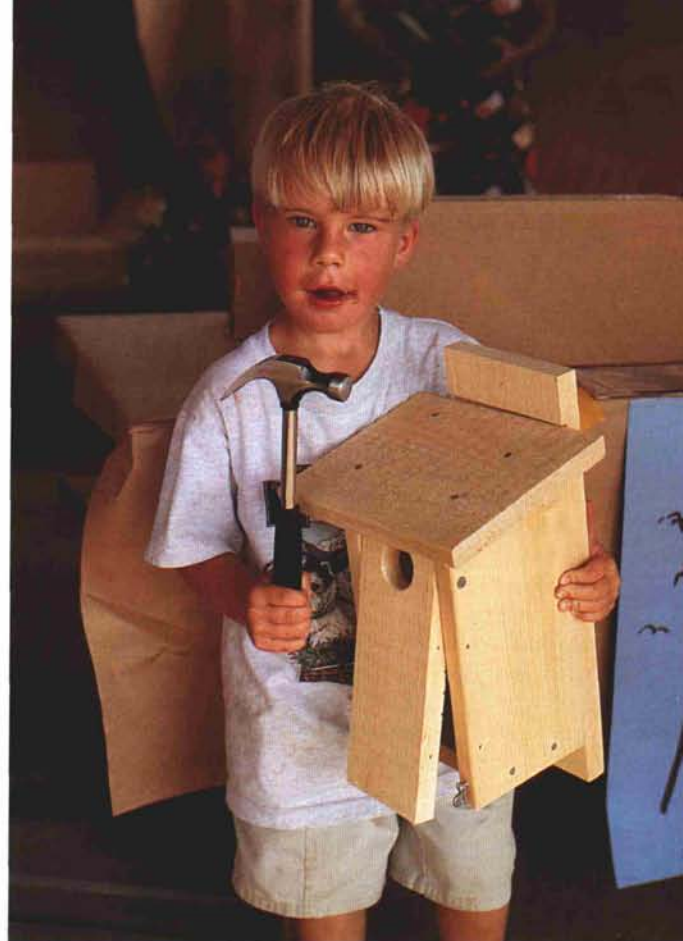
several people who actually want to help with projects in positive and constructive ways.

There are many ways that you can start this process, but the first, logical step is to contact the golfers at your course. A newsletter article or announcement on the bulletin board requesting help from individuals to assist with conservation projects such as wildlife surveys, nest box construction, or monitoring may result in more positive responses than you may think.

After you prepare a list of possible conservation projects for the course, think about people in the community, organizations, and agencies who might be interested in helping. This list could

(Below) Garden kits to attract bluebirds, hummingbirds, and butterflies were distributed at the Las Campanas Santa Fe Audubon Fair

(Right) Even the youngest environmentalist likes to help out with new homes for the birds.



include a local school teacher and a class, 4-H groups, and garden or bird clubs. For bigger projects, consider college interns, the local fish and wildlife agency, the cooperative extension service, a local utility company, or an area solid waste agency. In some cases, you will find individuals who are interested in getting involved and learning about your efforts. In fact, you may be surprised to find out that for some of these people it is actually their job.

Whether or not you are a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, you will find that pursuing public-member involvement is an important effort that will pay large rewards to the golf course, the environment, and to you.

In the Spotlight

Morro Bay Golf Course: When it comes to incorporating outside help in projects on the course, an excellent example is the fully certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary at Morro Bay Golf Course in California. One of the most impressive components of their public/member involvement efforts is the diversity of environmental, education, and research organizations they involved in their planning and implementation efforts. They worked with

the Boy Scouts of America, Native Plant Society, California Conservation Corp., University of California Cooperative Extension, California Parks Service, Santa Monica Community College, and California Polytechnic University, and several others. The Morro Bay Boy Scout Troop built, mounted, and monitored nest boxes on the course. The California Polytechnic University, Santa Monica Community College, and California Park Service are leading a combined effort in maintaining and improving monarch butterfly sites on the course. A native tree reestablishment program was developed in cooperation with the University of California Cooperative Extension.

Las Campanas, Santa Fe: An important component of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program is the emphasis on bringing projects implemented on the course to the backyards of course members. Las Campanas decided that a unique way of informing and involving their members was to hold an Audubon Fair Day at their maintenance facility. They offered their golfers free wildlife enhancement kits during the fair. During that day, demonstrations were arranged and experts were available to provide guidance to

help members enhance their own backyards. The wildlife enhancement kits the members could choose from included a bat house, a bird house with a songbird garden kit, and a butterfly or hummingbird garden kit. Members could take the kits home or else donate the bird house to the course if they agreed to maintain and monitor it during the summer.

TPC at River Highlands: Another approach to member/public involvement is in the planning stages at TPC at River Highlands in Connecticut. They are making plans for a *kids day* that will involve children of members building a nest box and a bird feeder under the direction of course management staff. The kids will take the bird feeders home with information about the Audubon Backyard Program and how their yard can benefit wildlife. In addition, they will put their name on the nest box, and along with their parents, they will place, monitor, and maintain the box on the course. This excellent project helps link backyards to the golf course, and links members to the conservation efforts of the course management.

RONALD G. DODSON is President of the Audubon Society of New York.