



GENE R. TAYLOR AND RICHARD H. WHITE

Charles Joachim, superintendent, and Bryan Grantom, assistant superintendent, provide members of the Texas A&M University Turf Club with history and general information about Champions Golf Club prior to conducting the resource inventory.

AGGIES IN ACTION

*Texas A&M University turf club
participates in the Audubon program.*

by DR. RICHARD H. WHITE

GOLF COURSES are often criticized in the news media and by environmental organizations for conducting environmentally damaging practices. In reality, however, most golf course superintendents are as concerned about the potential environmental impacts of their management decisions as are many members of conservation and environmental organizations. Some golf courses have been managed for many years in ways that protect and enhance the environment. Similarly, many other golf course managers are altering maintenance of

certain areas to enhance wildlife habitat within the course property.

Golf courses provide valuable open spaces, greenbelts, natural sanctuaries, and wildlife habitats, especially in areas of urban expansion. Audubon International, in conjunction with the United States Golf Association, created *The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP)* to encourage and recognize golf courses that take a leadership role in conservation projects. The ACSP encourages habitat enhancement, establishment of Integrated Plant Management (IPM)

programs, and protection and conservation of water resources. Participation in the ACSP offers the golf course superintendent and course officials valuable information through publications, telephone consultations, and on-site visits by special arrangement. The ACSP increases awareness about positive contributions golf courses make on behalf of the environment and the local community.

More than 2,200 golf courses participate in the ACSP, and many take the first steps to become a registered participant in the program. Some,

**Teams and Team Members Conducting the
Resource Inventory at Champions Golf Club**

Team	Photography	Property/Adjoining Land Use	Plant Inventory	Wildlife Inventory	Superintendent Information
Leader	Jay Stine	Dan Burkett	John Ferraro	Mark Peloquin	Brad Waters
	Chris Barker	Larry Rider	Sharon Morton	Scott Fuller	Gene Taylor
	Todd Terry	Jason Gaudreau	James Huntsman	Chris Cunningham	Kurt Sewell
		Chris McCallum	Eric Siebold	Zac Pettiete	John Waver
		Matt Brewer	William Boaz	Wade Warms	Belew Ellis
			Stephen Grochett	Brad Fryrear	

however, do not follow through with the program because they just can't seem to complete the first step — a Resource Inventory. The Texas A&M University Turf Club felt that the ACSP is an important and valuable program, and its members became interested in helping golf courses achieve success in the ACSP program.

The Texas A&M University Turf Club is a student organization whose members are primarily undergraduate students enrolled as Agronomy majors in the Turfgrass Management Option in the Soil and Crop Sciences Department. Many of the Turf Club's members are interested in pursuing careers as golf course superintendents. The Turf Club members decided to become involved because they wanted to: 1) increase awareness about positive golf course contributions to the environment and the community; 2) encourage habitat enhancement, establishment of IPM programs, and protection of water resources; 3) assist golf courses, through cooperation with the golf course superintendent, in fulfilling the requirements to become a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary; and 4) enhance the educational background of club members through close interaction with golf course superintendents and application of principles learned in various college courses.

The Texas A&M University Turf Club felt it could be most helpful in the ACSP process by gathering data and helping golf course superintendents complete the Resource Inventory. The Turf Club decided that it could:

- Take photographs to include in the Resource Inventory that show views of water features, natural areas, wildlife enhancement projects, and areas for specific conservation recommendations.

- Determine specific golf course features such as the approximate acres of out-of-play turfgrass areas, in-play grass areas, and rough (if unknown).

- Determine specific land features on the property such as the approximate acres of woodland, prairie, wildflower meadow, and other habitat, and describe adjoining land and land uses around the course.

- Assess water features on the course, such as lakes, ponds, wetlands, creeks, streams, and rivers, including average length and width of each on the property.

- Determine wildlife information, such as species of plants, including major trees and shrubs, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and butterflies and insects.

- Cooperate with the golf course superintendent to accumulate other pertinent information about the golf course and management of the course.

- Prepare a formal copy of the Resource Inventory for review and submission by the golf course superintendent and other appropriate course officials.

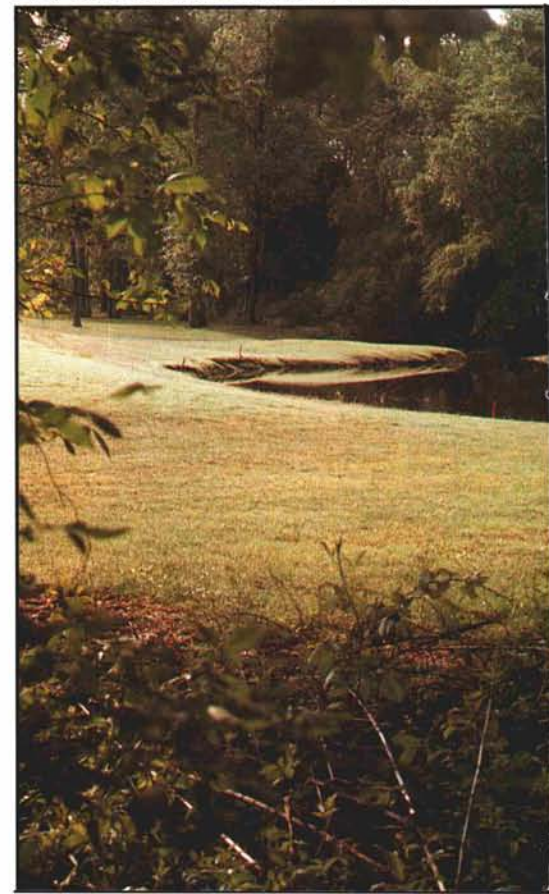
The Turf Club contacted Jean Mackay, Education Director of Audubon International, to discuss participation in the program and find out about golf courses in Texas that had registered in the ACSP but had not completed the Resource Inventory. Ms. Mackay provided names of several courses, one of which was the Champions Golf Club in Houston, Texas. Jay Stine, the 1994-95 Turf Club president, contacted Charles Joachim, golf course superintendent at Champions, about whether he would be interested in having the Turf Club assist with the conduct of the Resource Inventory. Mr. Joachim was extremely interested and welcomed the Turf Club's involvement. Jay Stine and Mr.

Joachim arranged a day for an initial site visit, and the Turf Club began planning and developing strategy for completing the inventory.

Developing Teams

The Turf Club decided that the most efficient way to complete the inventory was to develop teams that would be responsible for specific sections of the Resource Inventory. Dr. Richard White and Wallace Menn, faculty advisors to the Turf Club, served as project co-

Vegetation around streams and lakes is groomed to the water line in many areas that affect play. However, Champions Golf Club allows native trees, vines, and



ordinators. Five teams were selected based on information requested by the Resource Inventory form provided by Audubon International. The teams that emerged included: 1) Property/Adjoining Land Use, 2) Photography, 3) Plant Inventory, 4) Wildlife Inventory, and 5) Superintendent Information.

Jay Stine was the photography team leader with responsibility for obtaining photographs to illustrate existing features of the course. Brad Waters, superintendent information team leader, was responsible for gathering information from Mr. Joachim about management practices, existing habitat enhancement and conservation projects, integrated plant management programs, and other pertinent information that the superintendent could provide. Dan Burkett led the property/adjoining land team. His responsibility entailed defining adjoining land use, providing course maps and property descriptions, and providing data about water features, woodlands, buildings, turf, and other areas on the course. John Ferraro, plant inventory team leader, was responsible for providing a thorough inventory of major tree and shrub species. The wildlife inventory team,

shrubs along the water line of many water features in an effort to naturalize and enhance habitat for wildlife.



led by Mark Peloquin, was responsible for providing an inventory of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians that exist on the course.

The Turf Club started the site visit by listening to a general overview of the history and management of Champions Golf Club by Mr. Joachim. Then, teams went to work to gather the data needed to complete their portions of the Resource Inventory. By the end of the day, each team had conducted a thorough inventory. After the Turf Club returned home, team leaders assembled the information obtained during the site visit and provided a written report. The reports from each team were combined to complete the Resource Inventory report. The Resource Inventory was then submitted to the Champions Golf Club for its review and subsequent submission to Audubon International.

Other Important Potential Resources

The information required for the Resource Inventory is not difficult to obtain. However, conducting the inventory does require a commitment of time. Setting aside a few minutes each day for this project is probably better than trying to do it all in a couple days. Local environmental organizations may be a potentially important resource that can help with the process and expand the member/public component of the ACSP.

The plant and wildlife inventory may be the most difficult facet if one wishes to obtain a thorough list of plants, insects, mammals, and birds. The requirements of the Resource Inventory in these categories are minimal, but many golf course officials, members, and superintendents desire a more complete species list. Often, organizations and individuals are available to assist in these areas, and the Resource Inventory provides a good opportunity to become involved with local conservation groups. Local wildlife and Audubon societies, and other bird-watching groups, may be able to provide assistance with wildlife and bird species identification. Local garden clubs and native plant societies may be willing to provide lists of native plants and also may be willing to help conduct plant inventories. There may also be course members who have expertise with plant or animal species and can provide assistance with the inventory. Member involvement in the ACSP process is important. Some

golfers may have valuable expertise that can be utilized.

The Turf Club was able to obtain a list of birds, featuring their relative abundance and season of occurrence, for the Champions Golf Club area from a local wildlife society. Lists such as this one are a useful guide, but the birds listed should be verified as occurring on the course. Bird lists for particular areas are also useful for determining the birds that can be expected and ones that deserve special attention. Local birding or wildlife organizations can be valuable resources in determining current and future bird and wildlife populations.

A Native Tree Selection Guide also was obtained from the Coastal Region of the Native Plant Society of Texas by the Turf Club. Although this guide was not useful for identification purposes, the guide does provide useful information about trees that attract butterflies, provide fragrant leaves or flowers, and entice birds. This guide will be useful to the superintendent and club officials in deciding which species to plant to enhance wildlife habitat.

Future Involvement

Although the A&M University Turf Club is not affiliated with Audubon International or the United States Golf Association, its members believe that the ACSP is important to golf courses, the community, and the environment, and it will continue to assist with this program. The Turf Club members who help conduct a Resource Inventory gather excellent experience and will be more likely to participate in this program in the future.

One of the primary missions of the Texas A&M University Turf Club is to promote turfgrass education. Participation in the ACSP is an extension of the turfgrass students' education to a unique turfgrass/environmental laboratory. Members of the Turf Club are the next generation of turfgrass professionals. In a decade when environmental issues and concerns are at an all-time high, it is encouraging that these students have accepted the opportunity and responsibility of becoming leaders in environmental stewardship.

DR. RICHARD WHITE is a professor in the Soil and Crop Sciences Department at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. In addition to conducting research and teaching turf management courses, he also serves as advisor to the Texas A&M University Turf Club.