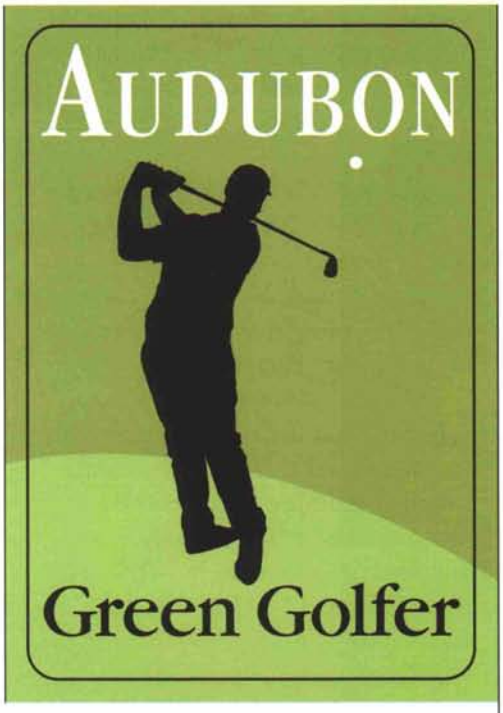
Take the Pledge for Greener Golf

It's time for golfers to dedicate themselves to making nature an integral part of their game.

BY JEAN MACKAY

Golf industry and environmental experts have long recognized the power of America's 25 million golfers in supporting or rejecting environmental best management practices on the country's 15,000 golf courses. Golfers can be a demanding breed — and their demands for fast greens and perfectly manicured conditions have often trumped sound agronomic practices and nature conservation.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Golfers also can be a force for preserving the *nature of the game.* Throughout 2007, Audubon International, along with the USGA and The PGA of America, is inviting golfers to take the *Audubon Green Golfer Pledge* (see sidebar). The pledge is a simple way for golfers to support environmental stewardship while playing. From replacing divots to picking up trash, the simple actions golfers can take are good for the game, good for the golf course, and good for the environment.



76% of golfers surveyed in 2007 by *Golf Digest* said that a golf course that integrates natural habitat increases golfer enjoyment of the game ("Golf & The Environment 2007," *Golf Digest Publications*). The Audubon Green Golfer Pledge builds awareness and support among golfers for doing just that.

"The pledge is a great way for golfers to celebrate the sport's venerable tradition of making nature an integral part of the game," says Kevin Fletcher, executive director, Audubon International. "We want golfers to recognize that quality playing conditions and good stewardship go hand in hand."

Golfers can take the free pledge online or via a pledge sheet distributed to golf courses that wish to participate in promoting the pledge. Green Golfers — and participating courses — are eligible for golf-related prizes to be given at the end of 2007.

For more information and golfer education resources, or to get involved in promoting the pledge, please visit www.golfandenvironment.org and click on *Audubon Green Golfer.*

AUDUBON GREEN GOLFER PLEDGE

We value the nature of the game and accept our responsibility to ensure that golf courses are managed in harmony with the environment. We pledge to:

- Be kind to the course: repair ball marks and replace divots to help maintain playability.
- Walk, rather than use a cart, when possible. Walking promotes physical fitness, healthy turf, and a clean environment.
- Look for consistent, true ball roll on greens, rather than speed. Lower mowing heights required for fast greens are at the root of many turf and environmental problems.
- Keep play on the course and stay out of natural areas. Respect designated environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitats within the course.
- Use trash and recycling receptacles and encourage others to do the same. If you see trash, don't pass it up . . . pick it up!
- Appreciate the nature of the game. Watch for wildlife as you play and support the course's efforts to provide habitat.
- Educate others about the benefits of environmentally responsible golf course management for the future of the game and the environment.
- Encourage the golf course to be an active participant in environmental programs for golf courses, such as those offered by Audubon International.

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