My four year old daughter loves my garden. Last weekend she ran around and hugged every plant that was blooming and told me, **“This will help them grow, Daddy.”** When she got close to the poison ivy, I had to show her exactly what NOT to hug. She understood, and now she looks closer.

Contrast this with the college students who, in a forest ecology lab a few years ago, would stand fifteen feet away from the trees I was identifying. I urged them to come closer, come closer. Look at the leaves. One student asked, from a distance, how many they had to know for the final exam, while another texted on his phone. One student took a selfie next to the tree trunk, but at least she was engaging!

This may, in part, be an example of Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD), a now popular term coined by author Richard Louv describing how kids these days don’t spend enough time outside. Clearly my young daughter, brimming with enthusiastic curiosity, has no such disdain for getting close to nature.

A goal I have for my daughter is to make sure she continues to feel comfortable outside. As long as she stays away from the poison ivy, she will develop a healthy body and mind, especially in a world with omnipresent iPads and cell phones.

Our staff at Audubon International is fortunate to work with many professionals who work outside, managing parkland, habitat, turf or all of the above. Advances in technology make managing the resources more effective and more efficient. Are these tools also resulting in adult NDD? Do they reduce the direct contact with nature that our eyes and ears and instincts provided for millennia?

Get outside. Play outside. Work outside. Bring your tablets and cell phones and digital cameras with you, if you must. Use them to help identify plants and birds. Technologies can enhance the experience (I think they are called “apps”?). If the bird app helps you listen more closely to the bird song and identify it, then use it. Take a selfie with a tree leaf, then, turn off the app-thingie. At least sometimes. Hug the flowers. Look at nature with your eyes, not just through your digital lens.

There is nature all around you, no matter where you live, no matter how urban or developed. All kids, all families, all people should get closer to grass, trees, birds, and flowers. Bring the balls and frisbees to the park. Listen to the bird songs. In order to reduce our impact on this planet, we must first touch it and see it and get closer to it. If we all do that, then NDD will not be the ultimate killer disease.

Fondly,

Doug Bechtel, Executive Director
Thinking of family month and being outdoors whether with a putter in hand or a set of binoculars reminded me of the work that parks and recreation departments do throughout the country as they work with families within their state, county, or local governments. Immediately Florida’s Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation came to mind. Palm Beach County has registered and certified their state, county, or local governments. Immediately through Audubon International’s programs. To gain recognition for their efforts, they joined Audubon International and the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

Palm Beach County and Public Golf
Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation manages over 8,000 acres of park properties for Palm Beach County including 81 regional, district, community, beach, and neighborhood parks. As of 2013, the population of Palm Beach County was shown as 1,372,000 which makes it the third most populous county in the state of Florida. Lots of families are looking for safe, interesting and fun places to enjoy out-of-doors. So how did Palm Beach County get into the golf course business?

Public golf is actually fairly new to Palm Beach County. According to a historical perspective document provided to Audubon International, in 1986 a needs assessment study was conducted by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) for Palm Beach County and at that time, there seemed to be an apparent abundance of golf facilities in Palm Beach County. However, upon closer examination, it was shown that access to those facilities by the public was limited. Many of the golf facilities, including some municipal golf courses, restricted access by membership or because they were within real estate developments.

At the time, Florida ranked 25th in the nation for population per public 18 holes of golf, but ranked 1st in the nation for population per private 18 holes of golf. So the NGF recommended that Palm Beach County should develop as many as 4 to 5 public golf facilities to meet the needs of the community.

Since that time, Palm Beach County has acquired or built 4 public golf courses and one practice facility. Two of these courses are located in the southern part of the county and two are located in the central part. Palm Beach County developed and acquired these public golf facilities primarily to provide equal access and affordable golf opportunities for its residents. In addition to providing access to existing golfers, one of the objectives of the Parks and Recreation Department is also to encourage increased participation in the lifelong recreation activities and to introduce its residents to the game of golf. The Parks and Recreation Department also includes golf courses in its overall strategy to preserve open space and green space as assets within the community.

Learning about Audubon International
Around 2006-2007 the golf operations of their parks department was growing. The Special Facilities Director, Jon Herrick, and Golf Operations Supervisor, Paul Connell, began investigating Florida Best Management Practices (BMPs). They had recently seen how changes in the way federal, state, and local environmental regulations and opinions had begun to impact golf course design, construction and ongoing operations at golf facilities. So they wanted to ensure that the county’s golf courses were following the most current and comprehensive guidelines in golf course management. While it was pursuing this goal, they became aware of Audubon International and the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

The goals at Palm Beach County golf facilities were to: operate in a sustainable manner; help protect and enhance wildlife habitat; reduce dependence on water; eliminate adverse impacts from maintenance operations; independently certify their management efforts; and continue to fund operations from user fees. Palm Beach County was already taking steps to improve their environmental stewardship, but working with Audubon International would take this effort further. All of these listed goals were things that could be accomplished through Audubon International’s programs. To gain recognition for their efforts, they joined Audubon International’s Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP).

Palm Beach County-Owned Public Golf Courses
So began the process of certification for the three golf courses and the learning center. As stated in the county’s informational materials, “Palm Beach County’s Parks and Recreation Department has a history of turning disturbed land into natural and recreational park settings for residents and visitors of Palm Beach County to enjoy for generations” and the golf courses were no exception. Their ACSP certified golf projects are as follows:

1. Okeeheelee Golf Course is a 27-hole golf course registered in the ACSP on 8/16/2005 and certified on 11/17/2008. In 2015 it participated in the Audubon International BioBlitz and identified over 60 species of wildlife. With its unique park setting and beautiful vistas of Clear Lake, the facility is aptly named Okeeheelee, or “quiet waters” in the Seminole Indian language.

2. Park Ridge Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course registered in the ACSP on 8/1/2006 and certified on 1/13/2009. This is the “ultimate recycling project” as the course was built on the closed Lantana Landfill where Palm Beach County and Solid Waste Authority partnered to turn a useless and degraded piece of property into a popular community venue. The elevation changes are unheard of in South Florida with 85 feet as its highest point. It was voted by the Palm Beach Post as one of the 5 top favorite places for locals to play golf.

3. Okeeheelee East Golf Course is a 9-hole golf course registered in the ACSP on 12/17/2007 and certified on 6/30/2008. This golf course includes golf courses in its overall strategy to preserve open space and green space as assets within the community.
3. Southwinds Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course registered in the ACSP on 12/11/2007 and certified on 4/28/2009. Southwinds was the county’s first venture in running golf courses/facilities. The county acquired the course in 1987 from Century Village, a local homeowner’s association.

4. Registered in the ACSP on 3/25/2008 John Prince Golf Learning Center in Lake Worth 1 ½ miles from the Atlantic, is a 33 acre stand-alone lighted practice facility that includes a driving range, putting green and chipping green along with three regulation practice holes. It was certified on 9/27/2013.

Going a Step Further
Palm Beach County took this focus on environmental stewardship one step further with the building of a 27-hole course called Osprey Point. Applying all of the stewardship principles from the ACSP and meshing those with the design, construction and long term management guidelines of the Classic Program, the property was registered in the Classic Program on 2/7/2008.

Osprey Point Golf Course is located within the South County Regional Park at the edge of the Everglades and adjacent to Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge. Prior to beginning development of the South County Regional Park, the land was used for both agricultural farming and shell rock mining and had been completely disturbed. The area where the course is located had been entirely overgrown with Brazilian Pepper and other non native invasive plants. Osprey Point Golf Course opened on November 6, 2010 featuring seashore paspalum on greens, tees, and fairways, paspalum being a grass that can tolerate brackish water, an appropriate choice when water is not so plentiful. It is hard to believe, but now there are 27 holes with lush, dense native vegetation providing habitat for everything from bob cat kittens to Bald Eagles. It is a place where families come daily to enjoy the setting and a see a newly completed Butterfly Garden at Osprey Point to watch butterflies in the garden. Osprey Point was certified on 3/29/2011 as the first Audubon International Classic Sanctuary in the state of Florida and only the second in the United States. Thanks to Palm Beach County!

Palm Beach County government made a concerted effort to bring public golf to those residents that were unserved. These courses not only provide a fun place for families to recreate together, but they are the result of foresight and leadership in their planning for the future. Although there are several reasons to take your family outside in this year, we hope you will find a certified Audubon International golf course for that outing where every day you’ll see the mix of the birds and the birdies.

Learn more about Palm Beach County and Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation at www.pbcgov.com/parks.

Meet the Winners!

SOUTHWINDS in BOCA RATON, FL
Left to right: Billy Couch, Assistant Manager; Frank Mitchell, Golf Professional; Peter Arvanitis, Golf Course Superintendent; Sharon Painter, Manager

STONEBRIDGE in NAPLES, FL
Left to right: Mark Metzger, Superintendent and Tim Jones, General Manager

VENICE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB in VENICE, FL
Kate Borduas, Coordinator of BioBlitz (club member) and Jim Schell, General Manager

MOHEGAN SUN in BALTIC, CT
Left to right: Philip Krick, VP and Director of Golf Operations; Chris Elsmore, Superintendent; Delphine Tseng, Audubon International; Michel Painchaud, Head Golf Professional
Sea turtles are one of earth’s most ancient organisms, with fossils dating back to 150 million years ago, long before humans inhabited the planet. With two centuries of rapid population growth and development, human activities have tipped the scales against the survival of these ancient mariners.

Of the seven species of sea turtles, five can be found in the southeastern region of the United States, where Audubon International (AI) has its highest concentration of members: the hawksbill, Kemp’s ridley, leatherback, green, and loggerhead turtles roam the eastern coastlines of the United States. Olive ridley turtles can be found near AI member sites in Mexico, Central America, and India, and flatback turtles occur near several of our Australian members. So, Audubon International members have a special opportunity to help conserve these threatened species where they live.

Sea turtles are in desperate need of protection. Sea turtles deal with many human-related threats which have greatly reduced their population numbers. Threats affecting sea turtles include:

- **Pollution Ingestion & Entanglement.** Sea turtles mistakenly eat garbage pollution floating at the surface of the ocean where they feed, because small pieces of plastic mirror the shape and size of food. When sea turtles eat plastic pellets, their intestines get clogged, leading to starvation and eventual death. Sea turtles also get stuck in floating plastic and often cannot break free.

- **Poor Fishing Practices.** The accidental capture of marine life, also known as bycatch, is possibly the largest contributor to sea turtle injury and death worldwide. Many fishery techniques contribute to sea turtle capture, and approximately 40% of all organisms caught by marine fisheries are discarded as trash. The lucky few that survive capture are released back to the wild injured, facing an uncertain future.

- **Habitat encroachment.** Sea turtles rely heavily on open beaches in order to lay their eggs. This has become increasingly difficult due to human-occupied beaches as well as beach erosion caused by development.

- **Artificial Lights.** Lights from human settlements cause disorientation in nesting turtles and hatchlings. Sea turtles rely on shadowed beaches to identify appropriate spots for nesting and moonlight to direct them to the ocean after hatchling. When artificial light is introduced, sea turtles become disoriented and will often move in the wrong direction. This leads many baby sea turtles to venture into coastal communities instead of to sea.

- **Climate Change.** Sea turtles feed on coral, which is being lost from bleaching caused by rising temperatures. Also, rising sea levels will likely affect sea turtle native nesting sites where beaches become submerged before sea turtles can lay their eggs. Additionally, sand temperatures determine the sex of incubating eggs (the warmer sand produces females and cooler, deeper sand produces males), and increasing temperatures have already triggered larger amounts of females to be born, causing concern for adequate numbers of males for reproduction.

- **Illegal harvesting.** Hunters sell sea turtle shells to those who will use them decoratively. Also, some cultures consume sea turtle meat and eggs as food regularly, although conservation education efforts have helped to decrease demand.

(Source: Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles)
**Sea Turtle Biographies**

**Hawksbill Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Critically Endangered
- Size: 3 feet
- Weight: Up to 150 pounds
- Diet: Omnivorous
- Life Span: 50 years
- Nesting Areas: Tropical reefs of Atlantic, Indian, and western Pacific Oceans

**Kemp’s Ridley Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Critically Endangered
- Size: 2-3 feet
- Weight: On average 100 pounds
- Diet: Omnivorous
- Life Span: 30-50 years
- Current Range: Gulf of Mexico and eastern United States

**Green Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Size: 3-5 feet
- Weight: Up to 850 pounds
- Diet: Herbivorous
- Life Span: 80-100 years
- Nesting Areas: Florida and western Mexico

**Loggerhead Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Size: 3 feet
- Weight: Up to 1,000 pounds
- Diet: Omnivorous
- Life Span: 50 years
- Nesting Areas: Indian, western Atlantic, and western Pacific Oceans; Mediterranean Sea

**Leatherback Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable
- Size: 7-9 feet (largest sea turtle)
- Weight: Up to 2,000 pounds
- Diet: Jellyfish
- Lifespan: Upwards of 100 years
- Nesting Areas: Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans

**Olive Ridley Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable
- Size: 2 feet (smallest sea turtle)
- Weight: On average 100 pounds
- Diet: Omnivorous
- Life Span: Unknown
- Nesting Areas: Mexico, Costa Rica and India

**Flatback Sea Turtle**
- IUCN Status: Data Deficient
- Size: 3 feet
- Weight: On average 200 pounds
- Diet: Omnivorous
- Life Span: 50-80 years
- Nesting Areas: Northern Australia

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**Legal Protections**

Many international, federal, state and local laws have been implemented in order to conserve and hopefully restore sea turtle populations. All sea turtles occurring in U.S. waters are listed under the Endangered Species Act, which offers protection to individuals as well as their habitat. Federal agencies involved in protection include NOAA Fisheries, responsible for sea turtles in the ocean, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, responsible for sea turtles while they are on land. State laws provide additional protection in some specific areas, such as regulating fishing gear to reduce the risk of bycatch. Other state laws are more broad-reaching, like Florida’s Marine Turtle Protection Act, which makes it a felony to knowingly kill, injure, or harass any marine turtles, their eggs, or nests.

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**Conservation and Protection Programs**

Although sea turtles are at risk in coastal communities, community programs can be highly effective at preserving habitat, protecting nests, and educating the public about sea turtles. For instance, Hammock Dunes Owners’ Association and the Hammock Dunes Club in northeast Florida support the Flagler Turtle Patrol, through financial donations as well as volunteers. The Flagler Turtle Patrol, a nonprofit organization, receives funds from residents who wish to “adopt” a sea turtle nest. In addition volunteers help collect data on nest success, set up cages around nests to prevent predation, relocate threatened nests, and dig out viable eggs that do not hatch independently.

The community of Seabrook Island, South Carolina, is also home to a Turtle Patrol. Since 1990, the Turtle Patrol has been protecting loggerhead turtle nests on the beaches. During the spring, the Turtle Patrol picks up litter from the beach and conducts turtle surveys, and during the summer they monitor the beach daily in order to identify and protect nests as well as document the turtles hatching.

**Education & Eco-tourism**

In Hilton Head, Marriott’s Grande Ocean Resort and Barony Beach Club, both Silver Certified Green Lodging facilities, offer weekly talks about turtles during nesting season by experts from the Coastal Discovery Museum. “It is a great program for families that discusses the importance of sea turtles and their habitats. It’s very popular!” shared Devon Garcia, Activities Coordinator.

In communities where sale of turtle meat was an important industry, eco-tourism has provided an alternative that allows local economies to shift focus to conservation of the species. Bahia Beach Resort in Puerto Rico, a Certified Gold Signature Sanctuary, guides guests and residents in viewing leatherback babies hatching on the St. Regis hotel beach. Staff natural resource manager and marine biologist, Marcela Canon, reports, “Bahia Beach environmental interpreters share important facts about sea turtles’ behavior and threats and narration of what’s going on. This experience is a once in a lifetime opportunity for most of the guests at the St. Regis hotel and is highly appreciated.” In 2014, more than 1,500 leatherback hatchings made it into the ocean at this site.

Another example comes from a member in North Carolina, where AI has its highest concentration of members.”

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**How Our Members are Helping Sea Turtles**

**Lighting Ordinances**

In addition to state and federal laws protecting turtles, many towns and counties across the southeastern United States have adopted lighting ordinances in order to protect sea turtle populations. To protect turtles from disorientation caused by bright lights, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, requires that lights visible on the beach be turned off or shielded at night from May 1 to October 31 when loggerhead turtles access the beach. Behavioral policies such as these help sea turtles reproduce successfully, ultimately contributing to higher populations. Hilton Head is in the final steps of receiving its designation as an Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community, building on the success of many AI-certified facilities on the island.

**Recently technological developments in sea turtle friendly lighting show early promise in further reducing turtle disorientations from lighting.**

Lights that are long wavelength (580 nm or greater), fully shielded, and aimed low can significantly decrease impacts on sea turtles.

Coupled with incentives for retrofitting, public education, and regular enforcement, these improvements offer hope for driving turtle disorientation rates close to zero.
in the Village of Bald Head Island. The Bald Head Island Conservancy offers a variety of opportunities for visitors to learn about and support sea turtle conservation efforts while enjoying their stay on Bald Head Island. The Conservancy offers visitors turtle walks to view nest sites and sea turtle “Ride Alongs,” where guests can participate in turtle monitoring patrols. The patrols gather information critical to track population-wide trends. They monitor nesting success on their assigned beaches and collect data on behalf of regional turtle conservation agencies. Community members established the Turtle Central Gift Shop in order to support sea turtle conservation by the Bald Head Island Conservancy. The Turtle Gift Shop serves as headquarters for Conservancy tours and sells turtle-themed apparel, art, gifts, books and more. All proceeds from the Turtle Central Gift Shop support the Bald Head Island Conservancy’s conservation and education programs.

Both Bald Head Island and Bahia Beach use eco-tourism in a way that supports sea turtles, people, and their conservation organizations. Even better, these ecotours involve people in conservation science while giving firsthand experience of these unique creatures.

What Can I Do to Help Sea Turtles?

- Clean up beaches: remove all trash, toys, umbrellas, and chairs brought to the beach.
- If you have to drive on the beach, please drive slowly and keep your eye out for sea turtles and nests, especially during nesting season.
- During nesting season, turn off lights at your beach house at night.
- Do not litter, especially on the beach. Recycle all plastic and bottles.
- Support renewable energy when possible & avoid purchasing products that require deforestation practices in order to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Follow speed limits and water safety laws when operating any water vehicle in order to protect yourself and sea turtles.
- Do not hunt, harm or harass sea turtles for any reason.
- Join a sea turtle protection program.

New Fact Sheets Available

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AI Webinar: Building Strong Communities: Resources and Assistance from Non-Profit Partners September 2, 3pm EDT

Hosted by the Sonoran Institute for Community Builders.

Description: This webinar features information about Audubon International’s Sustainable Communities Program, the Sonoran Institute’s Community Builders & SCoTiE, and Project for Public Spaces.

Joanna Nadeau, Director of Community Programs, will discuss the benefits and steps of the Sustainable Communities program, and join a discussion with the Project for Public Spaces, and two of the Sonoran Institute’s programs.

To register, visit our facebook page.

Featured Photos

Coyote Pups!

There are five coyote pups living with their mother in one of the native areas at Lake Tahoe Golf Course. Photography by Bobby Jeager.

Oops!

We offer a heartfelt apology to Ironwood Golf Course in Byron, Michigan for having incorrectly labeled this Bioblitz photo as Florida. Our apologies to Kim Davidson and the staff. Thanks for participating.

Join us in Welcoming Daron Blake to AI

Daron Blake assumed the role of Program Assistant on June 29, 2015. In her duties, she reports directly to the Director of Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programs and processes, assesses, manages, and tracks certification activities for membership businesses in AI’s award winning natural resource management and sustainability programs. In addition to managing incoming AI Member documents and submissions, Daron provides administrative and technical support to AI Members. With Daron’s background in environmental science and her fieldwork supporting multiple land conservation efforts, she is a great asset to our organization. Prior to joining AI, Daron was the Director of Communications for the Nature Museum in Grafton, VT. She has a Masters in Environmental History from Kansas State University and a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Science from SUNY- Binghamton in Binghamton NY. Daron’s work on grasslands has been published in the Journal of Plant Ecology.

Continuing Education Opportunity

Did you know that the ACSP for Golf can meet one of the continuing education requirements for the Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS) renewal through GCSAA? Get points towards your certification with all the hard work you are doing!

Here is the breakdown:

Completion of Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf

Points awarded: 1.0 per initial certification and 0.25 per recertification

Maximum: 1.5 per renewal cycle

How to submit: Complete ACSP for Golf Courses service point affidavit

Individual participation in ACSF for Schools

Points awarded: 0.5 per school

How to submit: Complete ACSF for schools service point affidavit and associated checklist

Completion of Audubon Signature Program

Points awarded: 2.0 initial certification and 0.25 per recertification

Maximum: 3.0 per renewal cycle

How to submit: Complete Audubon Signature Program service point affidavit

For more information on the CGCS Program, call the Golf Course Superintendent’s Association at 800-472-7878

Resources and Assistance from Non-Profit Partners

Building Strong Communities:

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Taiwan: A Journey to The Island Green

A Personal Travel Log by Delphine Tseng

I am not sure if the grass really is greener on the other side, but I was about to find out. I landed on the other side of the Pacific on a hazy spring evening. I knew it was going to be hot, humid, and thickened with the particles of jasmine and traffic.

This was Taiwan. I was home.

Turf Science at the National Taiwan University - Taipei

My first meeting was with Mr. An-Jan Li from Wu Fong Golf Club in Taipei before I started my tour of several golf courses. Mr. Li went to graduate school at the National Taiwan University, the most authoritative university in Taiwan, and he wanted to introduce Audubon International to his advisors and professors from the Department of Agronomy. I met with the Department Chair Prof. Yu-Sen Chang, and Management Section Director Prof. Wen-Dar Huang. Professor Huang is the Secretary General of Weed Science Society of Taiwan and was passionate about wildlife habitat recovery. He was the first scholar I met and the one who pointed out the importance of the geographical location of Taiwanese golf courses. Professor Huang also noted that the only AI-certified course, Wu-Fong Golf Club, has been a great model for demonstration. Inviting people to the course definitely narrows the gap between the golfers and non-golfers, and improves public perception of golf. Golf in Taiwan is still viewed as an extremely privileged sport with the basic membership fees ranging from $50,000 to $300,000 USD annually. Many Taiwanese people know about the sport, but the whole country knows and loves PGA professional, Yani Tseng (who was the world’s top woman golfer a few years ago) and PGA pro, C.T. Pan. Golfer population is trending up so it is only natural that education about the sport and course science is rising.

The Chair of NTU Agronomy Department, Prof. Chang, suggested that Audubon International should attend seminars and conferences held in Asia regularly, because we represent a refreshing angle on the certification process and standards for courses. "It would be a shame if not enough people knew about Audubon International’s programs" said Prof. Chang.

On that note, I started my island tour. It began on a winding road snaking into the shallow mountain in Tai-chung, the middle of Taiwan, to visit Audubon International’s certified course- Wu Fong Golf Club.

I landed on the other side of the Pacific on a hazy spring evening. I knew it was going to be hot, humid, and thickened with the particles of jasmine and traffic.

The shallow mountains

“Shallow mountains” is a term used in Taiwan to describe the area between the foothill and the mountain top. This is the ecological divide and confluence of wildlife habitat. Taiwan is in a sub-tropical zone which provides a rest stop or destination for migratory birds. These “feathered darling guests” as Taiwanese people call them, can be spotted on many golf courses here.

Left: Professor Shen-lin Lin from National Chung Hsing University with Delphine Tseng in his Turf Lab

A gardener picking caterpillars off of the wild peonies at Wu Fong Golf Club

Kindergarteners getting ready for the wildlife workshop at Tsai Hsing Golf Club

From left: Superintendent An Jan Li from Wu Fong Golf Club in Miao Li, Delphine Tseng with a new breed of baby butterfly orchids, Professor Yu-Sen Chang from National Taiwan University in Taipei, in his lab
Hungry caterpillars that were munching the wild peonies. "He greeted the gardeners as they picked up the spray that much, that's why labors are extra intensive. "Check out these chubbies." The gardeners laughed and showed me those fuzzy creatures in their palms. "No pesticides, which make them extra yummy." He paused and then quickly added, "I meant the flowers to the caterpillars. Not the worms themselves!" Ah. I laughed. We waved goodbye and carried on to the turn, studying the construction of a new water feature, greeted more gardeners watering the fairways and rough areas, and all of a sudden a huge shadow swooped over my head. "WHAT WAS THAT?!" I instinctively ducked and realizing that earthquake, I lost my childhood home to it and our home never was the same, so I could only imagine what hardship a course had to face.

"We came back up stronger!" said Mr. Li after seeing my darkened expression. "We incorporated new blind spots, new hills, new dog legs and even new angulated greens into the design. Now, it's like a brand new course that Mother Nature rebuilt for us. So to thank her we hold The 921 Charity Tournament annually to give back to the people in need. "Here we are!" His face brightened up as we arrived. We met with Professor Shen-Lin Lin (whose name is a palindrome in Chinese) from National Chung Hsing University. Professor Lin is the turf authority in Taiwan and he helped Wu Fong during the certification process. We talked about Mikado pheasants and Masu salmon. We also discussed how golf courses could help the conservation effort—not just wildlife conservation, but water conservation as well.

"You should come see our lab sometimes," Professor Lin said, "we have all kinds of turf grass. There's this kind of grass called 'Taipei grass,' it's practically your neighbor!" He was right. I would love to see a turf-grass species that's named after my hometown.

The course was exactly as Mr. Li described. It was gently embraced by the mountains around, some of the greens looked comparatively new and there it was, the dog leg par-5 situated on an impossible-looking fairway. Everywhere we went, we could see people bending down, working with pairs of scissors, clipping. "We don't spray that much, that's why labors are extra intensive here." He greeted the gardeners as they picked up the hungry caterpillars that were munching the wild peonies. "That's a crested eagle." Laughed Mr. Li, "he's trying to catch a snake, so they're also called 'serpent eagles.'"

"We've got a couple of families here; they help control the snake problem. I'll show you a couple of pictures when we get back to the club house of them catching snakes." Mr. Li steered the golf cart carefully veering to the left, "now do you know what kind of trees these are?"

"Hmmm..." I stared at the shining, almost crabapple-looking fruit, drawing a blank, trying to keep the smile on my panicked face. "These are coffee trees, it's ok if you don't recognize them, you don't have them where you came from," Mr. Li comforted me, "we are now experimenting planting coffee trees behind the out-of-play areas, if we are successful, we can share our experience with our neighbor fruit farmers to boost our the local economy."

"This is Da-Ann Hygrophila," Mr. Li pointed at a somewhat plain-looking plant. "They are an endangered species, but we've brought them back." He looked at them with a parental pride. Before we stepped into the club house to grab my bag, I looked at the course one last time. "We missed the monkeys. Usually they're out having meetings with the club house around dusk." Mr. Li's pride was a gentle glow much like the setting sun in the west, it was kind and not unbearably fervent. I soaked up that warmth, getting ready for my next stop.
All curious about what they could do to help wildlife.

To the superintendent, to the assistant superintendent, to So we started a meeting with everyone—from the course start, let’s go meet everyone!”

I introduced myself.

“I know who you are!” Roy laughed again, “Before we start, let’s go meet everyone!”

So we started a meeting with everyone—from the course superintendent, to the assistant superintendent, to the Sales Manager. They all had questions and were all curious about what they could do to help wildlife conservation. Each one had a different idea about the coolest creature on their course (Painted bunting from our 2015 Art Print proudly made the list.) Their staff was familiar and friendly, and then I stepped inside.

The clubhouse was extraordinary. It made a Las Vegas casino seem like a bed and breakfast. Mr. Wu shook my hand and welcomed me. “Let’s sit down and grab some of our famous coffee! And please, call me ‘Roy’!”

“You know you are!” Roy laughed again, “Before we start, let’s go meet everyone!”

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A Visit to National Chung Hsing University - Tai-Chung

Upon seeing my interest in the turf grass lab, Mr. Li called Professor Lin to ask if we could drop by his lab at the National Chung Hsing University - Tai Chung.

“Of course!” I could hear the Professor’s voice from Mr. Li’s mobile. “She can check out the pineapple too!”

The agriculture lab is on the second floor of the building. As I opened the screen door, Professor Lin was already waving and smiling. There were endless trays of turf grass surrounded by many mosquitoes, but it was well worth it. I got to see the grass that’s named after my hometown.

“This reminds me of home! I remember running on this grass at school!”

He described his experiment and showed how he was monitoring and modeling. I felt a sample of fossil soil and I touched grass that can take twice the shell soil and I touched grass that can take twice the pressure from air. The grass was impeccably, but then again nothing ever is.

“Come on in!” she reached the crosswalk area reminded me of Augusta. It was not as much as this was a place full of opportunities for environmentalism. They couldn’t wait to share it with the rest of the world. We talked about the importance of nature, of humans understanding nature, and of letting nature be nature.

“I also want to explore the possibilities of having a vegetable garden for our members to experience the joy of farming. I think it is essential.” Roy’s eyes sparkled with passion and he looked out of the window for a second, “Great! The rain stopped! Let’s go for a tour!”

That was when I saw the course for the first time. Norfolk pines. 90-foot tall of Norfolk Pines. I thought, “Well, Toto we’re not in Upsate New York anymore.” The crosswalk area reminded me of Augusta. It was not as much as this was a place full of opportunities for environmentalism. They couldn’t wait to share it with the rest of the world. We talked about the importance of nature, of humans understanding nature, and of letting nature be nature.

The most common thing, he said, “but if you pay attention, you will find the most extraordinary life.”

“I had to stop myself from thinking about my golf game, because I was here for their ecological potential.”

“Speaking of bunkers,” Roy said, noticing me strategizing the course map, “let’s check out our hotel.”

On the east side of the course was the resort. On the south side was a beautiful pool, a pool-side BBQ and bar, and next to the pool, was the practice green and a practice bunker. It was not just any kind of bunker, it was a pot bunker. I had to stop myself again from thinking about my game and how I would hit out of that.

The hotel was sleek and adopted a passive solar system to reduce energy costs, especially in a sub-tropical country such as Taiwan, where cooling costs are huge concerns for every business.

“It’s not just how we face the sun,” Roy said after hearing my passive solar comment. “We recycle all our grey water to irrigate the golf course.” I thought, “Now we’re talking business. Tell me more”.

“Our ultimate goal is to have an organic farming/camping/ recreation area not too far off the site. We are losing our farmland, but I think it’s essential for kids to know what it feels like to grow your own food. We recently hosted some guests from Singapore, and most of them have never seen how a pineapple grows!”

Did he just say pineapple? “I can assure you, Roy, I’ve seen it.” I smiled but then quickly confessed that it was the day before, at a lab in a university. Roy’s talk was inspirational. I never thought of the possibility that a sport like golf could bridge two worlds, and impact societal needs. At four o’clock in the afternoon, the smoke started to rise. The mountain was smoking.

“Quick,” Roy and everyone else said, “you must leave soon. If you don’t, the fog will become so thick you would have to stay here tonight.

I was hurried off in the most polite way possible, driving through pines and an ocean of clouds, slowly inching toward my next destination. My last stop before home.

Tsai Hsing Golf Club - Hsin-Chu

There was a sign welcoming Audubon International at the entrance of the clubhouse. I stepped out of the car and was immediately greeted by a team of staff. Among them was a lovely young, soft-spoken lady, who introduced herself as Elaine and shook my hand. It was not unbearably hot for a change. The conference room was already set, complete with a podium and chairs, comfortably arranged into four rows. If I didn’t know any better, I would have thought I was going to talk with golf professionals, but I knew who my main audience today would be- 40 kindergarten kids. Elaine then introduced me to a very tall person.

“Hello! I’m Brian! Your pen-pal!”

Brian Lee, the general manager of Tsai-hsing, the person who put all this together. The Kids Club, luncheon and meeting with the 12 core golf courses of Taiwan, and of course, the involvement with Audubon International. Brian had a spirit of the sunshine, he was thrilled and couldn’t wait for the kids to arrive.

From Left: Superintendent Jien-min Lai, General Manager Roy Wu, Delphine Tseng and Assistant Superintendent Yu-ting Cheng at National Golf Club in Miao-Li
First there was a shift in the atmosphere, it was followed by the sound of pitter-patter and a controlled, hushed excitement.

"The kids are here!" smiled Elaine, gesturing me to follow her to the lobby. There were 50 wide eyes examining the clubhouse from the ceiling to the floor. Somewhat shying away from the staff, they sparkled with curiosity and smiles. There were a lot of wows, a lot of giggles and squirms, but their eyes quickly found the pictures on the wall that detailed the wildlife around Tsai-hsing Golf Club, and suddenly they remembered the reason why they were here. I felt a tug on my polo shirt and I looked down.

"Are you the one who's going to tell us all about these animals?" asked a polite and apologetic voice.

"I will do my best, but I'm sure the big brothers and big sisters here know so much more about this course and its little critters better than I do. I will join you in the tour later and learn with you."

She gave me a satisfied nod and we headed into a small conference room where I had prepared stories, flashcards and picture books. The children were excited to learn about an organization that helps little (and big) animals find a home on golf courses. We talked about what animals eat, and which animals get eaten. All of a sudden, that green space outside was not boring anymore. They raised their hands to ask questions, they shouted out the answers when they had a slightest suspicion that they had the correct idea. They were not shy anymore.

"Now who's ready to see the course?" I asked. It was a rhetorical question, because even I wanted to jump up and shout, "I am!" I grabbed my bug spray and got ready to spray my legs. Elaine saw it and smiled "There are almost no bugs on our course. You'll see, because all our waters are alive." I trusted Elaine, and put away the bug spray. The children tried really hard not to giggle when they walked by people who were getting ready to tee off; and the golfers tried not to "ooh and ahh" when they saw 25 children walking pass them hand in hand. Some golfers asked about the program. They all seemed to think it was a marvelous idea to combine nature with golf and encourage a younger generation to appreciate it.

"I bet more than half of these kids will go home and want to come back and play again!" said one member to another.

"Yes, but after they see your swing, they might get too sick to want to ever think about golf. " They laughed as the golfer hit a 270 yard drive, splitting the fairway. We quietly marched to the fifth tee, and my fear for the water hazard suddenly disappeared when I realized I didn't have to worry about my 150-yard carry today.

The pond was a “living pond”, surrounded by native plants and now, local kids. They eagerly pointed out the bird who just swooped over their heads, and all the controlled, excitement suddenly busted open and no one could contain the joy anymore and they took it all in. How the water bubbled the way it did, who's living under that lily pad, who's trying to eat the frog, who's singing, who's flying. They had so many questions, so many answers and they all quieted down when the staff members (who they called big brothers and big sisters) started to explain the eco system (and what an eco-system was) of the pond. Their mouths closed tight, eyes focused, ears perked.

"Wow. " I looked at Elaine. She smiled back.

They explained the importance of Tsai-hsing's (or any golf course's) ecological role, and its location. Tsai-hsing and all the other golf courses I visited, sit in the "shallow mountain" of Hsin-chu, in close proximity of Taiwan's Tech Valley and the biggest airport.

After the luncheon with 12 other GM's from all over Taiwan, Brian told me about his grandfather who is the namesake of this golf course. His grandfather envisioned how his success and love for golf could help both his people and his beloved land. He bought this course to preserve green. It is because of this course that green space gets preserved. "We are literally the greens keeper," said Brian, as we rode our cart to the "Eco Hole".

Left: Delphine with the Kindergarteners at Tsai Hsing Golf Club
Right: Kindergarteners and the staff at Tsai Hsing Golf Club
New Members and New Certified Members

New Members

**ACSP**
- **Florida**
  - Woodfield Country Club, Boca Raton

**ACSP for Golf**
- **Georgia**
  - Bowden Golf Course, Macon
  - Brookfield Country Club, Roswell
- **Massachusetts**
  - Shining Rock Golf Club, Northbridge
- **Minnesota**
  - Enger Park, Duluth
- **Nebraska**
  - Holmes Golf Course, Lincoln
  - Pioneers Golf Course, Lincoln
- **North Carolina**
  - McConnell Golf, Raleigh
  - Raleigh Country Club, Raleigh
  - Sedgefield Country Club, Greensboro
- **South Carolina**
  - The Reserve Club, Pawley's Island

**ACSP for Golf International**
- **Mexico**
  - The Club at Querencia, San Jose del Cabo
- **Taiwan**
  - Ta Kang Shan Golf

**Green Neighborhoods Program**
- **Florida**
  - Woodfield, Boca Raton
- **Iowa**
  - Cobblestone HOA, Urbandale

New Certified Members

**ACSP**
- **New York**
  - Vassar College, Poughkeepsie

**ACSP for Golf**
- **Colorado**
  - Collindale Golf Course, Collindale
  - Whistler Golf Club, Whistler, British Columbia
- **Massachusetts**
  - Concord Country Club, Concord
- **North Carolina**
  - The Club at 12 Oaks, Holy Springs

**Green Lodging Program**
- **Florida**
  - Colony Hotel and Cabana Club, Delray Beach

**Sustainable Communities**
- **Arizona**
  - Community of Rio Verde, Rio Verde

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The “Eco Hole” is a tough par-3, and the best part is, there’s a penalty stroke if golfers hit their balls into the environmentally sensitive area. This is a marvelous idea, not only because it strongly discourages golfers from disturbing the area, it reminds them how their course is also someone’s home. Brian, added, “If people know there’s something they can do to make a difference, then I think people might actually do it.”

Our little cart climbed to the top of the course and I felt if I really tried, I could see the whole island from here. What I saw was a microscopic world of ours. There were houses, business districts, science parks, manufacturing factories, schools and this golf course. It reinforces the notion that we all exist together seamlessly, as humans. At some point in our lives, we are all students, laborers, business people, and scientists and we all do our best to preserve this green planet of ours.

Returning Home to Pinehaven Country Club, Guilderland NY

After traveling for more than 15,000 miles, I started to think, is the greener grass the better grass? Instead of making the grass greener, why don’t we make ourselves greener? I went back to Pinehaven, my home course in Guilderland NY. Still recovering from jetlag, I shot a 107. I guess I’m not ready for the tour yet.

“Ooh, bent grass.” My fingertips touched the green when I picked up my ball. This is not Taiwan, but this is also my home. I enjoyed the scent of the wild flowers around the buffer area by the water hazard. Mr. Bigley, our superintendent, supports a lot of milkweed there. The sun shines through every droplet of the fountain, the bullfrogs become obnoxiously loud when someone gets too close to them and the woodpeckers incessantly drum in an off-beat rhythm in the distance.

This is a playground for us, all of us living things. So let’s play, enjoy each other’s company, and may our next rounds always be our best rounds.
As a tax-exempt, 501 (c)(3) charitable organization, Audubon International accepts donations from individuals and corporations to support our ongoing efforts in environmental outreach and education. Through programs designed to educate and inspire action, we are finding ways to work with others to make a greater impact. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact Joe Madeira at joe@auduboninternational.org.

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Audubon International partners with organizations to help support our mission. These mutually-beneficial partnerships involve the sharing of expertise and resources, collaboration on projects, and cross-promotion. Through our partners we are able to expand our impact and more effectively meet our environmental goals.

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