

Nature by Design: The First Audubon Sanctuary in Asia

Golf and Mother Nature go hand in hand. The Audubon Co-operative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses is an award winning education and certification program that helps golf courses protect our environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. By helping people enhance the valuable natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficiency, and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operations, the program serves as vital resource for golf courses.

Manila Southwoods has always been uniquely aware of its environmental impact and its high visibility in the surrounding communities. In 1999 Southwoods achieved designation as a “Fully Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary” by Audubon International, which promotes environmental stewardship in properties throughout the world.

After a rigorous process of compliance that took two years, Southwoods was the 175th golf course in the world to receive the honor, the third course outside of North America, and first in the Asia Pacific region. To date, with over a thousand courses, only eight golf courses in all of Asia have achieved official certification.

Audubon provides guidance to golf courses to help preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect natural resources, and enhance environmental awareness within its boundaries and its surrounding communities. Since 1997 the club has employed a full time Environmental Officer to oversee all aspects of its Audubon Sanctuary program and to ensure that Southwoods exceeds all expectations. At the start the program had world famous wildlife biologist Dr. John MacKinnon from Oxford University as an advisor.

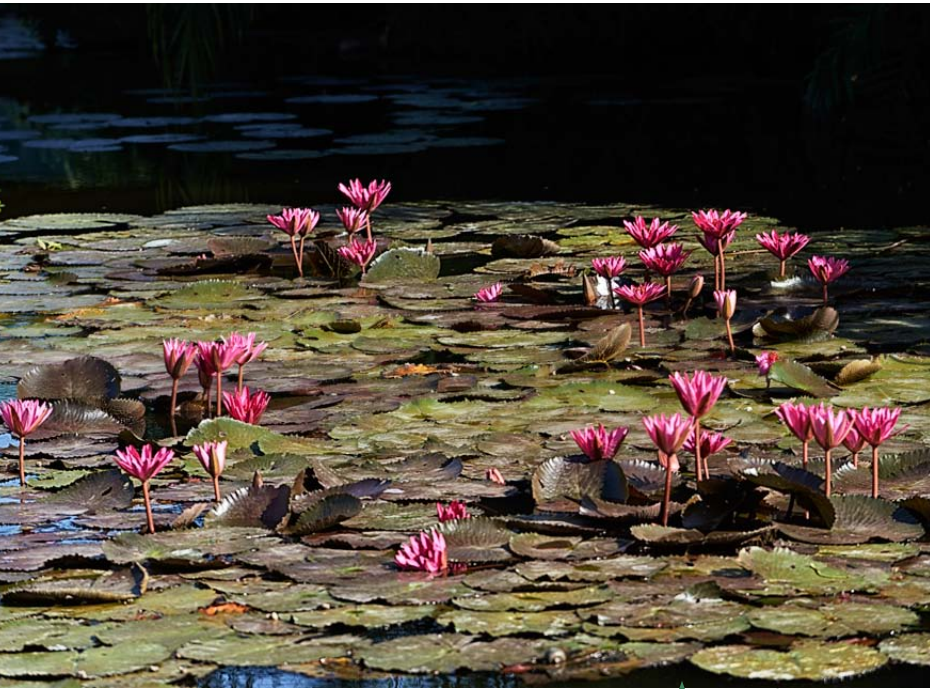
Ms. Joellen Zeh, Staff Ecologist for Audubon International said “Manila Southwoods Golf & Country Club has shown a strong commitment to its environment program. They are to be commended for their efforts to provide a sanctuary for wildlife on the golf course property. To reach full certification, a golf course must demonstrate that they are maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas.”

Environmental Planning included an inventory of all the club’s resources including all flora and fauna; *Wildlife & Habitat Management* naturalized out of play areas of the golf course, provided nesting boxes and planting fruit bearing and butterfly host plants; *Outreach & Education* established programs with local schools and created environmental activities and education for members; *Water Conservation* monitors the entire irrigation system; Integrated Pest management reduced the amount of pesticides, and *Water Quality Management* included a waste water treatment facility for the entire clubhouse with treated waste water recycled into our ponds. All of this is on a volunteer basis, above and beyond national laws and environmental regulations.



Chairman Sobrepeña expressed his appreciation and full support for the Club’s environmental stewardship efforts. “Through the success of the Audubon program at Southwoods, we have shown that properly-managed golf courses provide numerous benefits to the environment and the local communities. Hopefully, this will encourage other Philippine golf courses to follow our lead and embrace environmental stewardship.”

Over a thousand Egrets have claimed the natural area and pond adjacent to the 16th tee on the Masters Course as their colony’s nesting habitat. During the day they can be seen following the mowers in search of a free lunch of bugs and at dusk they settle into the trees like a squadron of WWI bi-planes, lazily skimming the ponds for tilapia and janitor fish. With water in play on sixteen of the Masters holes, the course supports an abundance of wildlife with seven



Water Lily on Masters Five



Kalachuchi on Legends Six

different species of fish, at least thirteen families of reptiles including Monitor Lizards, Madagascar Iguanas, Giant Philippine Frogs, Cane Toads, Snake Turtles and snakes, one of which is the Philippine Cobra, the most deadly of the Cobra family, so take special care when searching for that 50 peso golf ball.

In the beginning there were only four bird species inhabiting Southwoods. In addition to our plentiful Egrets and Herons, now over fifty different species of birds call Southwoods home for at least a part of the year. The club has progressively allowed areas of the course that are not in play to revert to lightly tended natural habitat. Even the garden areas are up for exploitation by the wildlife, as attested to by the Black Crowned Night Heron (below right) patiently fishing at dusk in the pool in front of The Verandah. Part of the Audubon Program includes the creation of butterfly habitats where trees and



Black-Crowned Night Heron



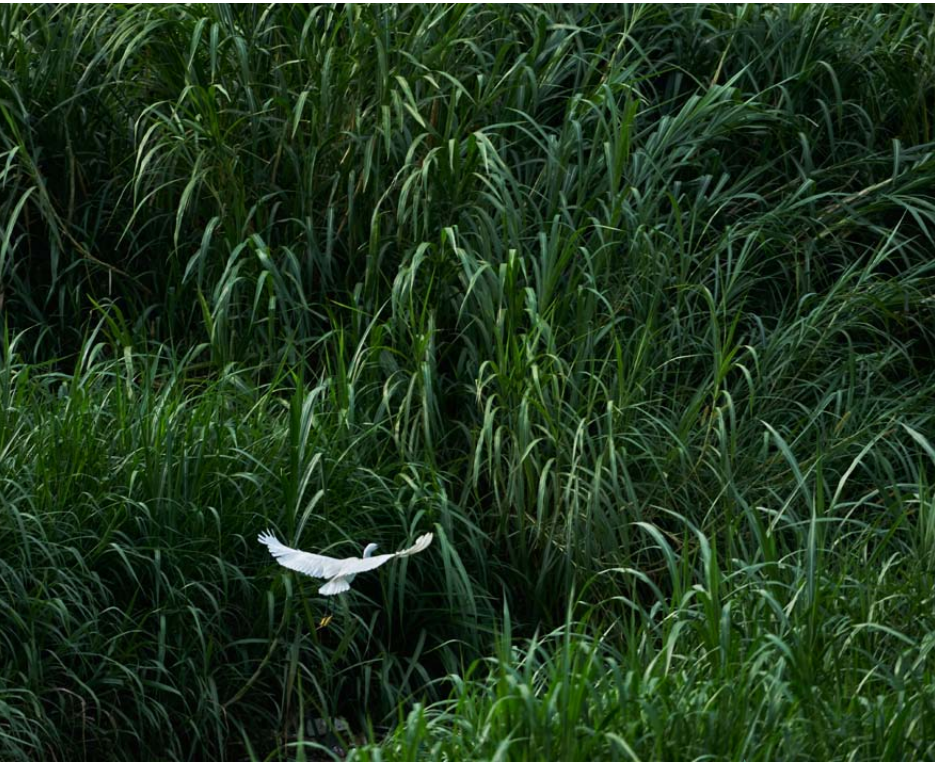
Flame Tree on Legends Eleven

bushes that attract beauties like the Emerald and Lowii Swallowtails and Blue Moon and Lemon Butterflies, which in turn attract additional birdlife.

During and after construction, over 40,000 trees were planted and a continuing program of tree planting replenishes trees damaged by disease and storms. There are 41 varieties and species of trees on The Masters, mainly Palms and Coconuts, while 61 different kinds of trees populate The Legends, mostly hardwoods, like the tall Acacia adjacent to the forward tees on Thirteen (Don’t tell anyone, but there are a few productive Mango trees in the natural area further to the left) and the Mahogany grove on Legends Seventeen.

Our environmental programs have also resulted in cost reductions and savings of an estimated \$10,000 annually on fuel, labor, pesticides, fertilizers, water and equipment wear and tear as a result of naturalizing about 50 hectares of the 140 hectares of the club property.

All golfers are encouraged to embrace the Manila Southwoods’ commitment to the environment. There is no doubt that it enhances the golfing experience.



Egret colony at dusk behind Masters Eighteen green

Eastern Cattle Egret





Lightly managed habitat adjacent to Masters Four tees. ▼

▲ Eastern Cattle Egret



▲ African Tuliptree



▲ Signage on the Legends



▲ Rufous Night Heron



▲ Peacock Flowers on Masters Eleven



Bougainvillea covers the fence along Masters Fifteen fairway. ▼



*“You’re only here
for a short visit.
Don’t hurry. Don’t worry.
And be sure to
smell the flowers
along the way.”*

Walter Hagen, Winner of 11 Majors