

The Lawn Reader

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The Birds and the Trees

Turfgrass managers are regularly reminded to look up from the turf and observe the beauty that is found in the trees. At the same time, in those same trees, are birds that utilize the turfgrass landscape as important habitat. In the last decade through the efforts of a proactive turfgrass industry and environmental advocacy groups such as Audubon International, turf managers have been working to become environmental stewards. What's been lacking is accessible information that recognizes the uniqueness of the turfgrass habitat and how it could influence the birds and the trees.

This installment of "The Lawn Reader" features two recent books that deal with tree management and bird conservation. What follows is my personal, objective review. I have confined my comments to first provide an overview of the text, then discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and finally highlight the key aspects worthy of further investigation.

As always, reader suggestions of books to include in this column in future issues are welcome.

Frank S. Rossi

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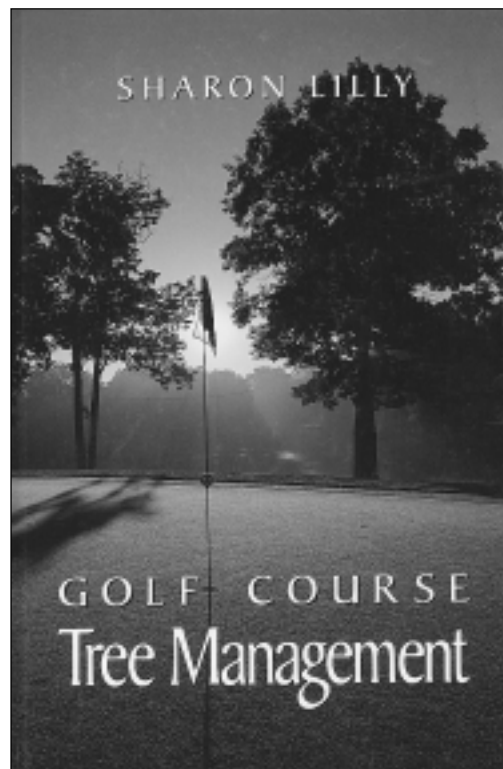
Golf Course Tree Management

Sharon Lilly
1999, Ann Arbor Press, Chelsea, MI
ISBN 1-57504-117-0

I must admit my bias before proceeding any further. As a passionate turfgrass manager and scientist, trees are a nuisance. I have seen many excellent golf course superintendents wage career jeopardizing battles over the removal of trees. Many of these "specimens" add no strategic benefit to the course and often little aesthetic value. In fact, in most cases the tree creates additional challenges to managing the turf that require an inordinate amount of effort with little hope of improving turf quality. Still, one cannot work in this industry and not appreciate the beauty of an old oak, or a majestic tulip tree, but my personal favorite is the palm tree (all trunk with little shade).

Industry estimates reveal that about 30% of all turf areas are maintained under some degree of tree shade. In addition, there are unique aspects of the tree-turf interaction that must be understood so that the health of both species can be maintained. Sharon Lilly and Ann Arbor Press have provided an important text, *Golf Course Tree Management*, that provides easy to understand information regarding the care of trees in turf situations. This book is not just for golf course personnel, rather it is an excellent reference for those in the green industry involved in the care of turf, where trees might be involved.

The opening chapter on the value and importance of trees was an excellent approach for the cynic in me who lacked the ability to understand the myriad of reasons trees are vital for the overall appeal of a landscape. Although, I will admit I have always preferred the prairie landscape. Nevertheless, the chapters build on each other, first laying a foundation in the understanding of how trees grow and the relationship between trees and turf. From there for-



ward, lest a few comments about design and placement on the golf course, the text is an easy to follow entry level guide to tree care. It is filled with excellent illustrations that compensate for the modest photographs (color photos would have been an improvement).

The chapter on hazards and liability is a must read for anyone involved in managing turf areas that receive regular traffic. The author outlines the importance of recognizing the hazard, how to use signs that indicate trouble, and then the legal aspects of liability. In my mind, the next step would be to utilize the closing chapters on how to train your crew to understand tree care and then hiring a tree care professional. These chapters are easy to read and well organized, so that a busy professional could spend an evening and understand the key points, then access more in-depth information from other sources, including a competent tree care professional.

I highly recommend this book for anyone involved in turf management where trees are their responsibility and for those who may not care for trees but would like to know the basics. This book is available to *CUTT* subscribers at a 30% discount from Ann Arbor Press. Contact Sherry Sawyer at (800) 487-2323 or sawyers@sleepingbearpress.com and mention *CUTT* for the discount.

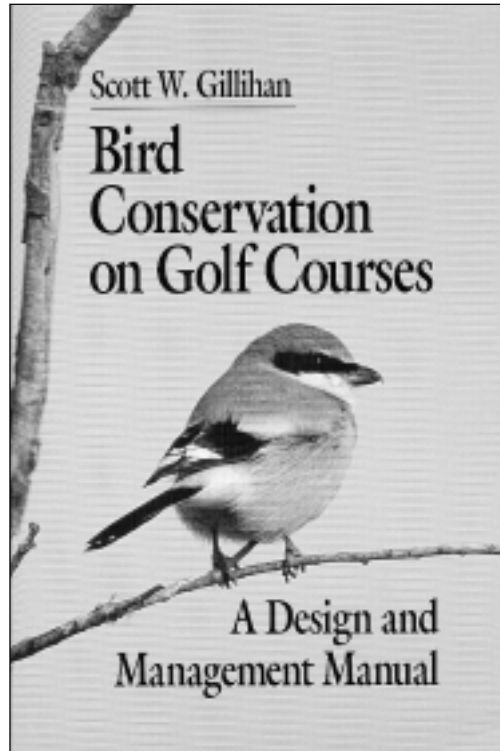
Bird Conservation on Golf Courses: A Design and Management Manual

Scott W. Gillihan

2000, Ann Arbor Press, Chelsea, MI

ISBN 1-57504-113-8

Birds have always been used by humans as an environmental indicator. The landmark text from Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, that energized the modern environmental movement was written about the awareness of birds in our lives. The discussion of birds in the turfgrass industry up until the last decade was generally centered around nuisance issues with water fowl and the well-publicized kills that occurred as the result of pesticide applications. The establishment of wildlife enhancement programs such as the Cooperative Sanctuary System from Audubon International, has raised the awareness of the turfgrass industry. Many turfgrass managers now understand the important habitat that the turfgrass landscape provides for many bird species, yet few texts are available to aid their efforts that recognize the turf-bird relationship.



Scott W. Gillihan is Program Coordinator at the Colorado Bird Observatory in Brighton, CO and the author of a new text from Ann Arbor Press, *Bird Conservation on Golf Courses*. This is the first book to my knowledge that attempts to address the relationship between our managed landscape and birds. There are many excellent aspects of this book such as it providing an entry into turfgrass areas as habitat for birds. Also, many of the chapters are easy to follow providing a good overview of the issues without exploring more basic aspects of birds.

Bird Conservation on Golf Courses is not just for golf turf managers, but for anyone interested in designing and managing their landscape to preserve habitat for wildlife. It is essentially an 80 page book and a 255 page reference manual filled with lists of breeder birds, plants and habitat care for specific birds. As a result, I did not find the book easy to read and many times found myself needing a more thorough explanation of some issues that are raised then only briefly addressed, especially in the basic bird biology chapter that amounts to four pages. Clearly, this could have been expanded to address unique habitat aspects that turf areas provide. While the relationship between biology and management is addressed in other chapters, it would have been more useful to discuss these examples in a biological context.

The course maintenance chapter was the

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For example, there is a discussion of insecticide use and how it reduces insect populations that birds need to feed on. The author suggests letting outbreaks occur so that a superabundant food supply is available for birds to make their long migratory journeys. While I completely understand the ecological aspect of this recommendation, it does not recognize the situation that many turf managers are faced with regarding turf loss.

most disappointing at only nine pages. In fact, most of the chapter focused on the negative aspects of pesticide use. There was only scant reference to the other aspects of a turf management system that could benefit birds. For example, there is a discussion of insecticide use and how it reduces insect populations that birds need to feed on. The author suggests letting outbreaks occur so that a superabundant food supply is available for birds to make their long migratory journeys. While I completely understand the ecological aspect of this recommendation, it does not recognize the situation that many turf managers are faced with regarding

turf loss. A better way to address this would have been to work with some entomologists to develop a strategy for "controlled outbreaks" that serve the bird population and allows the playable areas to survive.

Bird Conservation on Golf Courses is a good first effort and an excellent reference book, but could have gone much further. Much of what is addressed in a general sense is available in the Ron Dodson book, *Managing Wildlife on the Golf Course* (reviewed in CUTT Spring 2000). Plus, Dodson's book takes a more holistic approach that allows for an integrated approach for all wildlife, not just birds. 



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