

AUBURN Sports

Grand National Golf Course joins Audubon Program



Grand National's 18th hole

Photo by rtjgolf.com

Rachel Morand
The Auburn Villager

The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail at Grand National in Opelika, considered by several publications to be among the best public courses in the country, has gone environmentally friendly. The course recently

received certification in Environmental Planning from the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses (ACSP).

"It's a unique certification," said administrative assistant Adrienne Jones. "Not many other courses are certified. There are 10 other Robert Trent Jones

courses in the state, and we're the first."

The program, administered by Audubon International, is designed to help landowners preserve and enhance the environmental quality of their property. The Audubon cooperative sanctuary program for golf courses provides an

advisory service to help existing courses develop effective conservation and wildlife enhancement programs. The effort is sponsored in part by the United States Golf Association.

To gain certification, the plan must meet standards in five areas: wildlife and habitat man-

agement, chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation, water quality management and outreach and education.

Grand National's plan was developed by director of maintenance Jeff Oelmann. Jones, who mainly works in the course's administrative office, has helped in the project.

"I've been monitoring the bird houses, checking for new eggs every few weeks," she said. "We actually have a flying squirrel who has been occupying the bird houses. He moves around."

Jones added that Auburn University's turf management department has helped in the researching effort.

While achieving ACSP status is difficult, it must be maintained and the course will work to keep up its certification, Jones said.

By joining and participating in the ACSP,

Grand National will be involved in projects that protect wildlife habitats and preserve natural resources, including placing bird houses throughout the course, utilizing integrated pest management techniques, conserving water and maintaining food and cover for wildlife.

"The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program benefits both people and wildlife," said Jim Sluiter, staff ecologist for Audubon International. "It's a great way for the managers of developed properties and environmental organizations to work together and become better stewards of land and natural resources."

Audubon International also offers programs for hotels, resorts, schools, neighborhoods and businesses. For more information, visit www.auduboninternational.com.