

FIRST THE SIX GOLF COURSES WERE CERTIFIED, NOW IT'S THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

The Landings on Skidaway Island, a Certified Sustainable Community, first in Georgia

Twenty years ago, The Landings Club executive staff turned to a group of resident volunteers and asked them to explore the value of an environmental certification program being run by Audubon International. Within four years, by 2002, all six of the club's golf courses on Skidaway Island, located 12 miles southeast of Savannah, were certified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries. Today the Troy, NY-based not for profit works all over the world with nearly half of Golf Digests top 100 courses involved and 27 certified, according to Marcus Grey who leads the golf course certification program.

What certification has meant for The Landings Club is a fascinating and ever-growing list of projects on its six courses, all taking advantage of out of play areas. These include the longest monitored bluebird trail in the Southeast and the largest terrapin turtle rescue program on the East Coast, a pollinator berm garden that provides a habitat for monarch research with University of Georgia and University of Minnesota, a community garden with beds for 150 farmers on the site of a former sod farm and The Landings bird cam which streams nesting raptors 24/7 in cooperation with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

All projects are spearheaded by volunteers with funding from Skidaway Audubon, an on-island conservation organization that was launched as a committee of the club to secure certification. The Landings Club course maintenance professionals provide manpower whenever needed and the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association and its Environmental Foundation have both supported and publicized many initiatives.

Skidaway Audubon took its successful work with the club and, with encouragement from the founder of Audubon International during an onsite visit ten years ago, began to expand with projects for the entire Landings community. Volunteers worked alongside the professionals at The Landings Association, the communities governing body, with an environmental manager playing a key role. Out of this collaboration came a recycling center, a native plant trail, a campaign to eliminate an invasive species, the Chinese tallow tree, and water conservation initiatives. Five years ago the decision was made to take it a step further and pursue certification in Audubon International's Community Sustainability Program.

In February, 2018, after completing work in 15 different focus areas and building a long term plan, The Landings on Skidaway Island was designated as a Certified Sustainable Community, the first in Georgia.

Steven Freund, Executive Director of The Landings Club, lauds the effort, "Sustainable living in a sustainable community is a reflection of the sensibilities of our residents and members and the right thing to do."

Among the many projects completed as part of the community-wide certification initiative was the installation of interpretive signage at a tabby-walled cemetery that dates back to the time of the American Revolution, a piece of history on club property, adjacent to a green on one of the six courses, and carefully protected through the years.

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