

## Getting Recognized for Good Stewardship

### Making a Difference

Remember the old adage that ponders, “If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it fall, does it make a sound?” The answer, obviously, is yes. Similarly, if you do good things for the environment, but no one knows about them, are you really making a difference? The answer, again, is an unequivocal yes! By working with Audubon International to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around you, you are having a real, positive impact on the quality of our environment.

But there’s more. In addition to the sense of personal satisfaction and pride that comes from practicing good stewardship, garnering some much deserved recognition may take your efforts to new heights. Not only does a pat on the back feel good, it’s an excellent motivator, both for you to keep up the good work and for others to follow suit. Getting recognized has numerous benefits.

Positive publicity can enhance your organization’s reputation, improve employee morale and motivation, and generate support for continued environmental efforts. Equally important, publicity lets others know what you’re doing and sets a positive example. There’s no better way to inspire and motivate others than for them to see the results you achieve and the accolades you receive. Your story may be just the thing that sparks someone else to say “*I can do that, too!*”

### First Things First: Do Something Worth Recognizing

Before you can be recognized for your efforts, you have to do something worth recognizing. Darren Davis, Certified Golf Course Superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club (a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1996), sums it up well with his “four steps of public relations:”

1. Do something good.
2. Do something good.
3. Do something good.
4. *Then* tell somebody about it!



*Nestboxes provide habitat for your property and are highly visible, recognizable environmental projects that make for excellent promotional opportunities.*

Focus your pursuit of recognition around events and accomplishments of importance:

**Achieving certification** in any of Audubon International's various environmental programs is a noteworthy accomplishment. When a member achieves certification, Audubon International drafts a press release that can be sent to local and national media sources that the member deems appropriate.

**Ecological restoration or naturalization projects**, such as a new wildlife garden, restored prairie, stream rehabilitation, or community tree planting, make excellent promotional opportunities. Because such projects are highly visible, they are easier for media and other audiences to recognize.

**Events** that bring together people in support of the environment are another jumping off point for recognition. Fundraisers to support your stewardship efforts or the environmental work of others, birdwatching tours and nature walks on your property, and other public events are a natural fit.

**Partnerships** that unite different groups in a common cause can provide the impetus for recognition. From cemeteries and scout troops to schools and golf courses, the partnering of diverse groups that may or may not normally work together for the benefit of our environment is reason to celebrate.

**Intermediate milestones**— Recognition doesn't have to be reserved for your most significant accomplishments only or after years of hard work. Look for ways to communicate about progress you've made toward larger goals. In some cases, simply demonstrating a commitment to the environment by registering in one of Audubon International's programs or developing an environmental plan may be the right time to first seek recognition. Other intermediate milestones may include: formation of a resource advisory group, completion of a specific project or environmental upgrade, and achievement of Certificates of Recognition on the way to earning certification.



*Successful environmental projects make great local news stories. News stations may seek you out, or you may proactively contact them to do an interview.*

### Getting into the Limelight

There are a variety of ways to garner positive recognition, but the general idea is to spread the word – communicate, communicate, communicate. Don't expect accolades and positive press to come to you; you have to seek them out.

**Press releases** – A press release is your way to announce that you've done something good for the environment. Use press releases when you've achieved major milestones, when major events are coming up, and when you want to highlight significant projects and partnerships. A press release must be timely and include basic details of *who, what, when, where, and why*.

Effectively using press releases requires targeting the right publications and the right editors or reporters, at the right time, with the right information. Check the typical content and style of the publications you want to target. Which ones might be good fits for the types of information you want to share? Is there a hook that might grab their attention?

Members of Audubon International's various programs have been featured in countless newspapers; consumer and trade magazines, like *Chicago Wilderness*, *Sarasota Magazine*, and *Golf Course Management*; and many other media outlets. You can be too! Press releases are your ticket to media articles. When a press release works at its best, a particular publication, whether a magazine or newspaper (or perhaps even your local television or radio station) will do a story about you, your property, or your organization. In many cases, your local media may catch wind of your efforts and approach you about doing a story. But if you want to be proactive about positive press coverage, then a press release is the way to go.



*An Audubon International certification represents recognition of your environmental stewardship efforts.*

**Web communication** – Your organization's web site, blog, email blasts, Facebook page, Twitter feed, and other web communication methods are all wonderful ways to share your efforts with others. The beauty of social networking and web content is that anyone with internet access can visit your pages, and, in terms of your time commitment to share the message, it's relatively passive.

**Public events** – Hosting public events, such as a tour of your property to showcase stewardship efforts, makes people aware of your efforts. It is a slightly different approach that quite literally brings the recognition to you.

**Environmental Awards** – Lastly, there can certainly be no more direct way to pursue recognition than by applying for environmental awards. Like achieving certified designation for your property from Audubon International, receiving an environmental award is clear and proof-positive recognition of your successful efforts to be a good environmental steward. Keep an eye out for local, regional, and national awards for which you might apply. Some may be focused on overall environmental quality, while others will be more specific in nature, such as awards that recognize watershed initiatives, wetland protection, environmental education, or open space protection.

### **In the End**

Remember that in the end, our shared goal, ultimately, is to improve the quality of our environment. The example you set will stimulate others to do good— and the more people get involved, the greater the gains for the environment. Recognition is certainly nice, but it's usually fleeting. Some people will be applauded loudly and often, while others less so. Do not be discouraged if recognition does not come readily to you. Recognition develops over time and must be earned. Inevitably, there will be some who deserve to be recognized that never will. No matter. Keep sight of the ultimate goal and be proud of your efforts.

As a member of one of Audubon International's programs, there's at least one organization that already recognizes the commitment and effort you've put forth to improve and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around you. Keep up the great work!

