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Recommendations for design and management of golf courses and green spaces based on surveys of breeding bird communities in Montreal

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Abstract

It has been suggested that golf courses can serve as wildlife habitat, provided key landscape features are present. Breeding bird communities were characterized on six golf courses and six green spaces in the Montreal area, Quebec, Canada. Landscape variables were measured to see which were the best correlates of avian species richness within and across sites. While there was no difference in the mean number of bird species (golf: 31 ± 2.4 SE; green: 33 ± 4.5 SE), golf courses supported fewer total species (golf: 55; green: 66). However, most of the species contributing to the green spaces' higher cumulative total were found at one site. Species composition differed

between golf courses and green spaces, and was most correlated with site size, housing density surrounding the site, and extent of coniferous tree, grass, and vegetated water cover. Our results support the work of others, and suggest that golf course architects can improve habitat quality by: (1) increasing deciduous and coniferous tree cover; (2) increasing native vegetation within and surrounding all water bodies; (3) reducing the amount of highly managed grass area; (4) ensuring large, undeveloped buffers are maintained to prevent a shift in avian community composition with increasing urban sprawl; and (5) ensuring sites are planned as large as possible.



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Keywords

Avian; Landscape; Urban habitat; Management

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