

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- May 2013

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**Valley Oaks Golf Course Recognized for Environmental Excellence**

VISALIA, CA – Valley Oaks Golf Course has retained its designation as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, an Audubon International program. Troy Thompson, Golf Course Superintendent, led the effort to maintain sanctuary status on this course and is being recognized for Environmental Stewardship by Audubon International. Valley Oaks Golf Course was designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2002 and is one of 885 courses in the world to receive the honor.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, endorsed by the United States Golf Association, provides information and guidance to help golf courses preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, and protect natural resources. Golf courses from the United States, Africa, Australia, Canada, Central America, Europe, Mexico, and Southeast Asia have achieved certification in the program.

"Valley Oaks Golf Course has shown a strong commitment to its environmental program. They are to be commended for preserving the natural heritage of the area by protecting the local watershed and providing a sanctuary for wildlife on the golf course property," said Joellen Lampman, Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programs Director.

"To reach certification, a course must demonstrate that they are maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas," explained Lampman. These categories include: Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management. Courses go through a recertification process every two years.

Audubon International is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Troy, NY. In addition to golf courses, Audubon International also provides programs for businesses, schools, communities, and new developments with the purpose of delivering high-quality environmental education and facilitating the sustainable management of natural resources. For more information, call Audubon International at (518) 767-9051 or visit [www.auduboninternational.org](http://www.auduboninternational.org).

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