

## Champions of the Green - Europe

January 2017

### Article

This month we welcome a new feature to the EGA Newsletter – the EGA Champions of the Green in partnership with GEO, the not-for-profit dedicated to supporting sustainability in golf. Each month we will celebrate the work of a club, tournament or federation to protect natures, conserve resources and provide positive community value.

Our first Champion of the Green celebrates the oldest golf club in the Netherlands, Koninklijke Haagsche Golf & Country Club.

This 18hole links course is set in 60 hectares of varied landscapes including scrub and open dunes, dry dunes and a wooded area and is neighboured by the Meijendel & Berkheide Natura 2000 Natural Reserve. This unique collection of landscapes has meant that Koninklijke Haagsche GCC is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna and protection of their important habitats is a priority to the greens team.

“We have a saying at the club: *‘golfers are guests in nature’*. And we hold by this principle throughout all our operations on the course. We are proud to provide a safe home for wildlife and are delighted to have several protected and threatened species call our club home. Regular surveys have allowed us to see the success of the management techniques we have put in place to encourage and protect these species, we’ve been carrying out bird surveys at the club since 1958. Barn Swallows are one of our great success stories, between 2007 and 2016 these rare birds went from 0 to 19 nests on site, they now breed under the clubhouse roof, in the greenkeeping shed and in the nest boxes we’ve provided for them around the site.”

It is not only numerous rare bird species that call Koninklijke Haagsche GCC home but also mammals such as roe deer, reptiles including sand lizards and many different species of butterfly. It is management techniques such as increasing the size of habitat patches, reducing mowing areas, sheep and Scottish Highland cows grazing nature areas, creating habitat corridors and creation of micro-habitats such as log piles in wooded areas which have support the diverse wildlife found around the course.

“Our members and visitors greatly enjoy the natural management of the site and the up-close interaction with the wildlife, it is one of the many draws to our unique and beautiful course.”

Koninklijke Haagsche GCC has continually held golf’s international eco-label, GEO Certified®, since 2010 and uses the OnCourse® programme for sustainable golf.

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