

## Golfing Green



While golf may be played on the greens, there's nothing really green about the sport. Golf courses generally require lots of watering, fertilizer and constant manicuring with gas-powered mowers. Typically golf courses replace native trees, grasses and wildlife.

But as with many other businesses, some golf courses are trying to turn that image around. They leave much of the local vegetation intact making the existing landscape an integral part of their design. Buffer zones around their fairways become an ideal habitat for bugs, animals and plants.

Here are five golf courses that have turned green.

### *Golf Klosters, Switzerland*

Golf Klosters in Graubünden, Switzerland, was converted from a ski mountain and required minimal cutting and other major landscaping.

Less than half of the total land is

used for play — the other half sits untouched. The course's steep hillsides are still farmed for grass in the traditional ways, allowing for many rare plants, insects and animals.

### *Mirimichi, TN*

Singer Justin Timberlake bought Mirimichi when it was in danger of being turned into a housing project. He then spent millions greening it up.

The course underwent a massive eco-overhaul that added wetlands and native plants as well as a name change to Mirimichi, a Native American word meaning "place of happy retreat."

### *Old Collier Golf Club, FL*

The folks at Old Collier found and tested a special kind of grass that thrives in salty soils. This allows them to use salty brackish water on the greens.

The course sits on 267 acres of land, but only 77 of those acres are turfed

for play. Another 50 acres are mangrove and wetland habitat, and 109 acres serve as native habitat corridors to allow wildlife clear passage.

Old Collier also has a pest management plan that reduces the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and uses 100 percent recycled plastics to build bridge surfaces, benches, water coolers and trash cans.

### *Hirsala Golf, Finland*

Hirsala Golf is located in a forest in east Kikkonummi and was carefully constructed to minimize disturbing sensitive habitats. The course doesn't feel so much carved out of the woods as it does a natural extension of the landscape.

There are large areas of protected wetlands, with rare, protected and

notable species. They've paid special attention to creating habitat corridors to allow wildlife to move about.

### *Machrihanish Dunes, Scotland*

Machrihanish Dunes is situated on a large system of dunes on the coast of Scotland. The dunes are planted with native grasses that stabilize them and provide habitat for birds, insects, rabbits, lizards, deer, fox and otter.

Rough, untouched grassland accounts for 171 acres, and seasonal wetlands cover another five acres.

They've implemented a detailed operations plan that places a premium on ecological protection and improvement.

Excerpted from Shea Gunter, *Mother Nature Network*, <http://www.mnn.com/>.

