

The following is a report on Grant Agreement #08-RO2W between the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, and TreeHouse Wildlife Center, 1825 Fosterburg Road, Brighton, Illinois, 62012, telephone 618 372 8092.

This report reflects a grant executed during the first half of 2008, pursuant to the agreement between TreeHouse and the IDNR made on October 18, 2007. It has been prepared and submitted by Executive Director, Andrea Crabtree (amc777@piasanet.com).

The objectives of the project as described in the grant agreement were to : 1) acquire 24 sheets of 4' x 8' reinforced fiberglass paneling, 0.09" thickness, 2) predrill pilot holes in the corners and middle of each sheet , 3) affix wooden shims to the cages and cage doors, and 4) mount the fiberglass panels to the shims, using 2" zinc chromate screws and rubber and metal washers.

Introduction

The project was undertaken to protect avian patients and residents from attacks by mink. In the summer of 2006, TreeHouse lost three Screech Owls, two Barred Owls, two Great Horned Owls and our permanent resident Peregrine Falcon to nocturnal attacks while caged outdoors. The cages showed no damage or digging to implicate a raccoon and the loss of multiple large birds at one time indicated our first known losses to mink. These predators are small enough to slip between cage slats in some areas. Trapping was attempted during legal trapping season, but nothing was caught.

TreeHouse consulted with a veteran raptor rehabilitator in Canada who has dealt with the same problem and has successfully prevented mink attacks by lining the bases of the outside of the cages with a heavy-duty material too slick for mink to climb.

Completion of this project allows the affected caging to be returned to use without fear for the safety of the birds. We are able to house our new permanent-resident Peregrine Falcon outdoors and are able to utilize all of our flight and holding cages, such as those needed for the state-endangered Barn and Short-Eared Owls that we sometimes admit.

Summary of Project Accomplishments

After the panels were obtained, TreeHouse volunteers gathered on two workdays: March 29, 2008, and June 28, 2008, to install the panels. The team was led by Jim Moore, Rick Squires, and Mel McCann, all of whom were experienced with reinforced fiberglass panels and who determined that placing shims between them and the cage walls (planned for ventilation) would probably be detrimental to the project, as wind and weather on both sides of the panels would be more likely to shorten their effective life. They elected to forego the shims and affix the panels directly to the cage walls.

Materials and Methods

Using 4' x 8' sheets of fiberglass reinforced paneling, we surrounded the affected cages with a durable, 4' high barrier too slick for the mink to climb. Using 3/16" X 1 1/2" zinc fender washers, with rubber washer cushions, the team bolted the panels lengthwise to the cages with zinc chromate screws. Panels were bolted on at each corner and reinforced with bolts mid-width.

Results

Avian patients were returned to the cages as soon as their protective panels were attached. To date, no attacks have occurred at the previously-affected cages, nor any other cages on the premises. The panels seem to be withstanding wind and sun well.

Native Wildlife Species Benefitted

The following lists represent species typically housed in these cages, either temporarily or permanently, thus currently or potentially benefited by the project. Several hundred yearly visitors to TreeHouse are able to view the birds housed within these cages.

Illinois-Endangered: Peregrine Falcon, Short-Eared Owl, Barn Owl

Non-Endangered: Screech Owl, Long-Eared Owl, Barred Owl, Great-Horned Owl, Mallard, Wood Duck, Red-Tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Kestrel, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Broad-Winged Hawk, Common Crow

Expenditures

TreeHouse purchased 24 4' x 8' reinforced fiberglass panels at 37.50 each from Landreth Lumber, 600 W. McArthur, Cottage Hills, IL 62018 on 12/28/07. There was no charge for delivery.

The washers and screws used to install the panels were already on hand, left over from many prior cage –construction projects.









