Project: Electrical Service to Outdoor Rehabilitation Enclosures
Forest Preserve District of Du Page County
at
Willowbrook Wildlife Center
525 S. Park Blvd.
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
630-942-6200

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Project Objective:
This project brings electrical service to 2 outdoor rehabilitation cages without power access: Avian Flight Cage (AFC) and Free Standing Flight Cages (FSFC). Electrical outlets in these enclosures allows for better water management in the winter by utilizing heated water bowls, pond aerators and trough heaters to keep open water at all times for recovering birds. Additionally, pond filters would improve water quality for the Blanding's Headstart Program turtles nesting in Avian Flight Cage during the spring.

Completed Project Description:
An underground existing electrical service near Raptor Dorms was excavated and an electrical service housed in appropriate conduit tunneled into the interiors eastern AFC and both halves of FSFC where above-ground 4- and 2-outlet GFI outlets were installed (Fig 1, 2, 3). Existing above-ground electrical service from Raptor Flight Facility was accessed to provide service to a 4-outlet GFI at the western side of AFC (Fig 4). This outlet was installed exterior to but immediately adjacent to the cage as this enclosure sometimes houses wild mammals that may be overly-curious about the outlet.

Installment of the outlets was finished on October 24, 2012. However, ambient temperatures proved unseasonably warm through November and December and the new service could not be tested under freezing conditions mid-December when overnight temperatures dropped consistently below 30F and ice formed on the pond and water bowls. On December 14th, 2012 electric water bowls were plugged into the new FSFC outlets and a trough heater and pond aerator were added to AFC. The new service proved a success: the bowls remain consistently ice-free and the pond forms ice only at the outer edge opposite the heater. We look forward to providing filtered water to the Blanding's turtles laying their eggs in the AFC sand this spring.

Beneficiaries of the Project:
A number of native and migratory bird species are beneficiaries of this project. The AFC houses the larger species such as grebes, cormorants, gulls, geese, diving and dabbling ducks, herons, and crows to name a few. The FSFCs house songbirds including many migrants. Robins, cedar waxwings, warblers, sparrows, kingfishers, cardinals, woodcocks, buntings, and orioles are just a few species of the thousands of songbirds housed at Willowbrook each year. In prior winters, any species housed in AFC or FSFC had very limited water access for the duration of their hospitalization. The pond could not be filled as once freezing occurred the underground drain pipe would be useless and potentially crack. Fresh water pans and bowls are placed in these cages daily but their small size resulted in frozen contents well before the next morning. Twenty-four-hour access to water is important for hydration, feather condition and, in waterfowl, aquatic conditioning. With electrical heaters in the pond and bowls, the birds can drink, swim, and bath even in cold weather as they would in the wild.

In the summer months, the Blanding's turtles will also benefit from the electrical service. The WB staff erects pens within the AFC to house the gravid females collected from the wild to lay their eggs in the cage's soft sand. Small plastic ponds are sunk into these pens and filled with water as part of their normal housing. However, without electricity the water could not be filtered and quickly became stagnant. This spring we will introduce filtered into each pond, providing cleaner water for the duration of their stay.

Installation

Avian Flight Cage – East half (Fig 1)

Avian Flight Cage -- East Half (Fig 2)

Free Standing Flight Cages (fig 3)

Avian Flight Cage – West (Fig 4)

Completed and In Use

Free Standing Flight Cage – heated water bowl (Fig 5)

Two winter residents of FSFC –American Tree Sparrows (Fig 6)

Avian Flight Cage Pond –cormorant on a branch back right (Fig 7)

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Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
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GRANT BENEFITS WILLOWBROOK WILDLIFE CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 4, 2013

Contact: Jennifer Nevis, Willowbrook Wildlife Center, 630-942-6200
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Injured wild birds recuperating at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's Willowbrook Wildlife Center in Glen Ellyn are enjoying a new amenity this winter — improved water sources provided for by an $800 grant funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources from contributions to the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund.

The grant supported electrical upgrades to two outdoor rehabilitation areas. In the songbird cages, the upgrades allowed for the installation of heated water bowls since even in the cold days of winter birds need open water for drinking and bathing. In the waterfowl enclosure, upgrades provided a heater and aerator to keep water open and circulating in the existing pond.

"The equipment works well in the cold weather, and the animals are definitely using the open-water sources," said Jennifer Nevis, Willowbrook Wildlife Center's staff veterinarian. Throughout the year, species ranging from small songbirds, like indigo buntings, to large wading birds, like great blue herons, may recuperate in the outdoor enclosures.

Willowbrook, one of the largest wildlife-rehabilitation centers in the nation, accepts thousands of injured wild animals for treatment each year. "We strive to provide settings that allow animals to carry out their normal behaviors so they're ready for life back in the wild once they are healed," said Nevis. Some permanently injured animals that would not survive in the wild live at the center year-round, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about their animal neighbors.

(more)

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The grant provided for project supplies, and the installation work was completed by the District's in-house maintenance crews. This spring, a water filter will be added to the waterfowl enclosure to provide a constant source of fresh water for endangered Blanding's turtles that are also housed there as part of a head-start rearing program.

Willowbrook Wildlife Center is open daily (except major holidays) and offers unique exhibits and programs for visitors of all ages. It is located at 525 S. Park Blvd. in Glen Ellyn. To learn more, call the center at 630-942-6200.

Established in 1915, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County manages over 25,000 acres of prairies, woodlands and wetlands. Each year, over 4.3 million visitors enjoy the District's 60 forest preserves, 145 miles of trails, five education centers, and scores of scheduled programs and events. To learn more, call 630-933-7200 or visit dupageforest.org.

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