

Washington Quaker Parrot Numbers Dwindle In Winter Weather

A town trying to help a naturalized colony of quaker parrots is divided from a lack of communication says rescue volunteers

By Crystal Apilado

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A quaker parrot builds its nest on a pole . Photo by Christopher Driggins

Efforts to help a naturalized colony of quaker parrots in the town of Yacolt, Wash. have been put on hold, and volunteers are growing frustrated that these birds are being left out in the harsh winter conditions.

Clark Public Utility (Clark PUD) ceased killing the parrots late last year but continues to remove nests from the city's utility poles. Community members and volunteers are upset that the birds are being left out in the cold.

Local Portland news station, KATU 2, talked to Yacolt community members about recent events involving Clark PUD quaker parrot nest removals. See its broadcast report [here](#)>>

At the last count, only seven quaker parrots had been seen according to Alison Evans-Fragale, founder of Edgewater Parrots in New Jersey. Evans-Fragale has been assisting on educating community members in Yacolt on how the East Coast handles their colony of quaker parrots.

Efforts in part from Evans-Fragale included educating and connecting representatives of Clark PUD and rescue volunteers on the nest maintenance program established by the East Coast utility company, Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G).

The program entails that the utility company place orange insulating sleeves over the poles after a bi-annual nest removal, once prior to breeding season and once after, to discourage the bird from rebuilding on the utility poles. Of the 22 poles that were fitted with the insulating sleeves only two showed signs of nest construction, said Evans-Fragale.

"The birds don't like the color and it's not harmful, and it's cost effective to the utility company" Evans-Fragale said.

In an update from the Yacolt Preservation Association (YPPA), an organization made up of Yacolt community residents, YPPA proposed to Clark PUD to cease the removal of nests until the spring, when temperatures for the homeless birds are more ideal for their survival. YPPA also proposed a nest maintenance program based on the PSE&G model.

If Clark PUD agrees to not remove the nests until the spring, then interest groups involved in helping the quaker parrots will have time to build the alternative platforms for nestboxes and the birds would have a chance to survive, Evans-Fragale said.

"We need to get people to understand that removing nests this time of the year means death for the parrots," Evans-Fragale said. "We want to try to be a support group, and try to help implement action."

The N.W. Bird Rescue is one group that has been working to provide food and housing for the quaker parrots since December. However, its efforts have been put at a standstill. N.W. Bird Rescue volunteers collected signatures and are waiting for the approved permits to place alternative platforms in homeowners' yards, received donated supplies and equipment to construct the platforms and still waiting for permission to begin building.

Christopher Driggins, founder of N.W. Bird Rescue, said his group of volunteers wanted to start preparing the sites for the alternative platforms but were unable to on account that the original permits are unattainable. Driggins has received calls from residents and other rescues wanting to know when action will be taken. However, no action can be taken until the permits are presented and the group is granted the OK to do so.

"I'm here for the birds," Driggins said. "They need shelter now. Nests are being taken down."

Letters expressing concern and outrage are being sent from across the nation to local Washington newspapers in

response to the actions being taken against the Yacolt quaker parrots.

Driggins said the permits were released to Joy Tindall, YPPA president, after they were approved at a Yacolt City Council meeting January 28, 2008. But there has been a lack of communication coming from YPPA and no sign of the permits, Driggins said.

YPPA could not be reached by press time for comments.

“We have the supplies, we have the resources,” Driggins said. “Nothing can be done without the permits.”

This past weekend, Driggins said his group of volunteers went back to the neighborhood where the quaker parrots have been seen most, to knock on doors and ask for the permits to be filled out again.

Driggins said that action needs to be taken soon. “Birds were not seen for three days in one of the primary feeding zones.”

The lack of communication and action to save the birds has caused different groups to form in the northwest area. Evans-Fragale hopes communication between the different parties will resume so the groups can work together for the birds welfare and personal safety. In the meantime, groups on the East Coast continue to provide support and share their experience in working with their own quaker parrot colonies.

“We have a good support group of at least nine experienced people who have already worked on this issue,” Evans-Fragale said. “We have a lot of people who have been through this before.”