

Volunteers Work To Save Yacolt Quaker Parrots

Bird rescue groups take action to help find a solution for birds

By Crystal Apilado

Posted: December 10, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Quaker parrots perch in Yacolt, Wash. Photo by Garth Noggle

The N.W. Bird Rescue and their volunteers worked together to put finishing touches on 24 nest boxes set up on private residential areas to provide immediate shelter for the feral quakers of Yacolt, Wash., while the community debates over different solutions for dealing with their large nests over utility transformers.

The Yacolt City Council asked Clark Public Utility to hold off on removing the birds for four months as they work with various bird rescues to look for a solution, said Lena Wittler, customer communications manager with Clark Public Utility. According to Wittler, the nests on the transformers are their main concern. "We'll continue to remove the nests as they are built," Wittler said. "Most likely once a week we'll go out and remove anything that is visible." Wittler said Clark Public Utility will continue to remove the nests as they are built until the Yacolt community comes to a final solution. "Most likely once a week we'll go out and remove anything that is visible," Wittler said.

Yacolt city has invited local rescues to get involved in proposing different solutions to the community.

Many organizations and individuals are participating in different efforts to help the community. The N.W. Bird Rescue and their volunteers placed twigs, molted quaker parrot feathers inside the nest boxes to provide immediate warmth and homing for the four months. The purpose of the twigs and feathers is to make the birds think they've found an abandoned nest, said Christopher Driggins, founder of N.W. Bird Rescue. The nest boxes will help keep the birds alive while Yacolt decides on a solution and long-term goals for the birds.

Nest boxes are set up on homeowners land to provide a home for the birds.

Photo by Garth Noggle

Driggins' group received permission from homeowners to place platforms on their land to place the nest boxes. The boxes are set up with hinges to help capture the birds in the chance that the city decides to relocate them. But, if the city decides to leave the birds in the area, the boxes will serve as housing units. Driggins said if the decision is in favor of the quaker parrots staying, then more nest boxes will be needed to account for new babies.

The hopes of the the N.W. Bird Rescue and the community members supporting this effort are that the 24 nest boxes will not only provide immediate shelter from the harsh winter elements, but that they will also serve as a future place for the quaker parrots to build their nests.

According to Driggins, one of the challenges with the nest boxes is that the quaker parrots are imprinted to the sound of the transformers because when they were babies that is where their nest was. "They're like homing pigeons," Driggins said. "Quakers know where their homes are."

With Clark Public Utility's regular removal of nests from transformers, the group hopes the quakers will go to the alternative nest boxes and feeding areas.

For more information on this effort to help the Yacolt quaker parrots, visit www.nwbirdrescue.com.