

Final Report for DNR Grant # 08-R01W

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The project objective of this grant was to repair and upgrade the mews at the Free Again center, specifically the flight pens of the bald eagle and the hawks. This project was begun in November of 2007 and was completed this month, June of 2008.

Repairs were made to the roof of the bald eagle's mew so that it no longer leaks. In addition, work was done on the door to make it easier to open. All this was performed by volunteer labor.

The flight cage at Free Again was the larger project. This tall, rectangular shaped building is used as a recovery area for injured hawks. The height of the structure, but especially the length, allow the hawks to work their wings as they swoop up to their perches and down to their meals. Wire covered windows in the doors allow for this process to be observed and evaluations made as to when an animal has sufficiently recovered to be released back into the wild.

In receiving this grant, Free Again was able to replace rusted aluminum siding with pressure treated lumber. To do this, the hawks were placed in carriers so that they would not escape as the walls were being worked on. Volunteers then ripped the aluminum siding off the framing of the building and screwed the lumber to the existing framing. The lumber was spaced so as to let air and light into the pens. This helps create a healthier environment for the recovering birds. The labor for this project was done in sections that could be managed in a day's time – so that the hawks could be let out for feeding, etc.

The second major change to the flight cage was that a sturdy plywood wall was able to be erected lengthwise down the middle of the pen. This had always been the plan for this building, but lack of funding had prevented this from being accomplished. As it is now, the flight cage can accommodate more than one species of raptor, allowing them to recover and re-learn their hunting skills. Birds that would otherwise be hostile to one another can securely recover on opposite sides of the pen. In addition to increased service to the wildlife of Southern Illinois, visitors will now be able to view through the windows in the doors not just one, but two species of native raptor.

Species that have benefitted/will benefit from these projects include Bald Eagle, Red Tailed Hawk, Red Shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sharpshinned Hawk, Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barn Owl, and Barred Owl.







BAIRD EAGLE (THELMA)







BALD EAGLE NEST - EXTERIOR





FLIGHT CRATE - BEFORE





FLIGHT CAGE - BEFORE





FLIGHT DATE - AFTER - REAR





FLIGHT CAGE - AFTER - SIDE





FLIGHT CAGE W/ NEW DIVIDER



HAWKS ON BACK PERCH - FLIGHT CAGE





BONUS PHOTO #1





BONUS PHOTO #2 . AMERICAN KESTRAL, FEMALE

