

SMECO Helps Build Recovery Cage for Injured Birds of Prey

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Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) recently donated labor and materials to help a wildlife rescue group build a flight cage in St. Mary's County. The cage will serve as a recovery sanctuary for orphaned and injured birds of prey, including eagles, hawks, owls, and ospreys.

SMECO line workers mounted sections of retired utility poles to build the L-shaped flight cage. The long section of the L will be 96 feet long and the short section will be 64 feet long. The cage will also provide room for birds of prey to recover and achieve full flight before being released back into the wild. Its design will meet the minimum requirements for conditioning bald eagles prior to release back to the wild. The L shape allows the eagles to practice banking and making turns while flying. The line workers mounted more poles to build a second 48-foot-by-16-foot cage for other animals.

Both cages are located at the Back to the Wild Rescue & Rehab center in California,

Maryland. Back to the Wild is an annex of Wildlife Rescue Inc., a non-profit group based in Hampstead, Maryland. In the past four years, the group has rehabilitated 74 birds of prey, 333 raccoons, 124 opossums, and numerous skunks, foxes, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl, reptiles, and other wild animals.

"We can't thank SMECO enough for its generous help. This flight cage would probably never be built without the help that the Cooperative and its workers have provided," said Mary Martin of Back to the Wild. "It was a true pleasure to meet and work with the SMECO employees who most definitely went above and beyond what we expected."

The wildlife rescue group expects to finish the flight cage by the spring of 2007.