

# Working WITH Mother Nature

During the course of any day, the golf course superintendent can face many challenges. Some of these challenges can truly test our skills and our patience. One such challenge that I faced when coming to The Moorings Club was with the irrigation weather station.

Our rain gauge on the weather station never seemed to work properly because it had to be constantly cleaned out. I remember writing a schedule on the calendar to clean the station on a regular basis, like every other week. The problem was that Loggerhead Shrikes (a perching bird slightly smaller than a mockingbird and similar in color) in the area would use the weather station rain bucket for a toilet.

I figured what we had here was a failure to communicate. So I tried my best at communication with my little feathered friends.

Plan A was to just talk with them and let them know what I expected. I told the little birds that I did not mind them sitting on the rain bucket but could they please put their tail feathers to the outside rather than in the bucket. I'm not sure if the birds understood the instructions and just chose to ignore them but the rain bucket continued to be filled.

Plan B called for me to write them a lit-



tle note complete with a diagram on where to place their tail feathers.

You know, I don't think they even looked at the note or with apathy setting in.... just didn't care.

After some more brainstorming with the crew, we decided to silicone some nail spikes around the rain bucket which we were sure would keep them from landing on it. After all, if they can't land on it they can't use it as a toilet; another good idea gone to crap (literally). The spikes didn't work.

The shrikes would just sit between the spikes and even straddle them. Once I think I saw a shrike using the spikes to preen his feathers with which only added to my frustration. Ok, so telling

him didn't do it, writing pictures didn't keep him off, nail spikes around the bucket didn't do it. I got it. Let's tie some fishing line between the nail spikes so he has nothing to land on.

Well you guessed it, I just made the little birds a new swing set. It was quite humorous actually to watch these little birds swing on the fishing line all-the-while still pointing his tail feathers the wrong way filling my rain bucket with, well let's just say bird stuff.

We had had it at this point and thought we had exhausted all of our ideas. Then it dawned on me that if I can't keep him from landing on the rain bucket by placing things on it, what if I provided a better place to sit. Would he go for it?

Yep, that was the ticket. We made a quick bird perch by placing a wooden dowel through a stick and tie-strapped the whole thing to the weather station away from the rain bucket. Since installing this makeshift perch, the shrikes have not landed anywhere else.

The moral of the story here is don't work against Mother Nature because you're going to lose. If you work with nature everyone can be happy!

Craig Weyandt

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