

T-14 Pole Systems: A Safer Mounting Solution



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By Audubon Society

Above and right, several views of Dave Thomas's offset mounting system for a T-14 house. An offset winch keeps landlords safer—should cable or hardware fail, the operator is standing to one side of the house, rather than below it.

I have been monitoring a T-14 house and gourd setup at the Cape May Point State Park in Cape May Point, NJ, for the past few years and have built several more, one for a friend and two for the Cape May Bird Observatory site in Goshen, NJ. I find one flaw in these setups and that is the location of the winch at the base of the pole. With the house above your head it's a disaster waiting to happen!

The solution I came up with is simple and SAFE. Install a second, short post about three feet away from the house post. The second post should extend about four feet above ground. This will be the new winch location. Slots will need to be cut into the center of each post at ground level. The slots need to be large enough to hold pulleys about 3 inches in diameter. Each pulley should be set so that the cable does not rub on the poles. See Sketch 1 for a rough drawing of how it's done.

Mount the winch on the short post at a height that will make it easy to crank without having to bend over, about three or more feet above the ground. You'll need a longer cable than

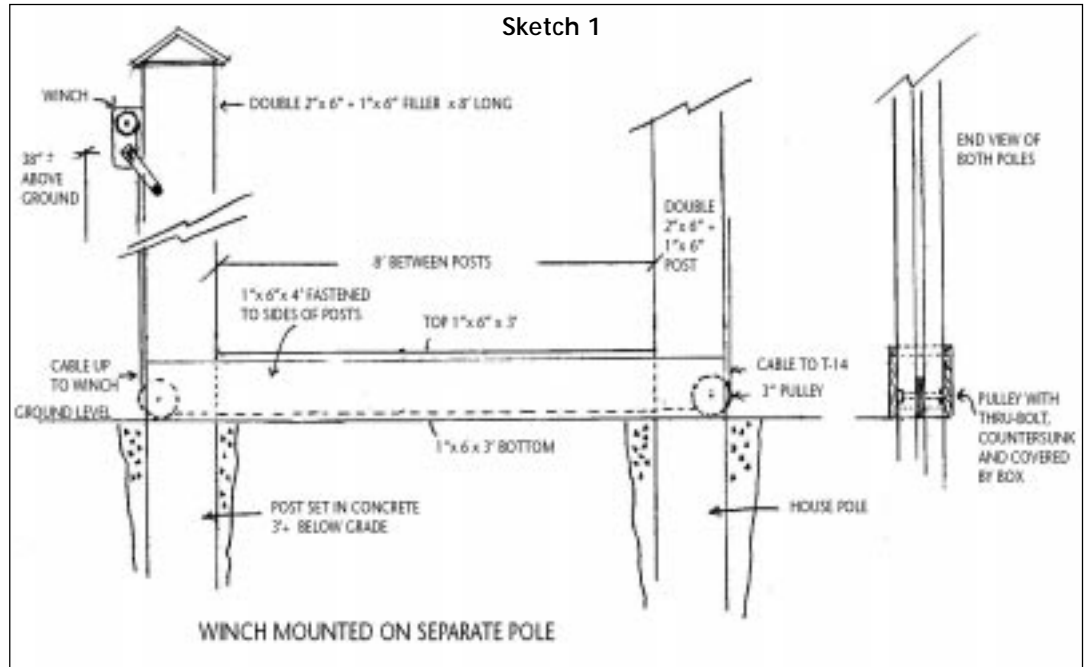
called for in the T-14 house plans, due to the added distance between the two posts, and up to the winch mounting location. Run the cable as instructed in the T-14 plans: up and over the house post, down through the pulley and then across to the short post, through the second pulley, and up to the winch.

To protect the cable where it crosses between the poles I made a box-like cover from 1 x 6 treated lumber; this keeps the cable from being stepped on, tripped on, etc.

This setup allows you to stand well away from the house and easily watch its progress as you raise or lower it. I removed the safety stop from the pole to allow the house to be lowered to a point where the predator guard just about touches the cross over box. This keeps tension on the cable as well as giving better access to the top compartments for nest checks. It works really well and makes monitoring a whole lot easier!

Dave Thomas and his wife Linda volunteer at the NJ





Audubon site in Cape May Point., NJ. Dave is a retired general contractor.

Alternate method: (see Sketch 2, below) I came up with an alternative method as well. Adding a pulley by cutting a slot in the main house post after it is already up and standing would be difficult for some to accomplish. It is awkward to work all hunched over while drilling and cutting out the pulley slot. Instead of doing it that way, you can drill a 1/2-inch hole through the center of the house post a little above ground level. Insert a 3/8-inch eye bolt 6 inches long through the hole, and secure with a nut on the opposite end. The eye should face the winch post. Next, attach a "medium duty aircraft block" known as a "swivel eye snatch block" to the eye bolt. This can be found at a hardware store or home supply store. Not as scary as it sounds! I suggest using a closed eye, not a bent one. To connect the eye bolt and the block, and I use a 'threaded chain connector'. Again, try a local hardware or home supply store.

With this method, the cable up and down will be the opposite of the Sketch 1, meaning it will go from the winch post to the block, then up and over the house post, and down to its attachment point on the bottom of the T-14 house.

The top of the box that covers and protects the cable will need a slot cut in the center, at a point where the cable starts up the house post a few inches in from that end. See Sketch 2 for information.

