

Bird Field Note
2/28/14
Kate Stone



Winter weather continues. With a foot of snow already on the ground, two Western Meadowlarks perched in a ponderosa pine. Their arrival coincided with blizzard warnings.



Otter slid along the river's edge after the heavy snowfall.



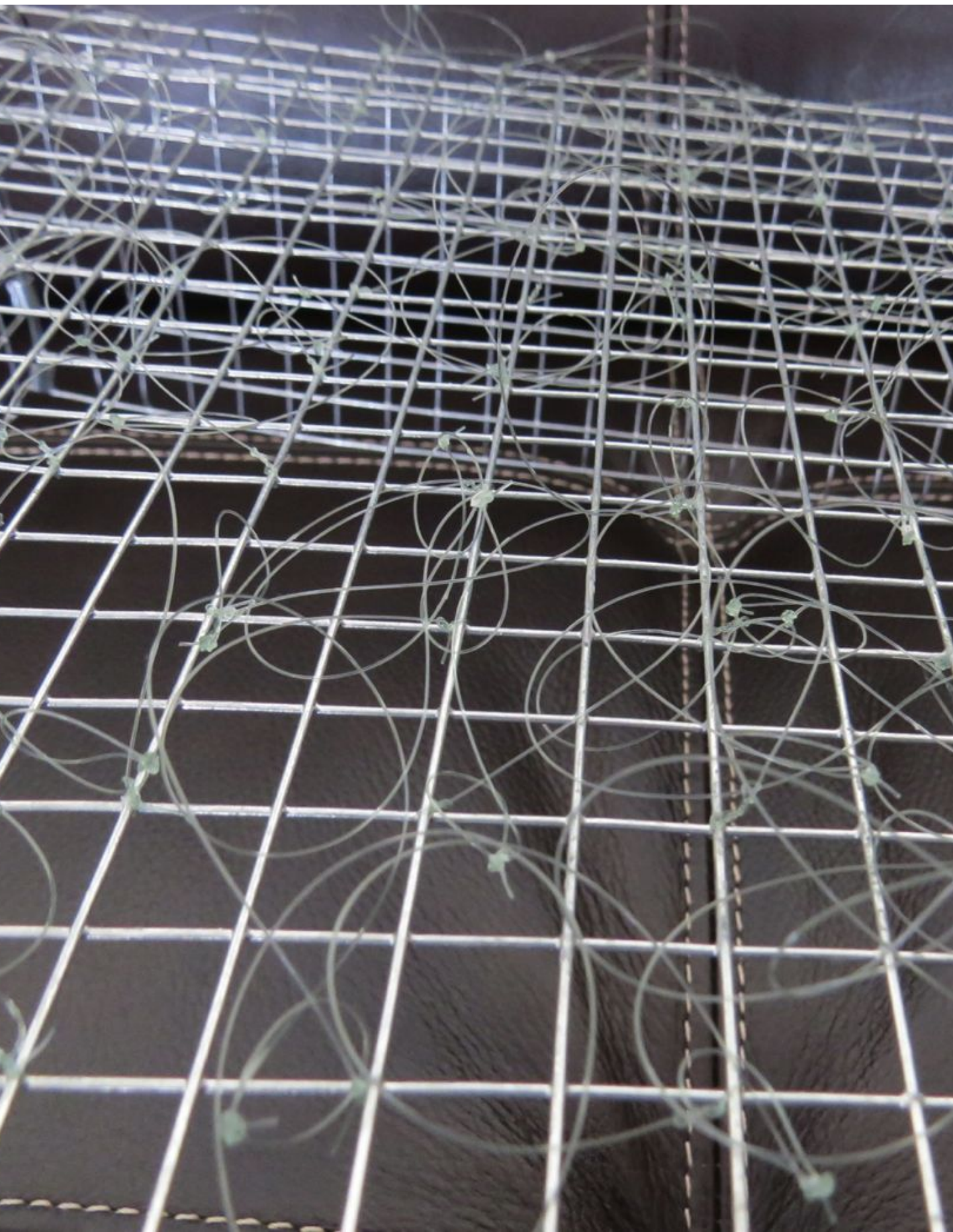
Horned Larks foraged on whatever bare ground they could find, including a thin strip of dirt left by the plow.



Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks officials accepted our permit application to study Northern Pygmy-owls. We assembled our trapping gear.



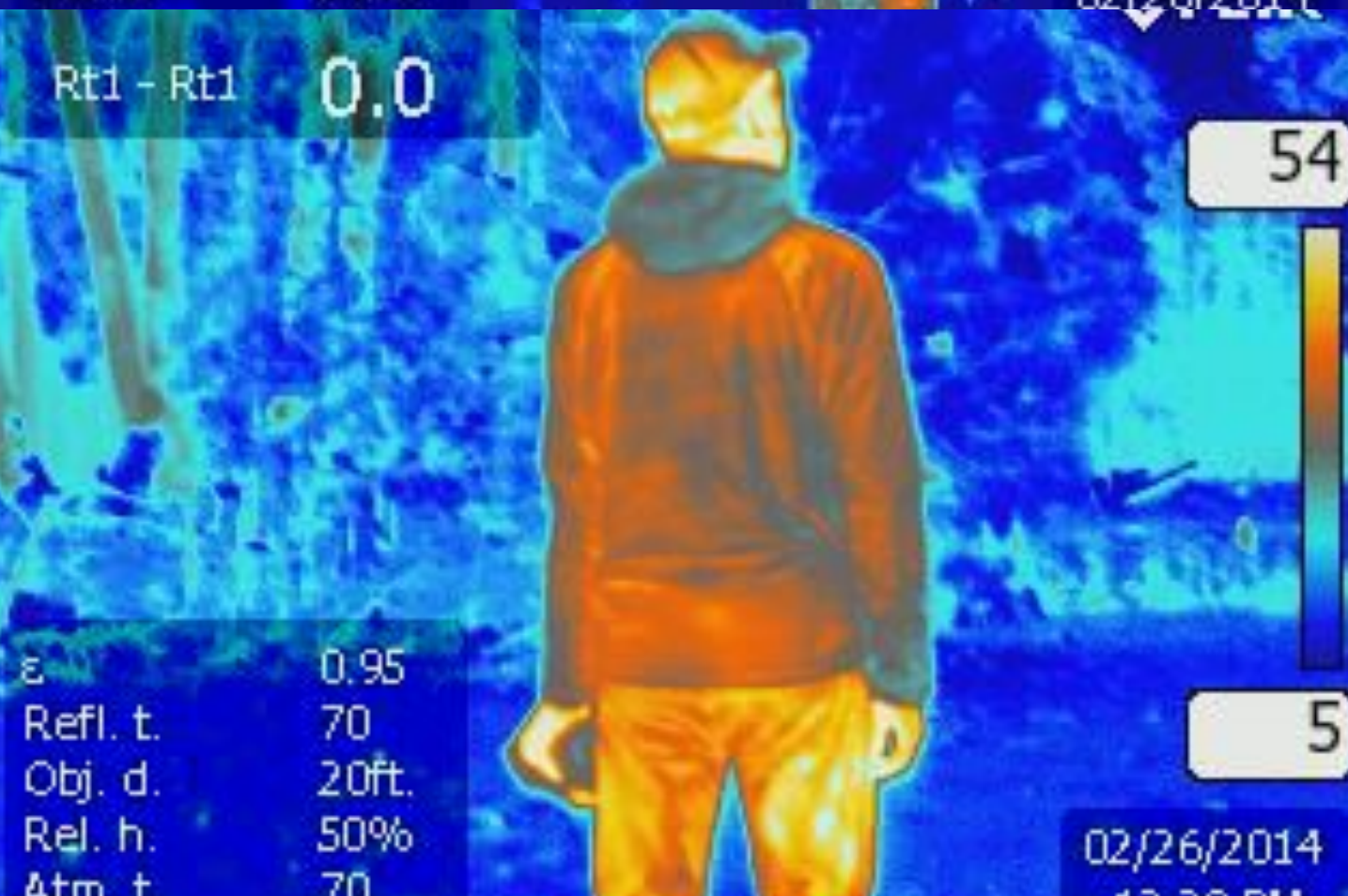
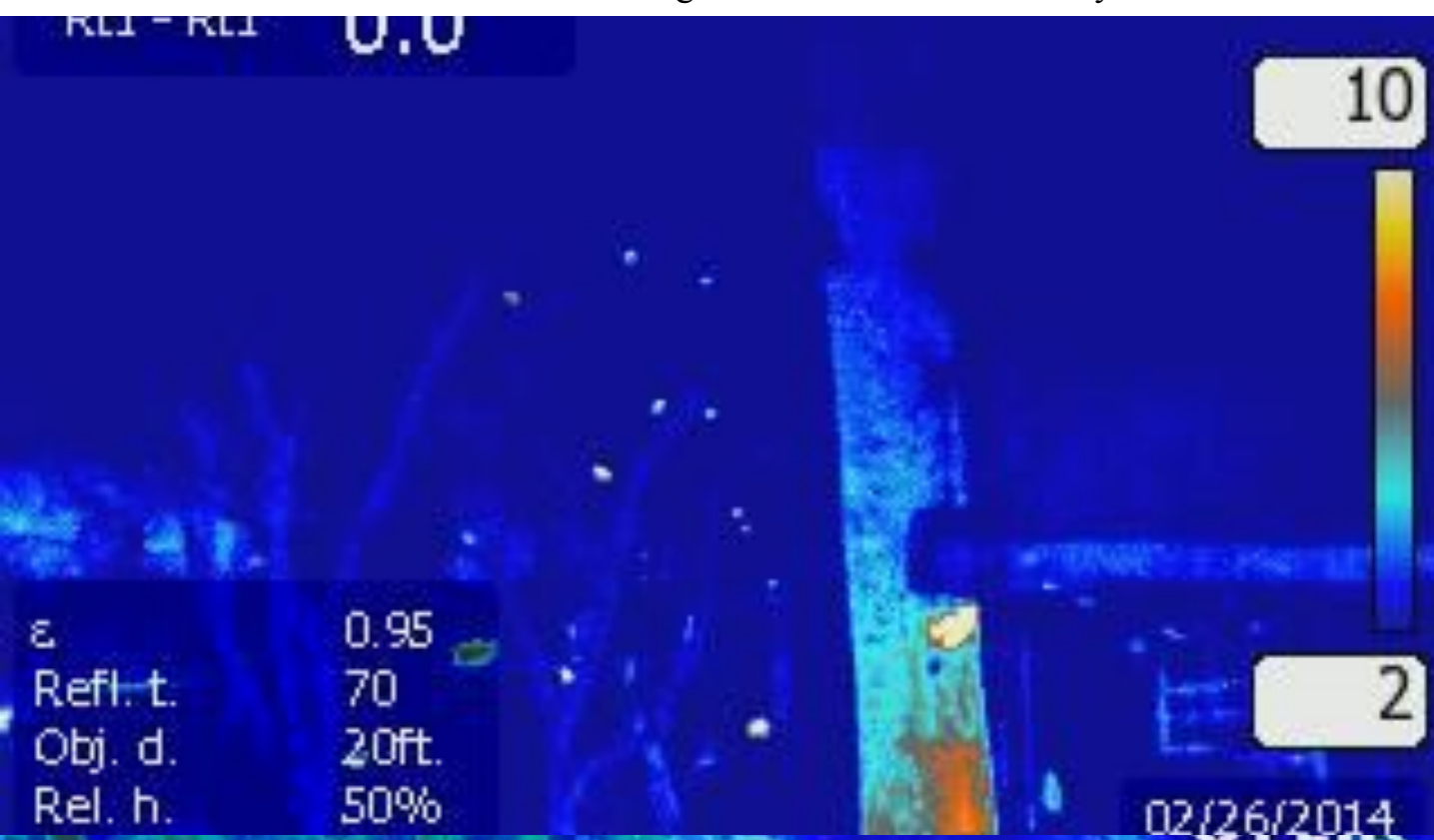
We will use hamsters surrounded by monofilament nooses to capture the pygmy-owls.



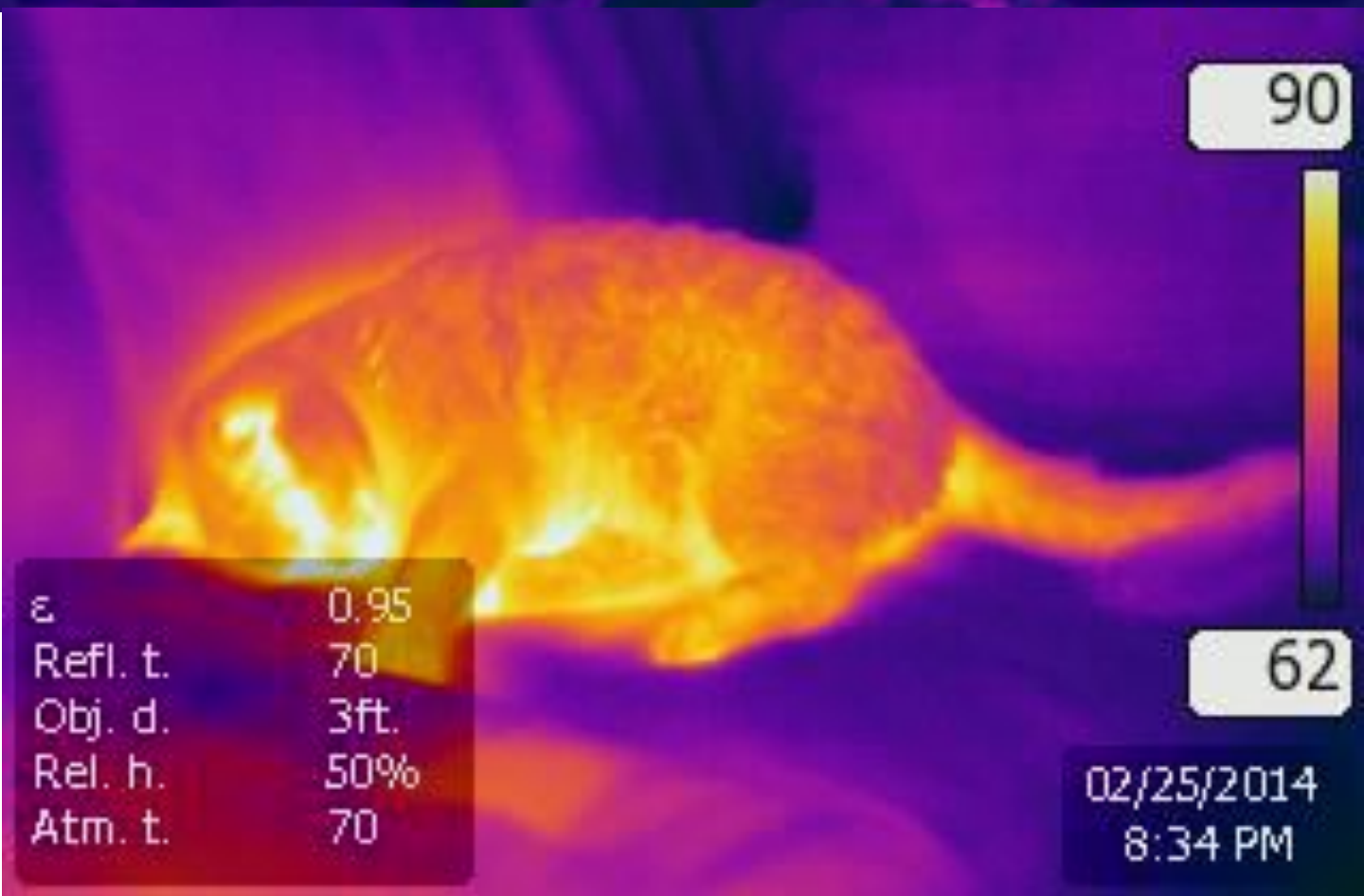
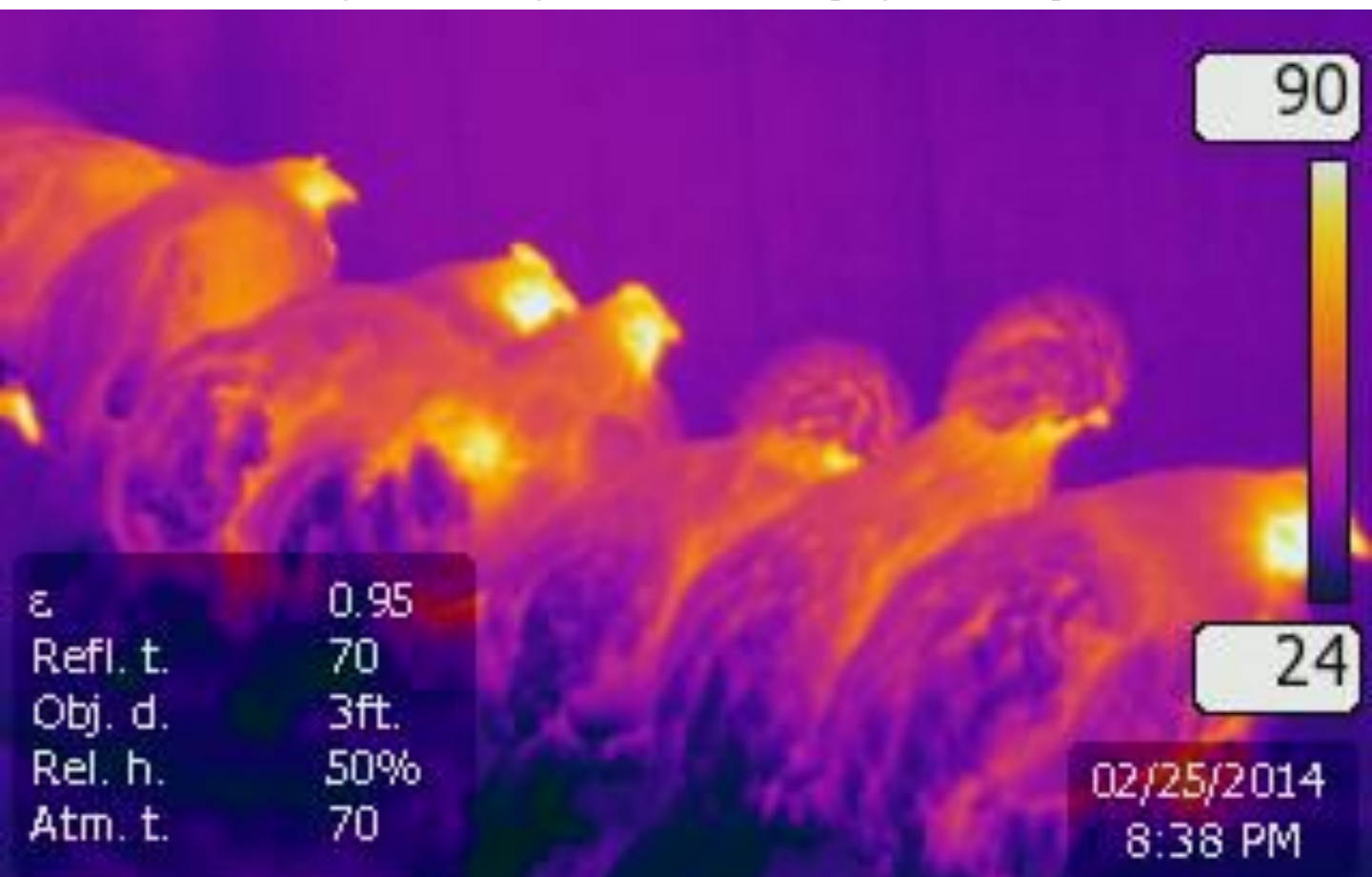
We hope to use an ultraviolet light to expose the molt patterns of Northern Pygmy-owls. Because we will do this work during the day, we tested our ability to create a dark environment by exposing objects to our light in a portable ice-fishing shelter.



We tested a thermal imagery device's ability to detect live objects by day. This technology can locate roosting owls that we track via telemetry. The top picture shows finches at a feeder. The bottom image shows William at mid-day.



I took these images of roosting chickens and a sleeping cat in complete darkness.



Despite the deep snow conditions, we spent one day trapping for Northern Pygmy-owls. We detected no owls on the Guest House Floodplain.



We refused to let a lack of plowed roads or heavy equipment deter us from checking Tongue Creek for owls.



With the hamsters safely strapped on my back, I took advantage of Gus's ski tracks and started the trip.



William carried the trap, mist net poles, and processing gear.



Though we detect no pygmy-owls in Tongue Creek, we flushed a pair of Long-eared Owls roosting near one of our artificial nest structures. William cleared snow off of this Long-eared Owl acoustic monitoring unit.



An American Tree Sparrow left a snow angel.





All slides by Kate Stone unless
noted

DL: Debbie Leick

ER: Eric Rasmussen

WB: William Blake