

## BirdXPeller PRO: Convention Center

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Welcome to the Kansas City Convention and Entertainment Centers. This city-operated complex consists of six buildings housing two million square feet of exhibit halls, meeting space, food service and entertainment venues. Thousands of visitors flock to the Centers every year.

But at one time, thousands of *starlings* also flocked to the Kansas City Convention/Entertainment Centers. “Birds were everywhere,” explains Dean Barrett, Building Operations Manager, “In the trees, around the buildings, on the rooftops. The birds were out of control, and the sidewalks were a mess,” he continues and describes the frequent power washings necessary to remove the recurring bird droppings.

### The Problem Deepens

“People couldn’t walk into the buildings without getting into bird droppings—either underfoot or overhead,” Barrett recalls. And, he adds, there were significant health concerns since birds often carry disease. “We do lots of food service in the Centers,” he says, “and the last thing you want around food is bacteria from bird droppings.”

The Exhibit Hall—almost half a million square feet—was vulnerable. “We regularly had birds flying inside, entering through the loading dock doors.” With exhibitors mounting large booths and displays, the doors were open for delivery for long periods of time, including set-up and breakdown before and after each convention. Too often, loading dock doors are open invitations to infiltration by bird pests. Any structure with wide open bay doors—such as sports arenas, stadiums and manufacturing plants—can suffer the same fate.

In an attempt to curtail the onslaught of starlings, says Barrett, “We even cut down some trees.” That moved the birds briefly, but they soon found additional perches and landing spots.

Next, Barrett and his staff tried blasting the birds with air horns and scaring them off by hanging flashy objects in the trees. No deal. Temporary deterrents didn’t work long with the bothersome birds.

### The Convening of the Birds

What attracted the confab of starlings? Barrett explains: “Our buildings are located between the heart of the city and an area called West Bottom.” West Bottom is a gathering place for livestock; it includes a train terminal for transporting that famous Kansas City beef to market. “West Bottom is where the birds come to feed every day,” Barrett says, “and then they return to the city at night to roost in the warmth of downtown buildings. Our Center is right in their flyway, between eating and roosting.” So the Convention Center is a convenient rest stop midway on the starlings’ daily roundtrip.

### Interrupting the Flight Path

Barrett explains how he got CD recordings of birds’ distress calls from the county agricultural center and played the recordings through the convention center’s audio equipment. Birds heed distress calls from their own species and avoid the area of perceived danger. “We had different sounds with different frequency settings and we tried them all,” Barrett notes. It’s important, he adds, to “mix it up—to keep the birds off-balance and to break their pattern of behavior.”

It worked, but was difficult to set up and keep functioning (keeping the sounds on just often enough and with just the right amount of randomness). Clearly, a high-maintenance solution wouldn’t save time or money for the long-term. Then Barrett heard about a device made by Bird-X, Inc., the Chicago-based manufacturer and distributor of pest control products. “Their BirdXPeller PRO is a sonic bird repeller that does what we we’re doing but much easier and cheaper.” Barrett says. “We wired sonic repellents into trees, on the buildings and at the loading dock doors. This stopped the birds from getting inside and eating on the floor,” he says. “Repellers were easy for our crew to install, and they were effective immediately.”

In retrospect, he says, “The key is to keep the birds from coming in the first place” —in other words, to use the sonic repeller as a preventive measure. Birds are creatures of habit, and you need to break their habits in a compelling manner. “Birds’ nesting habits are ingrained,” he emphasizes, “and you must be diligent in your efforts to discourage them.”

## Another Trick Up His Sleeve

In certain spots at the Kansas City Convention/Entertainment Centers, Barrett installed stainless steel spikes as a physical impediment to some other unwelcome rascals—pigeons. “They can’t land on spikes,” says Barrett, who used the Bird-X Bird Spikes. Spikes prevent pigeons and other birds from getting a foothold. “We put them at the bottom of the buildings and at the top of the columns. The spikes are made of stainless steel, so they are permanent. They do not need to be replaced,” he says.

Satisfied with the results of sonic repellents and spikes, Barrett uses his expertise to assist other operations’ managers who have issues with intrusive birds. “Bird problems are serious,” says Barrett, who has 16 years of operations experience. “People call me asking what I did that works.” He’s happy to tell them.

He also offers advice freely to architects and city planners: “If you know in advance that you’re building a structure in a bird flyway, then prepare to reduce the opportunity for birds to establish a comfort zone. Think first: build in sonic repellents at the time of construction; it’s less costly than retro-fitting the building afterwards.”

Speaking of cost, Barrett has one last comment since winning the battle against the birds: “We’ve had significant cost savings in terms of the manpower we used to expend in cleanup.”

The Welcome Mat is out for visitors to the Kansas City Convention/Entertainment Centers. No birds are invited.