

## BirdXPeller PRO: Corn Crops and Crows

R.W. Delaney, Business Writer

At Goranson Farm in Dresden, Maine (about 20 miles south of Augusta), farmer Rob Johanson revels in vegetables. He and his wife Jan have been planting 40 cash crops on the family farm for over 40 years. You name it, they grow it: asparagus, artichokes, beet greens, garlic, herbs, leeks, lettuce, summer squash, and so on down the alphabet. But all was not well on this thriving 36-acre farm: crows were devastating the sweet corn.

"They're cagey birds," Johanson affirms. "When the sweet corn is germinating and reaches 2 to 4 inches high, the crows yank it out of the ground and consume the remaining seed." They go up and down the rows, beginning at the end of April and continuing for nine weeks of successive plantings, catching the different maturities week after week.

"A flock of 100 seasonal crows can do immense damage in a short amount of time," Johanson says. And on a small farm, every crop is important. He counts on harvesting up to 1,000 dozen ears per acre.

The crows' destruction can put a severe dent in productivity—an intolerable situation for a man who is serious about farming. "We are stewards of the soil," he notes, "and this farm must support more than one generation." Unlike many mechanized, commercial farms, one-third of Goranson Farm remains deliberately uncultivated each year. "It's bad for the soil if you don't rest it," Johanson contends. Overworking the soil, he says, "destroys all the life, all the texture, and reduces it to a medium in which you must dump chemicals." So every crop produced at Goranson Farm is an *essential* crop.

### A "Natural" Solution.

To scare the crows away, Johanson first used 12-inch balloons with some success. But the birds became accustomed to the sight. "We're too busy to keep moving the balloons," Johanson says, so the threat factor waned. Something else had to be done to supplement the balloons.

From trade journals, Johanson learned about the effectiveness of an electronic device called the Super BirdXPeller PRO, which replicates birds' distress calls. Super BirdXPeller PRO is a programmable species-specific sonic repeller that operates on standard 110v electricity or via battery. Its directional speakers broadcast precise reproductions of birds' distress cries as recorded by a major U.S. university and create a perceived 'danger zone' that frightens infesting birds away—in their own language. The bird sounds—choose between 8 species—are *programmable* depending on the infestation. The choices include predator sounds to help scare all the birds. With variable volume and time sequence controls, the BirdXPeller unit fools the birds into fleeing the area, especially when used in conjunction with other deterrents, such as visual scare devices. It was worth a try.

Made by Bird-X, Inc. of Chicago, the sonic Super BirdXPeller PRO was easy to install. Johanson mounted the four-speaker unit on stakes. "It worked immediately," he says. "The crows flew over, looked around, saw the balloons, and heard the recorded distress calls. They never landed. They related the distress calls to the presence of the threatening objects," he theorizes. The quality of the BirdXPeller's sound reproduction is convincing, he says, and the effectiveness has not diminished over time.

"But," he adds, "the battery died once, and the crows got back into the corn." He is considering using a solar panel to charge the battery so that can't happen again.

As president of the Maine Sustainable Agricultural Society, Rob Johanson is, by his own admission, a "live and let live" kind of guy. "Let the crows forage somewhere else," he concludes.