

Super BirdXPeller PRO: Jersey City, City Hall Building

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“Urban pigeons are messy, dirty, unpleasant birds,” states Kevin Sluka, Director of Public Works for Jersey City, New Jersey, population 240,000. Of the 27 public buildings that he and his staff of 250 are responsible for maintaining, one structure was an especially vulnerable and venerable target: City Hall, the city’s primary administrative building housing all official records. Designed like a traditional old school with a central courtyard, City Hall occupies an entire city block. Over the years, City Hall had become a magnet for pigeons.

“Birds were nesting and hanging out over almost every entrance,” Sluka describes. Pigeon droppings hit the sidewalks, to be tracked inside on people’s shoes. This created an intolerable condition, says Sluka, who worried about the public health issues. Besides 500 city employees, about 50 citizens come to City Hall each day to pay bills, check records, and conduct other business.

“My concerns were cosmetic at first,” says Sluka, who has been Director of Public Works at Jersey City for six years. “But as I researched the problem, I learned that the toxins in pigeon waste can present serious health hazards to humans.” The droppings harbor microbes that can cause illness and disabling disease.

To combat the daily effects of perpetual pigeon droppings, Sluka’s department dispatched one custodian to mop the steps every day and conducted frequent costly power washings of the historic brick structure, which dates from 1896. But the root cause of the problem continued unabated.

Disrupting the Pigeons’ Power Base

“We tried using owl replicas to scare the pigeons away,” Sluka recalls. The owls did nothing, he reports. “In fact, the owls became the pigeons’ partners,” he jests. Then Sluka and his staff tried using scented material to ward off the birds—to no effect.

“Next, we reduced the availability of food and increased the annoyance factor,” Sluka continues. “This included posting signs, ‘Please Do Not Feed the Pigeons,’ but hundreds of them kept coming anyway.”

The problem was reaching crisis proportions. In addition to the disgusting pasty matter underfoot and the health hazard it represented, the acidic droppings had the power to erode City Hall’s historic stone steps and walkway. Sluka asked the larger neighboring city of Newark what it had used to deter birds. He soon learned that Newark’s method was very costly. “We were not in a position to spend \$300,000,” he relates.

That’s when Sluka’s attention turned to an advertisement he had seen for a product called the BirdXPeller PRO—an electronic device made by Bird-X, Inc. in Chicago—that replicates birds’ distress calls. 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 programmable bird sounds include a choice of any or all of eight varieties, depending on the type of infestation. The choices include predator sounds to help scare all the birds. With variable volume and time sequence controls, the BirdXPeller unit fools nuisance birds into fleeing the area.

An Effective and Inexpensive “Fix”

“We had our doubts,” Sluka confesses, “but we went ahead and purchased two Super BirdXPellers.” The price tag of \$495 each was easy on the city’s budget, he noted. And it was a humane method of discouraging the birds without harming them and without raising the hackles of animal rights activists.

“Two summers ago, we installed the BirdXPellers, and Bird-X gave us technical support,” he says. The results were instantaneous. “Right away, the pigeons responded to the threatening noises and vacated the premises.” Pigeons have not bothered City Hall since. “They’re happier somewhere else,” Sluka attests.



"I've used other products," Sluka says. "This one works. The only change I would make is to begin using the device in the winter, when the windows are closed, so people inside aren't disturbed by the distress calls." Overall, he says, it's a good trade-off. When City Hall employees understood that the recorded distress calls were getting rid of the messy pigeons, they were entirely supportive and grateful.

For the Department of Public Works of Jersey City, having two BirdXPellers means no more expensive extra power washings and no more assigning of a custodian to the nasty task of removing accumulated pigeon paste. His advice to other public works directors is "Just try it."

"I used to worry about kids dropping candy on the ground around City Hall and putting the candy back in their mouths," Sluka says. "I have young children myself." No more pigeon droppings. No more public health hazard. Just try it.