

## Open Season on Starlings.

*By R.W. Delaney*

Imagine for a minute that you are a plant superintendent in an industrial setting. Your company's product is considered volatile and flammable so, for safety, your warehouse needs to have an open dock. Your inventory is huge, occupying 70,000 square feet of plant floor space. Remember, the loading dock is open.

Now picture this: It's springtime and hundreds of birds are scouting Cincinnati for nesting sites. Aha – look at that inviting dock at Chemcentral!

Up on the rafters and girders they gather – pigeons, robins and starlings, making themselves comfortable in the manmade shelter. "With the nesting came droppings, feces and eggs," says William Spangler, Plant Superintendent at Chemcentral's Cincinnati plant. "The floor looked like a mowed hayfield. We'd clean it up, and the next morning we'd face the same scene." In short, Spangler says, day after day "it was a big pain." Starlings were the most prevalent and the worst offenders, he adds.

Chemcentral is the largest privately owned chemical distributor in the world, with annual sales of \$880 million. Founded in 1926, the family-owned business has 30 plants in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and South America, plus partnerships in Asia and Europe.

"The company packages chemicals in 55-gallon steel drums," Spangler explains, "and we store the drums in the warehouse. You can't send drums slathered in bird droppings to customers," he says. "It's both a health issue and a packaging issue." How would any of us like to receive a shipment splattered with starling excrement? As a big-name supplier, Chemcentral can't afford to offend customers or, for that matter, create a possible health hazard for workers.

### Popular Techniques to Deter Birds

"In our Detroit plant, we tried using large plastic owls to scare away the birds. The birds just landed on the owls," Spangler scoffs. The plant crew also tried sending aloft balloons with glaring eyes. The birds were not impressed in the least.

Something more powerful was needed. That's when Spangler heard about a sonic device made and distributed by Chicago-based Bird-X, Inc. Super BirdXpeller PRO, as it is called, offers a high-tech remedy that low-tech balloons and plastic owls can't match.

Spangler's plant crew installed one BirdXpeller unit and got immediate response. "We turned it on and the birds took off," he says. "The first blast not only scared the birds, but also our employees," he recalls with a smile.

Then he adjusted the unit's four speakers, which were located on all four sides of the plant. "The birds flew out and roosted in trees. They came back and got blasted again," he relates. Gradually, the crowd of birds thinned to a trickle. "It interrupted their roosting – that's the key point," Spangler asserts. "It cut way back on their nesting. The birds would hear the Expeller and fly out."

The BirdXpeller unit is based on 40 years of research and success with sonic repellents. The unit emits distress cries that convey danger to pigeons, starlings, gulls and other bird species. And it also releases the harsh cries of predators, such as falcons and hawks, to stimulate fear and flight. Sound waves transmitted by the Super BirdXpeller move from speaker to speaker, producing a menacing sonic shield covering up to six acres. For maximum effect, the unit can be easily programmed to set up random patterns in the volume and frequency of bird cries.

Bird-X president Ron Schwarcz says, "It works equally well in semi-enclosed areas and in wide open spaces, such as rooftops, parking lots, power station towers, stadiums, billboards – virtually anywhere that birds congregate." The disruptive power of BirdXpeller is extremely effective in a variety of industrial and commercial settings, yet it doesn't harm the birds or the environment. "It simply aggravates and frightens the birds," Schwarcz emphasizes.

Superintendent Spangler agrees. "It worked on all species that were bothering us. It's like day and night," he says. "We once tried a drug-like feed additive that was supposed to disorient the birds, but BirdXpeller is much more efficient," he confirms.

### **Ramifications Continue**

BirdXpeller changed the landscape (and floorscape) for the better at Chemcentral's Cincinnati and Detroit plants. "And," adds Spangler, "we saved money by eliminating daily clean-up costs."

In the Cincinnati plant, he's about to experiment with the timing of BirdXpeller's sonic bursts. "Our hours of plant operations are 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.," he notes, "so I'm thinking we could turn off the unit at night. It's a loud sound; and even though we're located in an industrial park, the sound could carry to residential areas." He has had no complaints, but why take a chance if the unit can remain silent for most of the nighttime hours? "I'm not sure if the birds will return at night, and I'd like to find out," he says.

As for daylight hours, Spangler counts on BirdXpeller to protect the company's open dock, warehouse workers, and the vulnerable 55-gallon drums. "It really works. The sound reaches all four corners of the warehouse. We who work here have become accustomed to the sound, but one drawback is that we have to explain the noise to visitors."

... A small price to pay for keeping noxious, pest birds out of everyone's hair.