

## **For The Birds**



### **Q & A Dean Barrett:**

**When flocks of starlings began infiltrating the Kansas City Convention and Entertainment Centers in Kansas City, MO, manager Dean Barrett searched for a humane solution to an unsanitary problem.**

## **What is your position? How many years have you been in the facility management profession?**

I have been the building operations manager for the Kansas City Convention and Entertainment Centers in Kansas City, MO for 20 years.

## **Please give a brief description of the facility involved in this project.**

This city-operated complex consists of six buildings housing two million square feet of exhibit halls, meeting space, food service, and entertainment venues. Over a million visitors come to the convention center every year.

## **Why was the decision made to pursue this project for the facility?**

At one point, thousands of starlings flocked to the Kansas City Convention and Entertainment Centers. Birds were everywhere—in the trees, around the buildings, and on the rooftops. The birds were out of control, and the sidewalks were a mess. Nightly power washings were necessary to remove the recurring bird droppings.

There were significant health concerns, because birds often carry disease. We do a lot of food service in the Centers, and the last thing anybody wants around food is bacteria from bird droppings.

The Exhibit Hall, which is almost half a million square feet, was vulnerable. We regularly had birds flying inside after 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 during setup and breakdown before and after each convention.

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## **Why was there such a pervasive bird control problem at this particular location?**

Our buildings are located between the heart of the city and an area called West Bottom. West Bottom is a gathering place for livestock, and it is where the birds come to feed every day before they return to the city at night to roost in the warmth of downtown buildings. The Convention Center is a convenient midway rest stop on the starlings' daily round trip.

We added a 250,000 square foot expansion to our exhibit hall that was directly in their flyway. Instead of going past the Centers to their normal stop, they started roosting here. The problem then went from a few birds to tens of thousands of birds.

## **Please describe the decision making and research process for this project.**

In an attempt to curtail the onslaught of starlings, we cut down some trees. That moved the birds briefly, but they soon found new perches and landing spots. Next, we tried blasting the birds with air horns and scaring them off by hanging flashy objects in the trees.

We also obtained CD recordings of birds, including distress calls, from the county agricultural center. There were different sounds with different frequency settings, and we tried them all. But we still had a bird control problem.

In retrospect, the secret to bird control is to keep the birds from coming in the first place. A good solution is to use a sonic repeller (as we ultimately chose) as a preventive measure. Birds are creatures of habit, and you need to break their habits in a compelling manner.

## **What was the vendor selection process like?**

I heard about a device called BirdXPeller made by Bird-X, Inc., a Chicago, IL-based manufacturer and distributor of pest control products. We had tried several other products before BirdXPeller without much success.



*PHOTO: Bird-X, Inc.*

## **What led you to choose the specific solution that you did?**

Repellers were easy for our crew to install, and they were effective immediately. After we wired sonic repellers into trees, on the buildings, and at the loading dock doors, the birds stopped coming inside and eating on the floor.

## **How did this project affect your operations and maintenance practices?**

We eliminated the bird droppings issue and this maintenance item is resolved. It saves us thousands of dollars in equipment and manpower every year.

## **What was the most professionally rewarding aspect of this project?**

We were able to solve this ongoing issue at a very reasonable cost and greatly improved our customers' opinions of our facility.

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