

Wrigley Field dismisses the pigeons with Bird-X

Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs, celebrated its 90th season in 2003 and found itself battling an unwelcome new pre-season rival: pigeons in its renowned upper deck, writes **RW Delaney**.

"This causes problems for the people seated below," says Paul Rathje, director of stadium operations at Wrigley Field for the last six years, tactfully understating the issue.

Rathje tried treated corn feed, applying a sticky gel on the trusses to discourage landing, and plastic owls to bother the birds - to no avail.

In spring 2003 Rathje was referred by Chicago-based Bird-X, Inc to a bird-deterrence consultant, Kevin Connelly, general manager of Premier Pest Elimination in Chicago.

Connelly explained the options,



including the installation of netting in Wrigley Field's vast superstructure to restrain the birds from roosting. This would require much longer than two weeks to install properly. Even more to the point, it would break Rathje's budget.

Rathje preferred Connelly's other proposal: installing ultrasonic devices to get the most bang for Wrigley Field's buck, and the most coverage considering the expanses to be pro-

tected. The two men worked out a plan to install seven Bird-X Ultrason X units and seven Super BirdXPeller PRO units in the trusses under the upper deck and in the lower deck corners.

As Bird-X presi-

dent Ron Schwarcz explains, "The area to control was large enough to require several sonic units. We selected two different types of units to produce greater variety of sound. This would provide immediate results

while helping prevent long-term acclimation, since birds don't like surprises and unpredictable changes."

Ultrason X is the first device to take ultrasonic sound out of



doors effectively. Super BirdXPeller PRO, pushes the sound much farther and is ideal for large, open areas. "Also," Connelly assures, "the devices don't hurt the birds. It's not an aggressive action." This keeps the peace with animal lovers.

When the Bird-X units were turned on in May, "The birds flapped out," Rathje says. "About 90 percent of the birds left for good," says Connelly. It wasn't a total elimination, both men agree, but it forced the bird problem to fall within an acceptable tolerance range. The sonic equipment is turned off during home games.