

# Repel Birds Harmlessly

**W**hen Westminster, Colorado, moved into its new city hall ten years ago, pesky birds moved in with the administrators. "We tried many remedies," recalls Facilities Manager Ken Quenzer, who has been with Westminster for 17 years and is responsible for 30 city buildings.

"For example, we tried hanging banners, Terror Eyes balloons, and flash tape," Quenzer reports—but to no avail. At one point, he says, a pest control firm attempted to get rid of the pigeons with a formula that sickened the birds. "They still returned," he says.

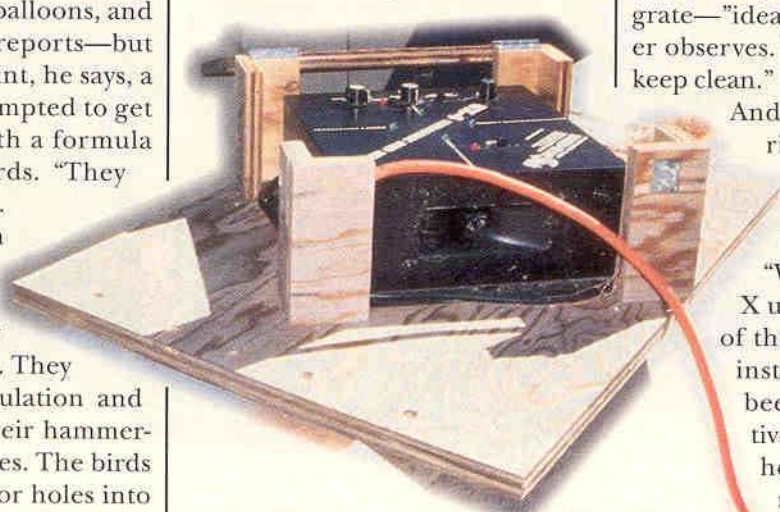
The biggest problem occurred in the city's fitness center. "Woodpeckers banged away on the stucco exterior. They hollowed out the insulation and made a racket with their hammering," Quenzer describes. The birds drilled at least 20 major holes into the stucco and, adds Quenzer, "it was as if the woodpeckers were leasing the holes to blackbirds." Occupancy was running high. The combined nuisance hurt the ear drums and the city's budget. "It cost \$50,000 to repair the stucco and put a new cover coat on it," he says.

Immediately after redoing the stucco, Quenzer installed an ultrasonic unit (QuadBlaster QB-4, produced by Bird-X, Inc. of Chicago) on

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the roof of the fitness center. He had read how this unit repels birds and other pests by emitting ultrasonic sound waves that annoy birds, yet are out of the range of normal human hearing. The unit's UHF sound waves are harmless but effective on most birds in a 6,000 square ft area. It runs on ordinary 110-volt current.



"We put the QB-4 unit on top of the roof where the birds were hanging out," Quenzer says. "The birds looked frazzled, and they left."

Since installing the unit more than 11 months ago, he checks the building at least once a week. "No blackbirds," he says. And no noise and no messy droppings to clean up.

Quenzer is impressed by the cost-effectiveness of the QB-4 solution for Westminster. "We were at our wit's

end, and it seemed worth a try to spend \$400 to save \$50,000," he attests. "This was our pilot project," he adds. It worked so well that Quenzer's department bought a second QB-4 unit for the city's bell tower, housing splendid Carillon bells.

Quenzer does not mince words about the situation. "The bell tower was filthy." Pigeons and starlings were roosting at the top of the 120-ft tower. The 30-ft by 30-ft structure has an open top covered only by a metal grate—"ideal for roosting," Quenzer observes. "It was a nightmare to keep clean."

And citizens' health was at risk, too, as residents and visitors like to hike up the stairs to the top of the tower.

"We mounted the Bird-X unit outside on the top of the bell tower. It was an instant success, and it has been 100 percent effective," says Quenzer. Next, he plans to install two more UX-4 units in the city's park recreation center, where pigeons hang around the entrance of the 70,000-square ft building. "Pigeons are so filthy," Quenzer concludes. "If you need to protect the public, this is the most humane way to get rid of birds."

## CONFIRMING EXPERIENCE

Not so far away, in Arizona, a government contracting firm was snuffing out a similar infestation of birds.

Steinhoff & Sadler, Inc., a national company that specializes in performing contract maintenance and construction repair work for government facilities, had a big mess on its hands.

John Hawker, planner/estimator for Steinhoff & Sadler's office in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, explains. His company had a five-year contract to maintain a large two-story federal administrative office building. Fort Huachuca, he says, is located just 20

miles north of the Mexican border, on the migratory pathway of mud swallows. "During the migratory season, the swallows built mud nests under the eaves," Hawker says. "This created a problem with excrement on the windows and down the side of the masonry. It looked unsightly."

Drastic methods of getting rid of the birds were out of the question. "The government is sensitive to the environment and to animals and

birds," Hawker says. In this case, the government wildlife management officer was interested in the well-being of the swallows and asked Hawker to count the nests, which numbered as many as 178. "We had to find a humane way to discourage the birds, without doing violence to them.

"We looked into having the sheet-metal shop fabricate semi-circular metal aprons to be installed at a certain angle so the birds couldn't penetrate the eaves, and we'd treat the eaves with special resistant paint," Hawker says.

But, when he estimated the cost of materials, labor to make the metal retrofittings, and the equipment and skilled labor to put up the metal guards, it was prohibitively expensive. That is when Hawker turned to QB-4 units, which, he heard, had been used successfully elsewhere on government property.

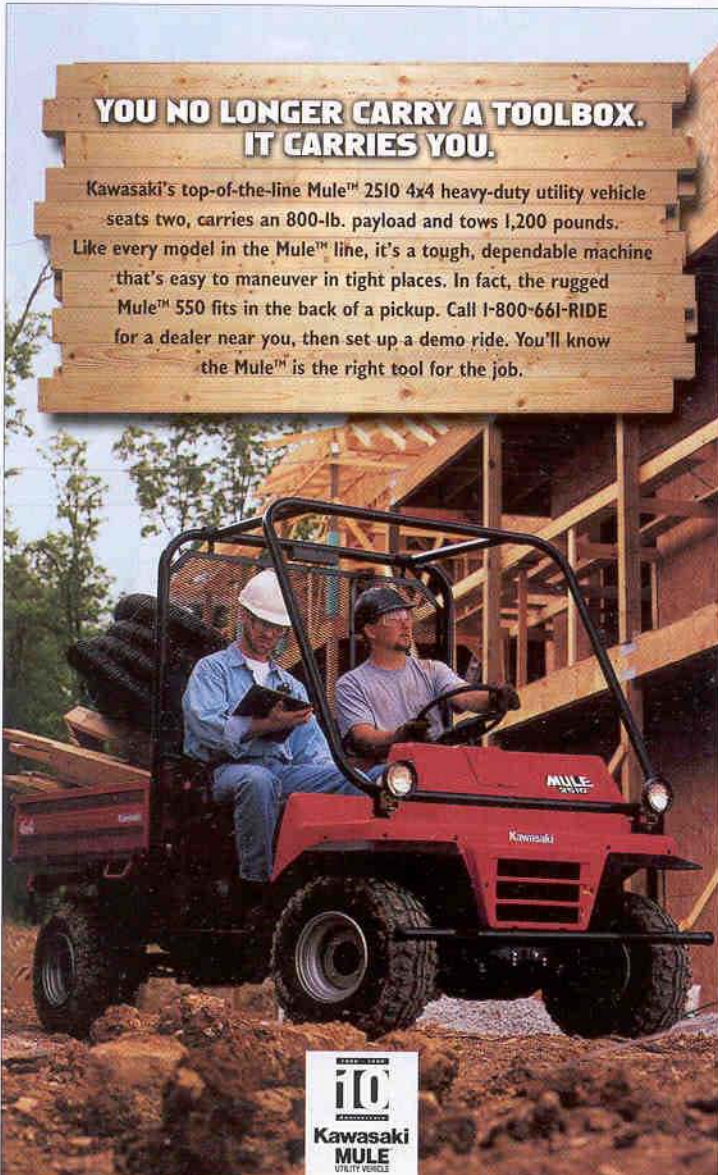
After the mud swallows had raised their young and vacated the premises, Hawker's crew removed the nests by hand and cleaned the eaves with high-pressure hoses. Then they installed a QB-4 unit on one corner of the building, about 30 ft up. This discouraged all of the birds from nesting, except for one spot that was around a corner where the ultrasonic waves could not reach. So Hawker placed a second unit in the opposite corner. After six months of continual use, he reports, "we've had no problems."

Best of all, he notes, are the resulting cosmetic improvement in the look of the building and the elimination of the serious sanitation issue raised formerly by excessive bird droppings in an area frequented by public employees. Also, Hawker says, the unobtrusive unit has a "low profile" that does not detract aesthetically from buildings. And he notes the significant decrease in maintenance expense. Hawker is pleased with the performance of the QB-4. "I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it," he says. "It is well worth the investment, since most other conventional means are more costly." And, oftentimes, less humane. **PW**

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