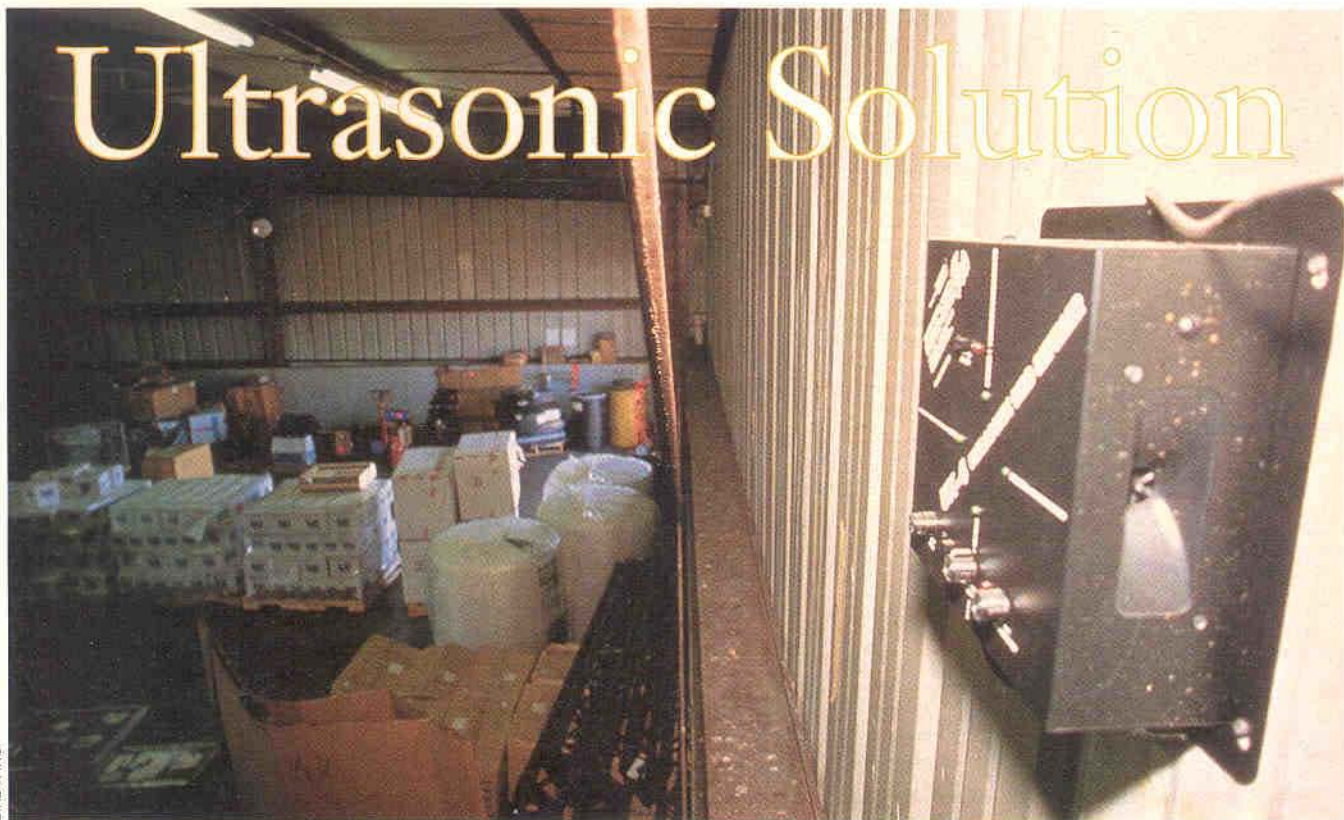


Ultrasonic Solution



Invading birds were creating a respiratory and safety hazard until new equipment drove them out.

by *R.W. Delaney*

Open warehouse doors issue an open invitation to birds. Inside, the high rafters offer warm shelter and a natural nesting niche for birds of all feathers. Wendell Murphy, vice president of an Avis rental car franchise and an air freight trucking business in Lexington, Ky., knows the habits of birds all too well.

"For a dozen years, we tried to keep the birds out of our 4,000-square-foot warehouse at the airport," Murphy said. Many varieties of small birds invaded, attracted by the 15-foot ceiling and the potential of uninterrupted roosting space. "This past spring, the problem got worse as insulation in the ceiling was deteriorating," Murphy said. Driven in by spring rains, the birds nested wherever the insulation pulled loose, creating convenient pockets for nests "up and behind the insulation, where it was warm and dry," he said.

Murphy minces no words about the nuisance created by the incoming birds: "Droppings hit the freight and the floor and got on packages and equipment. It was a mess," he said. The warehouse/dock was a major hub of activity, with trucks loading and unloading on one side

and aircraft on the other side. The doors were open all summer for receiving and dispatching.

A cure for the scourge of small birds was badly needed.

Murphy and his crew tried many reme-

dies. "We washed the building with high-pressure cleaners. It did not get rid of the birds," he said. They also tried rubber snakes and artificial owls in the rafters; "it didn't faze them," Murphy said. An employee tried rifle shot, but Murphy said that idea "didn't suit me. I like birds, and rifles would put holes in the ceiling."

He took his next lesson in bird deterrence from the Lexington airport. "The passenger terminal has a big overhang," he explained. "The airport facilities manager,

who is also an engineer, told me they used an ultrasonic device successfully to avoid problems at the passenger check-in area."

The manager recommended a product that uses a high-pitched, variable sound that is above the threshold of normal human

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—Wendell Murphy

hearing but is annoying to birds.

Murphy ordered a unit from the manufacturer. "We read the instructions and followed them to the letter," he said.

Because of the excessive deterioration, Murphy's crew erected scaffolding to get the birds out, cleaned up the mess, and securing the insulation with wood strips. Then, they washed the whole building with high-pressure hoses. "It's very important to prepare the site prop-

[Continued on page 66]

continued from page 42

erly before installing the unit," he said.

They placed the ultrasonic device—which is about 8 inches square and 2 inches thick—about 10 feet above the floor and away from the dispatchers' office. "It worked wonders for us. We had no more trouble," he said. "Birds fly in, land on the rafters, and fly right out. The unit bothers the birds by emitting a high-pitched tone that birds don't like. It surely eliminated our problem."

A Flock of Benefits

Now, the warehouse is clean. "No more mess," said Murphy, "and our employees feel better now because the dock is clean. It perked up morale, because employees understand that management does care." Murphy also cites the health factors that were of concern. If bird droppings are allowed to accumulate, they can release unhealthy gases. "We corrected the problem, and the employees appreciate it," he said.

He also noted the savings in cleanup

costs. "Anybody in the warehouse business probably has a problem with birds," said Murphy, who has been in the business for 42 years. "We spent less than \$600 to get the job done. I would have been willing to spend ten times that."

Another Success

The same unit solved a similar problem for Ray Salvesen, warehouse supervisor for Comdisco Inc., a technology services company that uses a warehouse near Chicago to recondition and store high-tech equipment. "We were looking into installing motion detectors as a security measure, and we didn't want birds setting off the alarm system," he said. And there was another problem: "Prospective customers tour the facilities," he said, and a scene of dead birds and excrement dripping on equipment would not be a pretty sight.

Many varieties of birds—sparrows, blackbirds, robins, and starlings—were coming in the dock doors and nesting in the warehouse's three enclosed docks. To deter

them, Salvesen first considered mounting flashy tape and balloons. He didn't think that would be sufficiently effective because the birds already had nested. Then, he heard about the ultrasonic unit.

"We bought one and installed it about 35 feet up in the beams of one of the docks" after removing existing nests and applying steel wool and mesh screening to deter repeat visitors, he said. "We noticed that birds came in, perched in one spot a minute or two, tried another spot, and then flew out. Soon they stopped coming in at all."

The unit was installed in May, and Salvesen thought winter would be the true test. It worked well, as the birds "didn't come in at all," he said.

Salvesen installed a second unit in the second dock but found he didn't need a third device. The two units covered all three docks sufficiently. ■

Business writer R.W. Delaney contributed this article for Bird-X Inc. of Chicago, Ill., a maker of bird-repelling products.