

# Aviation Products Report<sup>®</sup>

"Customers entrust these airplanes to us," says Brad Pocock, owner and president of Richland Aviation, an FBO and air charter operator in Mansfield, Ohio, about halfway between Cleveland and Columbus.

Pocock's hangars are his livelihood, and he takes full responsibility for protecting and safeguarding his customers' aircraft. Sometimes, this careful supervision includes dealing with a common hangar nuisance—unwanted birds.

The bird problem is "fairly standard with any aviation company," Pocock notes. "Around airports, there aren't many trees for birds to nest in. The peak of a hangar is warm and attracts birds."

Pocock became convinced that birds have no place in an aircraft hangar when, at an FBO he worked for previously, two people were killed in a private plane after a bird nest inside an engine cowling caught fire during flight. Pocock has made sure that such a tragedy would never happen at his company, but it's taken some doing.

Richland's main hangar and shops comprise 13,500 sq. ft. The facility typically houses about six smaller aircraft, mostly singles and light twins. A second hangar nearby covers about 3,000 sq. ft., including office space.

## Winning the bird battle

remember where the nests were and for generations they returned."

Pocock worked for the former owner of Richland Aviation for 10 years before buying the company five years ago. He recalls that the former owner used a BB gun, but that didn't stop the surviving generation of birds from reclaiming their homes in the hangar each year.



*An ultrasonic device is being used in the hangars of Richland Aviation in Mansfield, Ohio, to keep the birds at bay.*

"The hangar is high and peaked," says Pocock, "and the birds love to nest near the top. Our biggest problem has been with bird droppings on the airplanes."

In fact, the birds had declared squatters' rights some years ago. The main hangar was built in 1945 and the birds have been seasonal occupants since then. "They come in the summer, raise their young, then leave in the fall," explains Pocock. "The young seemed to

Besides being an eyesore, bird droppings are often a health hazard. Pigeon droppings in particular frequently harbor two fungi that can cause serious or even fatal lung diseases. Two diseases, called histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis, can occur if susceptible humans breathe in harmful fecal dust.

Apart from the ill-fated BB gun

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routine, Pocock tried a flock of techniques to discourage the birds. "Five years ago we tried the owl trick," he relates. "We bought some inflatable owls and they worked on the birds for a while. But they got used to them and returned."

The passive deterrent didn't stop the birds and they continued to be a problem. "Bird droppings on an airplane windshield don't look good," Pocock notes with understatement.

More importantly, he knew, in the evenings the airplane engine compartments provided a cozy, warm nesting place—a situation that spelled possible danger for customers.

After other attempts to get rid of the culprits, Pocock noticed an advertisement for an ultrasonic

device called UET-120 and for a bird-scaring inflatable vinyl ball dubbed Terror-Eyes, both sold by Chicago-based Bird-X Inc. "We sent in the reply card for their literature and decided it wouldn't hurt to try," he says. "The price wasn't outlandish."

Results with the Bird-X products were dramatic, according to Pocock. "It was like the birds put on the brakes mid-air," he says. "The ultrasonic (device) and the Terror-Eyes kept new birds from coming in and the UET unit worked on the birds already nesting in the hangar. The mothers braved it to get their young. But they all flew away as the young left the nest." They haven't returned yet, he adds.

Meanwhile, in the smaller hangar where Pocock had his office, conditions were deteriorating. Pigeon droppings were the worst. "A terrible mess," he offers. "all over the lot." Pocock moved the UET-120 to the small hangar and almost immediately cleared out the birds.

"It worked great," he beams. "I would recommend it to anyone with a bird problem."

We've had no problem with the device; it's been maintenance free."

The ultrasonic unit that Pocock ordered from Bird-X is about half the size of a shoe box and weighs just under eight pounds. It produces sound waves that are inaudible to humans, but very annoying to birds. It rotates on a turntable and sends bird-bothering signals in a 360-degree sweep for 45 ft. or more.

When mounted near the ceiling of an open hangar, the unit revolves and emits sound waves in all directions, bombarding birds with sounds they can't stand but which are physically harmless to them, according to Bird-X.

Pocock explains that he hung the Terror-Eyes inflatable balls—each about two ft. in diameter with eerie-looking holographic eyes—from the suspended lights in the hangars.

"When the wind blows, they move," he says. "No matter where the birds come in, they look like big mean eyes. The eyes are always looking at the birds, from whatever angle."

Because the Terror-Eyes weave in the wind and the big eyes "follow" the birds, they tend to be more effective than stationary devices. But Pocock adds that the dual approach—the ultrasonic unit with the scary eyes—seemed to be most effective.

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