



The privilege of making

A solid bird management program can help keep historic buildings beautiful.

By **Stuart Aust and Donna Aust**, Contributors

It's quite a privilege to service historic landmark buildings located throughout our great nation. While many of these buildings are notably distinct — whether they're ornate churches and synagogues, refined financial

institutions, adorned museums or overpowering bridges — the one thing they do share is the infestation of a growing nuisance: pest birds.

The three pest birds most commonly nesting on historic buildings are pigeons, starlings and sparrows. They

seem to enjoy roosting on building and parapet ledges, windowsills, balustrades (spindled railings), balconies, the tops of decorative columns, gargoyles, light fixtures and under canopies. Their acidic droppings are corrosive to the buildings and contain pathogenic fungi and bacteria that can cause histoplasmosis, cryptococcus, Legionnaires' disease and other lung ailments. In fact, 60 different diseases are associated with birds and their nesting material and fecal droppings.

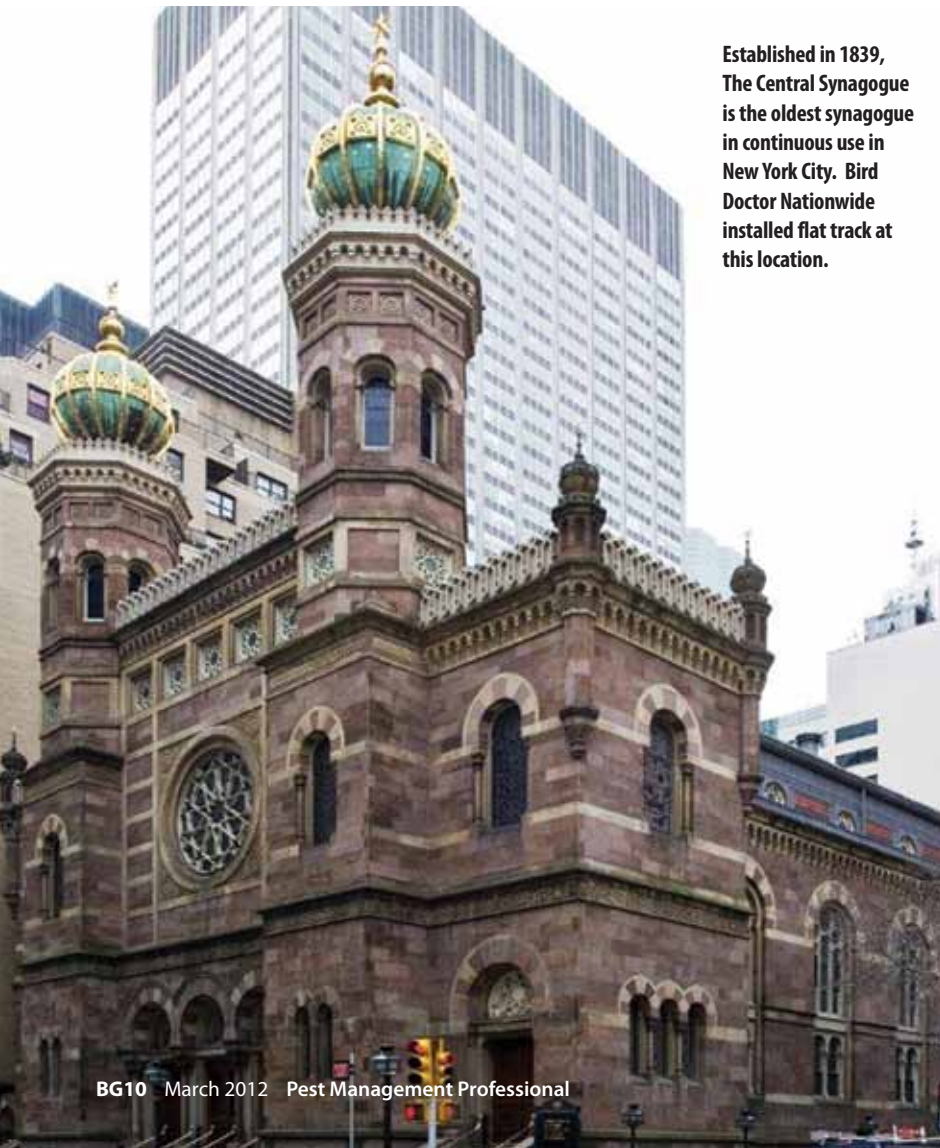
What follow are some of our recommendations for implementing a comprehensive bird management solution for historic buildings and sites.

Start with cleanup

Clean and sanitize the affected area, removing all of the bird droppings from critical spots. Because the exterior facade of many historic buildings is made of limestone or sandstone, careful selection of cleaning and sanitizing products is important to prevent staining or discoloration. In fact, it is common practice — and often a requirement — to submit specimen labels and material safety data sheets (MSDSs) of the products that will be used.

Most historic buildings have a team of contractors who work on-site, one of which is an architectural firm. The architect approves and oversees what cleaning products will be used, and what bird deterrents will be installed.

Established in 1839, The Central Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in continuous use in New York City. Bird Doctor Nationwide installed flat track at this location.



history

Choosing the right approach

Historic building clients want solutions that focus on aesthetically pleasing methods of exclusion that foster synergy between the architectural design and the bird exclusion system. Most historical landmarks preservation associations approve only low-profile, aesthetically pleasing and non-defacing products. Bird netting, electric track and post-and-wire are specified on most jobs because they are considered the least obtrusive.

The product used to attach the bird deterrent to the building is also a critical consideration. Generally, bonding agents are used to ensure that there are no penetrations into the exterior facade, such as drilling, which can cause stress cracks. This would cause water to eventually seep into the cracks — and when the water freezes from frigid temperatures, the stone or facade will crack even more.

The U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) owns and manages more than 400 historic buildings that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This register is responsible for preserving the historical and architectural excellence of these buildings throughout the United States. All bird deterrent installation companies must be registered with the GSA to submit quotations and perform services. Included in the GSA portfolio are courthouses, post offices, border stations, government buildings and customhouses.

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Stuart Aust, President & CEO of Bird Doctor Nationwide, in front of The Plaza Hotel which opened its doors in 1907. Among its original residents were members of the Gould, Harriman, and Vanderbilt families.

Tips to consider

- Always include in your proposal a maintenance plan or a renewal program. Once a bird deterrent system is installed, it is critical to maintain the effectiveness of the system with monthly, quarterly or yearly follow-ups.
- Determine whether your client requires a mock-up sample before the project begins. Also, inquire whether CAD or shop drawings are required.
- Confirm who is responsible for obtaining permits — you or your client.
- When submitting a proposal to historic building owners, be sure they are aware of the process of obtaining approvals, and that they have consulted with an architect or building contractor before any bird-deterrent installation work begins.



Turning historic buildings into clients



Obtaining historic buildings as clients is no different than pursuing any other client you want to service. Our company has found that cold calling has been most successful. When we spot birds on the exterior of a building, we will either call the property manager, or literally walk in and ask to submit a proposal.

Years ago, we were celebrating our wedding anniversary at The Plaza Hotel's Palm Court. While there, Stuart noticed pigeons on the ledges and immediately went to speak with the management. While Donna wasn't quite as excited about the discovery, we definitely got our money's worth.

Other ways to obtain historic buildings as clients is by joining various associations, such as those for property managers, architects, superintendents, contractors, janitors, project managers, engineers and city government. Consider also attending their events and conferences.

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Approval, then installation

With a typical commercial bird account, once the proposal is approved, the installation job begins. However, the process with historic buildings is more involved. In most states across the country, owners and property managers of historic buildings belong to state-sanctioned organizations. For example, New York City belongs to the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The purpose of such organizations is first to identify and designate which buildings are classified as historical. They regulate any proposed changes to these buildings, so as to preserve the historical, aesthetic and cultural heritage. Once a proposal for a building under their supervision is submitted to the client, the customer submits the proposal to the organization, with supporting documentation of the need for service. Sometimes this can be a long, drawn-out process, as the organization may require the bird deterrent installation company to prepare and provide CAD and shop drawings. This can incur thousands of dollars for the installation company, so keep that in mind during the bidding process. Once the job is approved, the company will typically receive a permit allowing the work to commence.

Our bird installers are proud to service these accounts, and enjoy the excitement connected with these buildings. They occasionally spot big celebrities like President Bill Clinton, Serena and Venus Williams, and Suze Orman strolling out of The Plaza, for example. We take pride in being a part of a united effort to preserve history and maintain the architectural integrity of such distinguished landmarks. In doing so, we believe we are making a little bit of history ourselves. **PMP**

The Austs are the owners of Bird Doctor Nationwide. Learn more at BirdDoctorInc.com.

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Bird Doctor Nationwide's historic portfolio

Our company has been servicing the following New York historical landmarks:

- **The Plaza Hotel:** Located on 59th and 5th Avenue, it received landmark status from the New York City LPC in 1969, and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986. The Waldorf-Astoria is the only other hotel in New York City to receive this designation. The Plaza opened its doors in 1907, and the Goulds, the Harrimans and the Vanderbilts were among some of its original residents.
- **The Brooklyn Bridge:** One of the largest suspension bridges in the United States, it was completed in 1883. The bridge, which connects Manhattan to Brooklyn, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964, and a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1972.
- **Grand Central Station:** Located on 42nd St. and Park Ave., the station was designated a landmark in 1968.
- **Old Yankee Stadium:** Also known as "The House that (Babe) Ruth Built" or "Baseball's Cathedral," it was previously located on River Ave. and East 161th St. in the Bronx.



The New York Historical Society was founded in 1804 and is the oldest museum in New York City. Bird Doctor Nationwide installed pin-and-wire (also known as post-and-wire) and bird netting at this museum.

- **Central Synagogue:** Established in 1839, it's the oldest synagogue in New York City, and is located on 123 East 55th St.
- **New York Historical Society Museum:** The oldest museum in New York City, it was founded in 1804.
- **The Metropolitan Museum of Art:** Located at 1000 5th Ave., the Met is recognized as a structure on the National Register of Historic Places in Manhattan.
- **The Haier Building:** The original name of the Haier Building was the Greenwich Savings Bank Building, at 1352-1362 Broadway. It was constructed in 1922, and both the interior and exterior of the Greenwich Savings Bank achieved landmark status by the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1992.

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