

Thinking **Inside** the Box

Bird control for big-box, retail stores

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Images of frail, gray-haired ladies feeding innocent pigeons and starlings on city stairs has become nostalgic. Nowadays, fewer people sit or stand near corporate structures in fear of feathered friends dropping disease-infested feces on their heads. While industrial and corporate buildings are threatened by bothersome winged intruders, big-box stores are being infiltrated with birds in staggering proportions because of their box-like shape and easy entry points.

Bird control companies acknowledge more opportunities to eliminate this epidemic inside and outside the stores. Big-box stores are more susceptible to attracting birds because:

- of their large size;
- it's harder to control doors that are left open;
- birds can find entry into the interior of the store if connected to a shopping mall;
- birds enter through openings made by contractors who've installed conduits;
- new construction areas often create gaps and open areas for entry;
- garden centers attract birds through seed and other products; and
- garbage containers are located at loading docks or close to buildings.

As long as birds have food, water and shelter, they'll thrive and live indoors.

To rid big-box stores of birds, a thorough walk-through is essential, including a complete interior and exterior inspection to determine entry points. While the clients' desire is to have the birds permanently removed and may suggest removal ideas, they generally don't know the ideal solution for long-lasting elimination. Trained bird inspectors rely on the inspection and present their findings to the client. The following bird-deterrent installations keep birds off of, and away from, big-box store exteriors:

- netting;
- spikes;
- pin and wire, also known as post and wire;
- flat/jolt/electrified track;
- slope/slide;
- coil;
- spiders, also known as daddy long legs;
- hardware cloth, sheet metal, and copper mesh as exclusionary methods; and
- gel.

It's challenging for big-box stores to maintain a bird-free environment and prevent stray birds from entering the interior. The following deterrents can be used in conjunction with exterior methods.

The **air or pellet rifle** ensures a quick, euthanized removal. Technicians should keep the following requirements in mind when using a pellet rifle:

- have proper credentials and/or licensing to carry a pellet rifle/air rifle;
- know the laws of the state and county where the service takes place;
- vacate all store employees;
- perform the service in the middle of the night and early morning when the birds are active;
- take all safety precautions into consideration, including wearing safety goggles;
- ensure all electrical and plumbing fixtures, such as skylights, sprinklers, valves and pipes aren't damaged in the process by using soft-tip pellets that don't penetrate through metal.

When **bird netting** is installed on an exterior, it helps remove the roosting/loafing/nesting areas that prevent birds from entering the store, especially areas such as garden centers, over the front and side of signs, loading dock areas, etc. A two-inch net is recommended for pigeons, and a three-quarter-inch net is recommended for sparrows and starlings. While the two-inch net is less expensive, it's best to invest in the three-quarter-inch net to exclude all birds. Stainless steel attachments are recommended to prevent rusting or streaking. Otherwise, clients will notice rust seeping into painted walls or the front façade of the building. When birds enter the store, an older net method, a **pole net**, is used. Stray birds are scooped into a net that's attached to a long pole.

Mist netting was popular years ago in the tropics for catching and tagging birds and identifying different species. This technique has worked its way into big-box stores and is an effective way to trap and remove birds, particularly pigeons, sparrows and starlings. These almost-invisible, vertical-hanging mist nets hang easily and scoop up the birds. It works best at dawn when the birds are most active and foraging. Using **laser guns** (aka laser pointer guns), which move birds off high places, such as beams, sprinklers, valves and pipes with mist netting, can be more effective. The mist net should never be left unattended in the store.

A sophisticated laser gun can be purchased inexpensively at Staples, Home Depot, or through an industry supplier. Laser guns are useful for pointing out various problems to the client, such as entry points and openings.

Interior and exterior bird trapping is used only for pigeons, sparrows and starlings. Traps need to be

maintained daily and must provide food, water and shelter. Some recommend tagging the trap with the company name and phone number. In extreme cold temperatures, a technician can leave the cage open for birds to come and go to prevent trapping and freezing to death. In hot weather, particularly in temperatures warmer than 85 degrees, birds will suffer and die. One may continue to feed the birds in the area, so that when the weather changes a large population of birds forms in the traps.

Installing **bird house traps** inside the store involves technicians baiting the trap with food on the inside and outside, and when the bird enters, a colored indicator pops up. With a **laser bird trap**, the bait rests on top of the traps where a net scoops up the bird. Technicians need to make sure the traps provide food, water and shelter. A **sparrow sled trap** hangs from the ceiling or a beam but is unnoticeable from below because of the metal tray, which looks like a sled. **Glue boards** attract the birds via seed or other bait, but some retail chains and regulatory agencies believe this method is cruel, and causes birds to suffer.

Aerosol or hard-wired aerosol dispensing systems redirect birds. The active ingredient methyl anthranilate, which is dispensed through an aerosol or a thermal fogger, irritates the nerve sensation of the birds' beaks, causing them to flee. This is especially ideal for large, uncontrollable spaces. There are various formulations and systems available.

The hard-wired or aerosol dispensing system disperses fewer particles into the air, whereas a fogger product disperses a greater volume of mist into the air.

A **light leak audit** shuts out the lights during the daytime, especially in a back warehouse area. It's important to physically inspect the perimeter of the store's interior, exterior and roof. Also, contractors leave openings when they're installing conduits and piping, which also must be closed off.

Sound deterrents startle birds away with supersonic predator calls that can be set on a timer.

Bird spikes are a viable solution to eliminate birds from sitting on lamp posts and light fixtures in parking lots and on buildings. **Bird spiders** or **rotating bird spiders** are often used with other methods on exterior ledges or posts where birds tend to park.

The location and placement of dumpsters also are critical to an effective bird management program. Dumpsters are often located close to buildings for convenience, but moving a dumpster away from the building or loading dock helps reduce the number of rodents, flies and birds that enter the building. Covering the top of a dumpster and fencing the dumpster is also effective. **PMP**

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