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UTILITY OF PYROTECHNICS IN BIRD CONTROL

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The balanced approach is essential for the proposed application of control methods for birds. The essential ingredients in a balanced approach are knowledge of the environment, both animal, plant and human; reasonable experience in the solution of biological problems; and an awareness of the possible solutions available. After these problems' qualifying ingredients have been met, the control specialist or investigator may apply the tool of choice. In most instances he will have selected alternatives available to himself. In the selection of the tool of choice and alternative methods, the cost of time, labor, materials and equipment, the need or purpose of the control, and the effect upon the public or clientele are all involved. Careful attention to the consideration of all of these factors is essential in providing sufficient alternatives as well as the tool of choice.

Safety must be considered as an integral part of the operation and not as a a separate item. Managerial evaluation which does not include safety as an integral part of the control operation invariably violates certain basic rules of safety, sometimes with unpleasant consequences.

The tool of choice and secondary or alternative methods and their reasons for their relative priority should be discussed in lay terms with specialists or clientele involved. Final decisions on methods too frequently result in exposing the ignorance of individuals. Therefore, it is essential that the clientele understand the reasoning processes involved in the selection of the method used.

Major areas of use for pyrotechnics and non-electronic audio-repellents are difficult to delineate; they generally are: (1) when the need for control is ephemeral or short-lived; (2) when the labor or equipment costs of alternative methods are high (the material costs are less important); (3) when a bird roost needs to be moved to a location where it may be attacked by better methods; (4) when lethal methods cannot be used for a variety of reasons; (5) where disruption of a business or industrial operation is inconvenient and the fire hazard is low (I am generally not talking of pigeon problems; I'm speaking of pyrotechnic use in the case of starlings, blackbirds, or other birds with a high social structure); (6) where other methods, particularly detergents, have proved unsatisfactory in moving birds from a roost.

*John Beck was State Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Blacksburg, Va., when this talk was delivered.

The satisfactory use of pyrotechnics and audio-repellents in an integral control program is dependent upon objective analysis of the following considerations; people, costs, public relations, method capability, safety and efficiency. Actually these are the things that must be considered in any bird control operation. I would consider that fireworks are normally a secondary choice method. However, they are used far more commonly than this would indicate. It is impossible to consider all of the alternatives for bird control in a given situation without proper consideration of this method. The registration of chemicals is difficult and some indications are that these and attendant problems of environmental contamination are becoming more difficult. Therefore, it is highly desirable that the control specialist with a balanced approach be well versed in the use of "fireworks" (Pyrotechnics) and most audio-repellents.

Basically this is an old, old tool. We've used it many times and for many years, and it's gotten to the point where people are cussing the use of pyrotechnics. But there are many bird situations where it is not feasible to hit a fly with a hammer. I would at this time like to give you a brief presentation of illustrations of what I'm talking about when I say audio-repellents or pyrotechnics.

The rope firecracker which is a device and technique developed by our Patuxent research people. This is both an audio-repellent and a pyrotechnic; it fits under both categories. Generally we don't recommend it, but it is still available for use and has application in some situations.

The shell cracker—this is the old type. The competitor who is here now with Teleshot will forgive me, and I don't have a picture of Teleshot in cross-section. The shell cracker is relatively expensive, but it is an excellent supplementary tool to assist you in removing any bird problem particularly among those birds that are highly social.

This is a method developed over at Lafayette by Fitzwater and it was the first time that I had seen moveable repellents. He's got his acetylene exploder hooked onto the top of a station wagon, and I think he was working with a pest control operator at the time. This was used over at Logansport, Indiana, wasn't it Bill?

FITZWATER: Yes. One other advantage of that is that you can move it out of the way of the enraged human population, (laugh)

BECK: And another thing was, Bill sometimes lowered this cannon and fired it at people who objected too loudly!

This is another tool in the same general category. These are pyrotechnics of one type or another. Some of these, incidentally, are going to be taken off the market for bird control because they are going to be placed under the hazardous substance labeling act by the Food and Drug Administration. John Seubert, would you care to comment on this?

SEUBERT: Children are getting these devices illegally. For example an automobile full of cherry bombs blew up and didn't leave much left. So they're seriously considering just eliminating these.

BECK: I think the Food and Drug Administration intends to leave one of these which could be available to us for a rope firecracker or a pyrotechnic. That's all I have. I'll save questions on this until we've heard from the next gentleman on the program.

Next on the program is a man who is in charge of a lot of bird work here in Ohio. He was formerly in the Division of Wildlife Research; he's now with the Division of Wildlife Services. I first became acquainted with Don in Tennessee when he was wandering around in the middle of a bird roost hanging some cages of birds up in a tree to see what results he was going to get with a particular method. I haven't had the opportunity to work with him very much, but I'll say this—he knows how to hop from cow chip to cow chip as well as the next fellow. Don Harke.