

# Birds as Pests



By John Kotzé

**T**he result of a survey done in the Pest Control Industry revealed that the average qualified Pest Control operator knows 93% of the routine, habits and life of Rodents and Cockroaches but knows only 18% of the routine, habits and life of birds. This does not include the knowledge of the products available to use for Bird Control and the application thereof.

**Bird Control is a very specialized field and requires intense training.**

## **BIRDS AND INTERESTING INFORMATION:**

Some of the “nuisance birds” numbers are increasing at a stunning rate of 15-20% per annum! (Starlings, Feral Pigeons, Sparrows). These birds are forever looking for food, water and shelter opportunities. This they readily find amongst people.

Warehouses and building facilities has become their main nesting and roosting sites. People, on the other hand, wants to protect their property and products, and make sure that their working environment is safe and healthy. Apart from losing big quantities of product and ingredients, as food to birds, the finding of bird droppings, feathers, etc. in food is a big cause for concern.

Urban bird control has become a necessity as the predator bird population decreases and the number of artificial bird shelters and easy-to-find food sources increases. Pigeons, gulls and sparrows (among others) are a serious problem in industry.

### **A bird's sight**

Birds know exactly where their food-source is every morning. Because of the magnetic and geographic field in the brain they do not get lost. They have amazing visual acuity and can distinguish between ultraviolet and

infrared in the UV spectrum. With night-seeing birds (such as the owl) seeing more infrared while day-seeing birds (such as the pigeon) seeing more in ultraviolet.

They can see:

- Sugar quantity (or balling) in fruit
- Food - even through bags
- Heat
- Danger of attacks coming from above

Pigeons usually mate for life and will not willingly move from their nesting or sleeping place.

### **Damage and health**

Their droppings cause contamination, spread germs and increase the number of resident insects. Acidic droppings also stain roofs and facings. Droppings, nesting material and feathers often block drainpipes, ventilation shafts and chimneys. This creates a risk of water damage and fire. Diseases are easily spread by birds and are a significant health hazard in the food chain.

## DISEASES AND ORGANISMS ASSOCIATED WITH BIRDS INCLUDE:

### Yellow mealworms (*Tenebrio molitor*)

Perhaps the most common beetle parasites. This worm lives in pigeon nests. It is transported to grain and other grain products. It can end up in breakfast cereals and may cause intestinal canthariasis and hymenolepsiasis.

### Salmonellosis

This can be traced to pigeons, starlings and sparrows. These bacteria are found in bird droppings. Dust from droppings can be sucked through ventilators and air conditioners thereby contaminating food and preparation areas.

### Bed bugs

#### (*Cimex lectularius*)

These parasites are drawn from hosts, which include humans and some domestic animals. Pigeons, starlings and house sparrows are known to carry bed bugs.

### Chicken mites

#### (*Dermanyssus gallinae*)

These mites are known carriers of organisms, which cause encephalitis and may also cause fowl mite dermatitis and acariasis. While they subsist on blood drawn from a variety of birds, they may also attack humans. They have been found on pigeons, starlings and house sparrows.

## PEST BIRDS

A few of the more common pest birds are:

### House sparrow

#### (*Passer domesticus*)

The house sparrow is the second most notorious urban bird pest. It builds nests that often hold several families. One breeding pair can grow 200 + birds in two to three years.

### Pigeons

Pigeons mate for life and their numbers double every four to five years. They can lay two eggs every 75 days in perfect conditions. They have a territory owner - or dominant pair. Under these two are others who submit to them and are allowed to nest and breed according to rank. Pigeons carry all kinds of germs, viruses, bacteria, fleas and mites.

Their droppings are the main source of contamination and disease transmission from birds to humans. The dust on pigeon feathers and in their droppings is also the main cause of sinuses irritation and runny nose among people. It is also known to cause migraines, especially among women.



### Pied crow

They cause bacterial diseases such as cholera. The uric acids in their droppings are highly corrosive and

damage waterproofing and cause leaks. They also spoil motor vehicle paintwork (with regular contact), air-conditioning units and solar panels.

### Birds in buildings

Because birds enter factories and warehouses they are a health risk when HACCP standards are not met by food processing companies – their droppings damage and infest raw materials, products in process and finished goods.

Birds are attracted to food manufacturing facilities, because, once they have gained access to the building there is plenty of roosting space and lots of free food! The trouble with many warehouse buildings is that they offer little resistance to a tough feral pigeon intent on breaking and entering. It is known that if there is water and food readily available inside a building, a sparrow can live there without seeing the outside throughout his life.

The nature and construction of buildings makes it a perfect environment for bird infestation. Commercial and Industrial buildings usually have no ceiling to create a barrier between the loft space and birds, allowing for quick and easy contamination of the food products. Large doors allow for deliveries, but also make it easy for birds to enter.

Lots of storage space, stacked containers, high ceiling beams, suspended lighting, etc. allow birds that have gained access to dodge anything but a determined effort to remove them.

Usually, once birds have your address, they will keep coming back.

### The Solution:

Because each facility is unique, a general solution is always difficult to prescribe. A combination of the following products installed, as a system, should be very helpful:

- Visual products such as the Eagle Eye units or FlashFlags
- Irritation type of products such as Sound Systems
- Physical barriers such as Bird Netting or Bird Spikes.
- Human operational products such as Laser Guns and Trapping Cages

The best advice will be to get a Bird Control expert to give his recommendations.