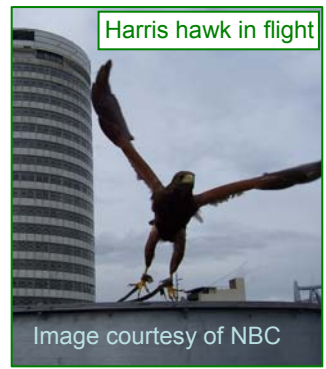


- Scaring is often thought by the public to be a simple solution to bird problems. But birds are intelligent creatures that can rapidly habituate to initially frightening sights or sounds once they realise that they pose no real threat.
- Often the most effective scaring techniques are those involving a combination of systems, both visual and audible, that are managed on an ongoing basis rather than just being placed in situ and left.
- Scaring needs to be considered an aspect of the pest management strategy for a site. Habitat management, such as removing food sources and proofing key heavy pressure locations, is integral to that strategy.
- Be extremely careful when carrying out any scaring of birds near aerodromes. Birds in flight can have catastrophic consequences for aircraft.



Pere-Lanner falcon



Harris hawk in flight

Image courtesy of NBC



Harris hawk

Introduction

Predator Birds

Visual Scaring

Life size plastic replicas of Owls and falcons do not work if just set in position and left. However, they have been found to be useful as part of a managed scaring strategy e.g. in conjunction with distress call systems to help deter starlings from feeding areas on farms. In this situation, the owls are regularly moved around the site to different 'perches' so that the starlings do not become habituated to them.

- It is becoming increasingly common to fly live captive bred predator birds to disperse pest birds from infested areas, especially awkward sites such as radio masts, landfill sites, complex buildings, public places etc.
- Different birds used for different situations. Generally hawks used where agility is required and falcons used for higher level dispersal over wider area.
- Normally the birds will be flown in the daytime at a stage where they are keen to fly but not so hungry that they actually prey on one of the pest birds. However, hawks have been trained to fly at night and follow a torch beam to pick off individual birds from their perches.
- Contracts usually involve an initial intensive clearance period, followed by ongoing routine visits.
- Specialist bird handlers are generally happy to take on sub-contracts.
- Distress calls and/or dummy predator birds can be used to reinforce the scaring when the live predator birds are not being flown.

Plastic Predators



Plastic owls left in situ do not work



Allowing predator birds to kill sometimes can help to reinforce scaring effect