

Nighttime Falconry to Disperse Roosting Blackbirds at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Boyles, Cathy

Dallas-Fort Worth International (DFW) Airport is comprised of 18,000 acres of varied habitat surrounded by a developing Metroplex area. In the center of the property are its terminals built over 30 years ago, with a now-mature landscape concept that was designed before wildlife issues were fully appreciated. This design includes Live Oak trees that are attractive to roosting blackbirds for their dense cover and unbroken canopy during the winter roosting season (typically October – April). Over the years blackbird populations built up to thousands of birds that migrate daily into the Central Terminals Area (CTA) during the roosting season. Many deterrent methods were tried but failed to be effective or practical: truck-mounted sirens/propane cannons, tree netting, spot lights, fake snakes, branch thinning. In Spring 2007, a new approach using nighttime falconry was explored, with a demonstration showing promising results. Male Harris Hawks were deployed into a densely-populated Terminal and removed the roost. A beta test was applied during the 2007/2008 roosting season, again with good results. A full scale deployment was initiated in Fall 2008 for the 2008/2009 roosting season. The concept of using nighttime falconry at DFW Airport, a history of challenges, and its efficacy to date will be discussed.