



Crow Management in State College Borough

Beginning in the fall of 2007, crows began roosting in large numbers on campus adjacent to the busy bus stop at the intersection of South Allen Street and College Avenue. It wasn't long before the Borough and Penn State began receiving complaints from residents and visitors about the noise and mess the large flocks were causing. Migrating crows, the primary culprits in this case, actually prefer the slightly warmer and brighter urban areas over rural areas to spend the night. Also, crows tend to be social animals that can congregate in the thousands in areas where they feel safe. This is what causes the problems. Penn State, in cooperation with State College Borough, decided to act. After researching the problem and consulting with avian experts, Penn State made the decision to try and disperse the large flocks to areas away from central campus. In order to do this, the Office of Physical Plant, formed teams of employees to roam the campus at dusk to locate the flocks and use aerial versions of noise makers to harass the flocks and persuade them to roost elsewhere. Generally, these efforts are begun in late October of each year and conclude in January or February when the flocks begin to disperse on their own.

Late in 2010 and early 2011 the Borough received several complaints about the flocks of the messy birds causing problems within the Borough. Since much of the problem area again centered on a public bus stop and public rights-of-way, action was deemed necessary. Public Works employees visited the areas for several nights to harass the crows and disperse them from the area. Some flocks have also been causing problems on private property but the Borough is unable to actively address these concerns. Homeowners, however, can use similar strategies to keep large flocks of crows from roosting on their own property.

Creating loud noises near dusk or soon after may be enough to cause the roosting birds to leave. Even clapping your hands may work to some extent. Using lights directed at the flocks or spraying them with high pressure water may work as well. Hanging dead crow effigies, similar to those found in stores at Halloween, will sometimes help keep crows from returning if used in conjunction with other methods mentioned. Keeping trees thinned and pruned properly will discourage crows and other flocks of birds from initially choosing them to roost in.



Although efficient ways of dealing with large flocks of crows are limited in urban areas, some success can be achieved. Crows are smart and learn quickly. Alternating methods and varying times of harassment will provide the best results.

If you are interested in learning more about crows and what you might be able to do to deal with problem flocks, please visit one of the links listed below. State College will continue to monitor the situation and take necessary action to minimize impacts on public property and rights-of-way. If you have significant problems caused by crows, please contact the Borough at boro@statecollegepa.us or call 234-7140.

Additional information on crows can be found at:

www.birds.cornell.edu/crows/crowfaq.htm

www.crittercontrol.com/facts/animals/crows.html

www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife/crows/index.html

icwdm.org/handbook/birds/AmericanCrows.asp