

USDA Wildlife Services Blackbird Management and Research: Historical Approaches and Current Activities

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Managing Conflicts involving Blackbirds

- Agricultural Impacts
- Human Health and Safety
- Endangered Species Protection



Agricultural Impacts

- Sweet Corn and Field Corn
- Sunflower (ripening)
- Rice (sprouting and mature)
- Feedlots and Dairies





Human Health and Safety

- Airport hazard management
 - Bird-aircraft collisions
- Disease management
 - Histoplasmosis
 - Bacterial diseases at livestock facilities
 - Commensal birds in industrial settings





United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Wildlife Services
NWRC
National Wildlife Research Center

Endangered Species Protection

- Localized trapping programs primarily aimed at Brown-headed Cowbirds
- Kirtland's Warbler
- Black-capped Vireo
- Golden-cheeked Warbler



Major Control Efforts / Tools



Major Control Efforts / Tools

- PA-14 Surfactant (1974-1992)
 - Roost spray
 - Mixed blackbird flocks targeted
 - 83 roosts total over 19 years
 - Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama
 - Rusty BB <1% of total take (117,625 over 19 years, est)

Major Control Efforts / Tools

■ PA-14 Surfactant (1974-1992)

- Discontinued due to EPA registration expense
- Effective for reducing local problems, especially near human-inhabited areas
- No impact on overall regional populations as used.

Major Control Efforts / Tools (PA-14)

- Composition of Mortality in roosts treated with PA-14 where species composition was estimated (n=47, 1974-1992)

– COGR	48
– EUST	30
– RWBL	13
– BHCB	9
– RUBL	<1

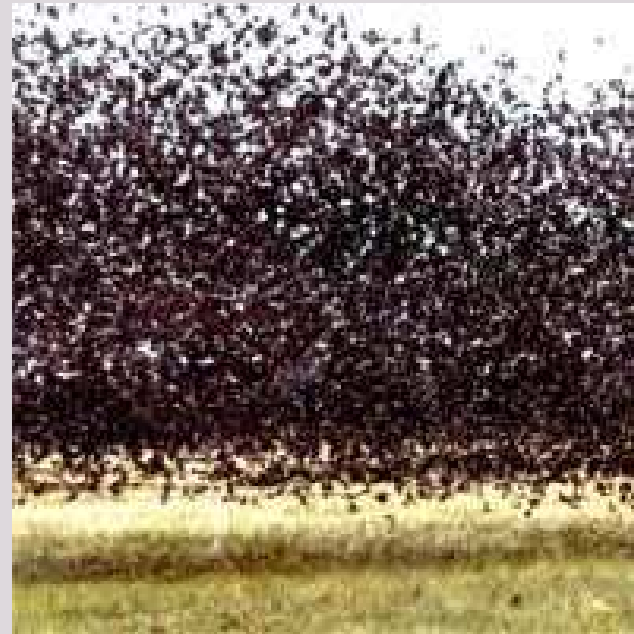


DRC 1339 Baiting

- Toxicant used to relieve local damage
 - Rice: TX, LA, AR, MO
 - Sunflowers: ND, SD
 - Feedlots: throughout Eastern US
 - Dairies: throughout Eastern US
- Regional approach proposed, not implemented
- Extensive studies of non-target impacts, no mention of RUBL
- Crop settings applied on rice
- Dairies/feedlots applied on commercial feed

Avitrol Dispersal Agent

- Toxicant diluted with untreated grain
- Mixed at 1:98 treated:untreated formulation
- Applied using corn on sunflower fields usually
- Low mortality



Habitat Management

- Perch and roost removal and thinning (Airport applications)
- Cattail Management to remove RWBL roosts



Trapping (Decoy Traps)

■ Blackbird strikes

- Blackbirds/starlings involved in 1704 Bird Strikes 1990-2001.
- About ½ involved starlings
- Dense-bodied, flocking birds

■ Trapping

- Usually aimed at EUST
- Seasonal – peak strikes occur July-Sept.
- Nationwide



Current Blackbird Research and Management

National Wildlife Research Center Research Projects

Evaluation of Wildlife Food Plots, Repellents, and DRC 1339
Models for the Management of Blackbirds and Starlings in
Sunflower Fields, Feedlots, and Dairies

Development of Repellents and Other Techniques for
Managing Blackbird Depredations to Rice

Resource Protection Through Avian Population
Management

Wildlife Food Plots, Repellents, DRC 1339 Models for Management of Blackbirds and Starlings in Sunflower Fields, Feedlots, and Dairies

- Evaluate effectiveness of sunflower plots (Lure Crop) to reduce damage to nearby ripening sunflowers
- Identify chemical and tactile repellents for reducing blackbird and starling damage to sunflowers, feedlots, and dairies
- Determine effects of population density on reproduction and population status of Red-winged Blackbirds



Wildlife Food Plots, Repellents, DRC 1339 Models for Management of Blackbirds and Starlings in Sunflower Fields, Feedlots, and Dairies

- Determine criteria for selecting cattail habitats for management
- Develop models for predicting DRC-1339 take for blackbirds and starlings at feedlots and dairies
- Develop new DRC-1339 baits for specialized situations



Development of Repellents and Other Techniques for Managing Blackbird Depredations to Rice

- Evaluate potential repellents for reducing bird damage to newly planted and ripening rice
- Improve DRC-1339 bait formulations to reduce degradation of treated baits and enhance bait acceptance
- Determine blackbird breeding population status, movements, and distribution patterns in rice-growing states



Development of Repellents and Other Techniques for Managing Blackbird Depredations to Rice

- Determine effectiveness of potential wetting agents
- Develop models to estimate DRC-1339 Take from staging areas in LA, TX, and MO.



Questions?

