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Dan Frankian of

Hawkeye Bird Control uses falcons, hawks, and owls as a natural solution to pest control.

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Hawkeye for the pest guy

By Sarah Magwood /// Photo by Susheela Nirmalan-Nathan

George Costanza on the TV show Seinfeld has a deal with the pigeons: they get out of his way, he looks the other way on statue defecation. Torontonians, too, have to make deals with birds, who tend to crowd the city. Luckily for us, Dan Frankian, founder of Hawkeye Bird Control, is negotiating a new contract.

Pest birds, causing health hazards and physical ruin, account for tens of millions of dollars of damage every year to buildings, machinery, automobiles, roofs, and ventilation systems. City Hall is therefore continually battling the birds: they are a safety risk in airports and landfills; they transport waste from dumpsites to residential areas; they biologically bomb parks and recreation areas; they cause physical damage to concrete and steel structures; and they are serious disease carriers.



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In response, Frankian is dedicated to reclaiming our city's skyline. With the help of falcons, hawks, owls, and even bald eagles, Hawkeye has helped curb annual damage costs in Toronto — and it has done so in an eco-friendly way. Rather than killing our city's renegade flyers, Frankian has made an ally of Mother Nature herself, using birds of prey to scare off millions of starlings, crows, pigeons, geese, and gulls.

This would not be possible without Frankian's unusual collection of permits. Not only does he have a license for fur trapping, mountaineering on city buildings, and using hazardous-material equipment, he also literally has a license to kill, possessing the only Greater Toronto Area permit to kill, trap, relocate, and/or euthanize pest animals (only when absolutely necessary).

The key to Hawkeye's success is that, unlike traditional pest control methods (sound devices, bird bombs, firecrackers, those fake owls that pigeons dismissively "decorate"), Frankian's don't cry wolf — they bring the wolf. "You just hear a big thud and see a puff of feathers," says Frankian. "All the other birds see that, and they start flying like crazy out of there."

Not everyone shares Frankian's enthusiasm, however. According to Philip Armstrong from SAFE, Save Animals From Exploitation, people are turning animals into abstractions. "People refer to animals without really thinking of them as animals. Such terms distance humans from other living creatures, which can then be treated as objects, resources, tools, or commodities, rather than recognized as sentient beings."

There is also the simple issue of control. Birds of prey are bred to be hunters, trained to kill. And just because they're smaller than pit bulls — a breed that has been legally denied the right to be in public spaces without a muzzle — doesn't make them any less dangerous to people or other animals. Four years ago, a Chihuahua was famously mauled in a Manhattan park when a trained hawk mistook the pooch for a rodent.

Nevertheless, Hawkeye is providing a system for animal population control as nature intended — bird-on-bird — and is an excellent example of how environmentalism can have soaring economic potential.

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