

# CROWS INVADE CAMPUS: OPP forces repel “Wave of Darkness”

*Paul Ruskin*



University Park began to resemble the old Alfred Hitchcock thriller, “The Birds” as thousands of crows began roosting in campus trees just before the holiday break. This year the annoying avians returned in greater numbers than expected and settled in campus areas north of Pattee Library.

Last year about 3,000 migrating crows landed on the University Park campus causing unsanitary and unpleasant conditions along the Allen Street Mall and the College Avenue bus stop. Physical Plant responded with thermal fog machines, organic digesters, and power washers to scare the crows away and clean up the mess. The goal of the University is to discourage this mass roosting and the accompanying sanitary problems. “No roosting zones” have been designated on campus and OPP is continuously working to keep the crows away from central campus.

The University community was alerted to expect occasional loud noises in the early evening as OPP attempted to chase the crows into less problematic locations. All relocation activities were conducted by Physical Plant employees who were carefully trained in the use of pyrotechnic noisemakers called “bangers” and “screamers” which are launched from hand held flare guns.

Most of the action this year took place in the vicinity of the Nittany Lion Parking deck, Rackley Building, Carpenter Building, Kern Building, Moore Building, and the Music Building. The new efforts focused on moving the crows completely into “Hort Woods,” the small forest behind the music buildings. OPP Landscape crews cleaned the sidewalks in that part of campus on an ongoing basis to maintain sanitation.

Since it was not possible to exactly control where the crows go, it was necessary to continue this process for weeks until the crows settled into more tolerable locations. Once the crows vacated a location, crow effigies were hung to dissuade the crows from returning. Our goal was to discourage mass roosting and the accompanying sanitary problems. Crows are attracted to the light and warmth from our buildings and sometimes flew into State College when we chased them off campus. Physical Plant partnered with Penn State researchers, Borough officials, and the USDA Wildlife Services to find solutions to this continuing sticky problem.

Our solutions were somewhat successful this year, but like classic movie villains, they will be back! ■

*Photo: OPP worker shooting pyrotechnic noisemakers. Courtesy Paul Ruskin*