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Ten effective low-tech methods to prevent human-wildlife conflict

These low-tech methods are all very effective. Even though the technology is quite simple, some of them require a lot of preparation, while others can be implemented with little cost or expertise. Some of these methods are most effective only for a short-term, and they must to be alternated with other methods regularly to maintain effectiveness for as long as needed. All these methods should be removed when not needed, in order to prevent habituation.

1. A radio – Leaving a radio on all night at its loudest (or attached to speakers) is a very effective way to have human presence felt by wildlife in orchards, fields or even places where livestock are kept. Talk shows work best, or a looped recoding can be used where all-night radio shows are not available. To prevent theft it's a good idea to put them very high up (such as, on a roof). If no power source is available nearby, one can use rechargeable batteries or even a solar powered radio, which you can even make quite easily (see: <http://www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Solar-Powered-radio-for-%245>).
2. Mirrors – The sun's blinding power as a light source can be used effectively to deter birds, especially songbirds in orchards. Instead of going out with an expensive laser beam, use a hand-held mirror to aim the sun into roosts of cattle egrets and other birds.
3. Compact disks (CD's) – these disks have at least one side that is very, very highly reflective of sunlight. Hanging disks by a string and letting them twirl in the wind adds to their reflective ability and scares birds from orchards and small fields. The more there are, the better the effectiveness.
4. Crow parts – members of the crow family are highly intelligent birds, and will become greatly disturbed and will leave an area where they see a dead crow or even a crow's wing hanging from a branch or fence. Since crows are very effective at remembering human faces, it is very important that you place the dead crow at a time when they will not recognize you (put them in place at night or even while wearing a face mask).
5. Shiny tape – Shiny mylar reflects the sun very well and makes a good bird deterrent in orchards. Mylar is used to line the inside of bags of many kinds of potato chips and snacks so you can often get material from food manufacturers who have left-over material from the packaging process. Aluminum foil can also work.

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6. Scary-eye balloons – Painting large round eyes on balloons and hanging them in fields and orchards or from kites, deters birds, though usually only for a short-term, and this method needs to be alternated with other methods regularly. Mylar balloons filled with helium are best (as they can be put at different heights), but any scary-eye balloon will work if hung in a visible place.
7. Snake effigy – A very effective way to keep pigeons and many other birds off of roofs and other structures is to put life-like effigies (figures or dolls) of predatory animals. Most effective are snake effigies. Best are the very large colorful, inflatable models, but smaller solid plastic ones work, too.
8. Predatory bird effigies – Models of predatory birds, such as raptors and owls scare songbirds away. It is best if the model moves and is positioned as if in flight with the wings spread.
7. Barn owls – The effectiveness of barn owls as a natural "rodenticide" is well proven. Setting up barn owl boxes takes a lot of preparation, but once in place the barn owls will use them and keep the rodent population low. Reducing pesticide use is important to prevent accidentally poisoning the owls.
8. Fladry – Fladry is a line of bright-colored flags hanging down all along the line, as a way to make a kind of visual "fence". This effective method to keep predatory canids (wolves and jackals) away from livestock, has been used in Europe for centuries, and has now been adopted in other places too.
9. Chili powder - Hot pepper is very effective as a mammalian deterrent (it does not work at all against birds!). When placed in the right place and time, hot pepper can be very efficient way to convince mammals to go elsewhere. There are various ways to make sure it adheres to fences and remains effective.
10. Guard animals – many domestic animals make effective guards against wildlife. Besides livestock-guarding dogs (which must be trained in a very special manner), other animals that are effective in many cases are guard donkeys, geese, llamas and alpacas.

I'm a wildlife ecologist with over 30 years' experience in wildlife management and most of that solving a huge variety of human wildlife conflict cases using hi-tech and lo-tech methods for many species from wild-boar and jackals (in field crops) to pelican and cormorants (in fish farms) to songbirds, fruit-bats and parakeets (in orchards), as well as Bird-Aircraft Strike Hazard in airports, and even dolphins in fish farms, and more!

As a top international consultant now I bring my expertise and experience to every new case and would love to reach out to more people to help them solve their issues.

Simon Nemtzov

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