

campus & city



Although their voices are attractive and their appearance enjoyable, the birds on campus are creating a problem with the messes they leave due to their large numbers. This problem has even reached the extent that the maintenance department has to scare the birds out of their nesting sites. Battalion photo by Sam Stroder

\$110,000 contracts enable A&M archeologists to continue projects

A large tract in East Texas and another site in the Cross Timbers region will undergo exhaustive archeological surveys this year and next by Texas A&M University scientists.

Two contracts totaling nearly \$110,000 — the second and third major Texas projects in recent months — have been awarded to the interdisciplinary Cultural Resources Laboratory at Texas A&M, said research scientist Dr. Erv Garrison.

The larger project is a \$57,567 contract from R.W. Beck & Associates of Seattle to study an area in Palo Pinto County where an electric reservoir and hydroelectric storage tank will be constructed near the Brazos River.

SUNOCO Energy Development Corp. awarded \$49,921 for the Texas A&M scientists to make a similar study of 9,000 acres in eastern Angelina County where SUNOCO proposes a lignite mining project.

Cannons, distress cry used to scare birds

By STEVE CRITCHFIELD
Battalion Reporter

Those cannons you may have heard on campus the weekend of Oct. 27 between 6 and 7 p.m. weren't those of pranksters or military drills.

They were one of the Texas A&M University Grounds Maintenance Department's attempts to scare roosting birds off campus grounds.

The best method of controlling the large numbers of roosting birds has been the trimming of the smaller branches of campus trees, Ray said.

They cause a great sanitation problem," said Eugene Ray, director of the department about the birds. Ray said the grackle, starling and cowbird concentrations after dark in campus trees can leave great amounts of defecation.

Ray said the problem reached its

peak three years ago when it resulted in thousands of dollars in labor to clean up after the birds.

"It was then we decided to try to control the birds," Ray said.

He said all earlier attempts to scare the birds from their roosts failed with the birds only fluttering up and landing again in nearby trees.

The department was then granted a federal permit to shoot the birds but that didn't help either. "It didn't scare them anymore than the other methods," Ray said.

But finally, after more than a year, the best scare tactic was discovered.

"We had two trucks driving around campus," Ray said. "One had a cannon and the other had an amplified recording of a starling distress cry. The birds didn't react well unless the trucks were in the same area."

Ray said the combination of the distress cry and the propane cannon noises apparently signaled a greater danger to the birds and their roosting sites were abandoned for the night.

The department has been using that method ever since but now only one truck is used. Ray said this pickup is equipped with both a propane cannon and a tape player. Only one man is needed to activate the propane tank, play the recordings and drive while the cannon automatically fires at 30-35 second intervals.

Ray said the cannons and recordings are generally sounded only during Thanksgiving, Christmas, and spring break when students are gone from campus. He said they were used Oct. 27 because it was assumed that most students would have gone home or to the Texas A&M-Rice football game in Houston.

Ray said the birds are frightened "30 or 40 minutes either side of sundown because after they get settled in the trees they're a lot harder to scare."

Ray said this method is more economical than those used in the past. "So far it has cost us between \$600 and \$800 and 200-300 man-hours."

Ray said the birds are only frightened from the parts of campus where people walk. He said the area east of the Administration Building and around the golf course are not disturbed and are allowed to remain roosting places.

County, state election returns match

Brazos County voters followed statewide trends Tuesday and stayed away from the polls in droves as two of three proposed constitutional amendments passed.

Voter turnout was light all over the state. Locally, only 1,284 ballots were cast in the election.

Proposition 2, which would have given the Legislature the power to veto the actions of state agencies, was overwhelmingly defeated locally

and statewide.

Both Proposition 1, which would license notaries public statewide and Proposition 3, which would create a \$10 million bond program for farm loans, were approved by voters locally and statewide.

Vote totals from Brazos County's 31 precincts were:

- No. 1: 650 for, 623 against
- No. 2: 388 for, 876 against
- No. 3: 826 for, 444 against

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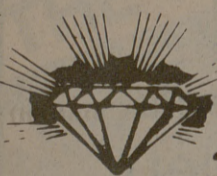
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