

Special today: blackbird pie

Birdsong no longer sweet

United Press International
VIDALIA, La. — If four-and-twenty blackbirds were baked in a pie in Vidalia, that would still leave another 499,976 birds to drive residents crazy.

"There are thousands and thousands of them — blackbirds with some robins mixed in," police spokesman Wesley Bruce said Wednesday. "They always roost around the area, but this year they've moved into town."

With their sidewalks and yards covered with bird droppings and their sleep interrupted by cackles and calls, some of the 6,000 residents in the Mississippi River town have resorted to shooting at the birds. Although a small number have been killed, most merely return to the trees when the noise of gunshots subsides.

"They just fly up and come back down," Bruce said. "It

doesn't do any good, but they've even got some people making blackbird pies out of them. I haven't tried any and I'm not planning on it."

Residents are hopeful the estimated half-million birds will back down in the face of the federal government, which plans to come to the rescue Monday with a barrage of noise-making devices designed to frighten the birds out of town.

The birds have taken over four or five residential streets, and officials worry about health problems the vast amount of bird droppings could cause.

"It's a sanitary problem, and it could cause some health prob-

lems with disease carried by birds," said George R. Abraham, state supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wildlife service biologists will use machines to produce loud booms and broadcast recorded bird distress calls for about two hours each evening for four days, beginning Monday.

Abraham, who estimated 300,000 to 500,000 birds were roosting in Vidalia, said such techniques had been used to relocate flocks of up to 5 million.

But while blackbirds readily find new roosts during the noisy onslaught, robins are harder to relocate, he said.

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Woman fights back, shoots attacker with his own gun

United Press International
CHICAGO — Hanna Robinson had a feeling the gunman who commandeered her car wasn't just after money. She says

she thought of her eight kids, weighed the odds and decided to fight back.

Robinson, 36, and her sister-in-law, Debra Robinson, 22,

were accosted in a restaurant parking lot by an armed mugger who forced the women into their car and ordered them to drive through an alley.

But as her sister-in-law drove the car, Robinson grappled with the gunman, who was shot during the scuffle.

The gunman, identified by police as William Cox, 26, died early Wednesday at Loretto



staff photo by Eric

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