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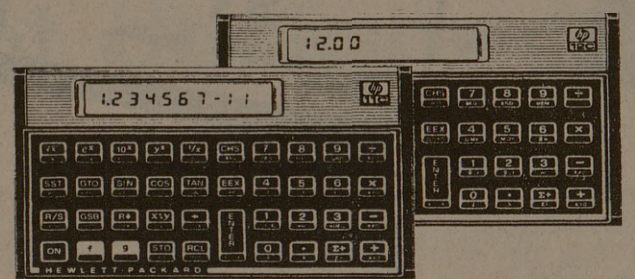
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# Fewer fowls flocking to A&M this year

## Bird control expected to cost A&M about \$10,000 in 1985-86

By **THOMAS OWNBEY**  
*Reporter*

Birds roosting on the Texas A&M campus have been a problem since the mid 1970s, and although there are fewer birds this year than in the past, they are still a nuisance.

"This year we expect to spend about \$10,000 on bird control," says Eugene Ray, director of the Grounds Maintenance Department. The birds coat the ground, sidewalk, cars and people — anything under the trees where they roost — with droppings. After a rain, the droppings make the entire campus smell like a hen house, Ray says.

In 1974 there were about 200,000 birds roosting on campus. By 1977 the number had risen to 1.5 million. Now there are only about 25,000 on campus, but Ray says cleaning-up after them is still a problem.

In 1974, the grounds around the Academic Building were covered in almost two inches of bird droppings, Ray says. That year, A&M spent close to \$50,000 cleaning up the mess.

This year the main problem is centered around G. Rollie White Coliseum in the trees along Joe Rountt Boulevard.

The Grounds Maintenance Department is trying everything to rid the campus of its winged residents, Ray says.

One year the department had to actually shoot the birds out of the trees. Ray says it took days of phone calling to get permission to shoot the

birds. And though he says he wasn't crazy about the idea, he saw no other solution.

When it was over the campus was littered with almost 30,000 carcasses. Ray says it was an experience he would like to forget.

Two new ultra-sonic devices have recently been added to the arsenal of bird scaring equipment. Grounds Maintenance hopes that the high frequency noise will irritate the birds enough to leave.

"The problem is the device isn't very ultra-sonic," Ray says, adding that it's quite noisy and it's irritating to people as well.

Grounds maintenance operates two devices — one at the Academic Building and one at Rudder Tower — but only when classes aren't meeting, Ray says he doesn't want to dis-

turb any classes or meetings with the loud chirping.

Dr. Keith Arnold, professor of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, says he has tried placing plastic owls in the trees but has seen few results. Owls are natural enemies of the cow birds and grackles that roost on campus.

To scare the birds from their roosting places, a loud blast from a propane cannon is used. But it's so loud that it can only be used when school is not in session, Ray says.

Therefore, an amplified distress call is used in conjunction with the cannon, Ray says.

The cannon and distress call seem to work fairly well, Ray says. But



Photo by MIKE...

This car is parked along Joe Rountt Boulevard near G. Rollie White Coliseum where birds have been the biggest problem.

One solution is to thin the tree to remove roosting birds, Ray says. But he says that study needs to be done on the habits of these birds.

There are about 1,900 large live oak trees and many of them are sheltered from the wind. And since the live oaks don't lose their leaves in the winter, the campus trees offer excellent protection for the roosting birds.

He says he doesn't really think there is a viable solution, but weather gets warmer, many birds will migrate North.

"Maybe then they'll go someone else," Ray says.

# Number of Mickey Finn crimes up in Dallas

Associated Press

DALLAS — It's an old scam: a bar-hopping man — usually one who flashes cash and expensive jewelry — picks up a woman, takes her to a hotel room or apartment and is slipped a drugged drink known as a "Mickey Finn."

Most victims of a recent outbreak of Mickey Finn robberies in the Dallas area have lost high-priced watches, jewelry, cash and credit cards. Police say one robbery victim found dead at a hotel may have lost his life in a Mickey Finn crime.

Mickey Finn robberies started in

the Dallas area about 15 months ago, police say.

Police estimate only 20 percent to 50 percent of the druggings are reported to police because the victims' pride keeps them from seeking police assistance.

A typical robbery starts when a man picks up a woman, occasionally two women, in a bar or hotel lounge.

He takes the woman to his hotel room or apartment, and she insists on offering him a drink. Then she slips a drug, or "Mickey Finn," into the victim's drink, waits until he passes out and steals his valuables.

Most of the victims who have reported the robberies to police are white men varying in age from the early 20s to the early 50s.

Steve Higgins, an investigator for the Addison Police Department, said police estimate about half the victims are married. Most give at least the appearance of being wealthy.

"Some are genuinely well-off people," he said. "Some are \$200-a-week millionaires."

Higgins said the drug most often used is Lorazepam, better-known by its brand name, Ativan.

According to the Physician Reference, the drug is an anti-anxiety agent, used to alleviate disorders or to relieve associated with clinical depression.

In combination with alcohol, the drug depresses the nervous system and the victim passes out for hours.

Higgins said several victims have been taken to hospitals in poor condition. Police suspect one victim found dead in an Arlington room Feb. 17 was a Mickey Finn victim.



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