

27 November 2008

By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Depicted here is a starling on a bench in London. The British capital also faced similar problems  
[Wikipedia Commons](#)

## [Rome Group Uses Technology to Chase Away Birds](#)

*The starlings produce discomfort for the ancient city*

Every year, in autumn, the Italian capital city of Rome looks like it's under siege. But ancient Barbarian hordes have been replaced by tens of thousands of starlings, birds weighing no more than 80 grams (3 ounces) each, which cover priceless historic monuments with guano and other droppings. There is little authorities can do to stop this from happening again and again, as killing all of them is impossible and economically unsound.

Thus far, the only thing city officials could come up with is a "bird-buster" squad of sorts, a group of workers who walk around the town and play various sounds through large speakers, in order to scare off the birds. The sounds, which are unpleasant to the human ear, were recorded amidst the starlings themselves, and represent their own alert signals.

Basically, the idea behind this initiative is to make the birds believe they are in immediate danger, and must evacuate the "premises" as soon as possible. Thus far, this method seems to yield little results, as the winged creatures go about their business as usual, forcing pedestrians to carry an umbrella around even on sunny days. Drivers and motorists are also inconvenienced by this repeated occurrence, as their vehicles are covered with thick layers of filth every morning.

Some smarter drivers carry around plastic sheets, which they place on their cars every time they stop for errands. Motorcycle owners are less lucky, as the sizes of their bikes don't allow for such protective gear to be moved around easily.

Landmark monuments are covered head to toe in droppings, decreasing the great tradition of tourism the former capital of the Roman Empire has. "Obviously we don't have a magic wand. We can't make the birds disappear. If you kill them, they will soon be replaced, so it probably wouldn't work," said Giovanni Albarella, from the Italian League for the Protection of Birds (LIPU), which coordinates the efforts.