

# BIRD PEST CONTROL BY TRIMMING FAVORITE TREES SHOWN EFFECTIVE



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The original article on this subject, "Nonlethal Blackbird Roost Control", appeared in PEST CONTROL Magazine, September 1978. WEEDS TREES & TURF was created in PEST CONTROL Magazine in July 1962, more than 17 years ago.

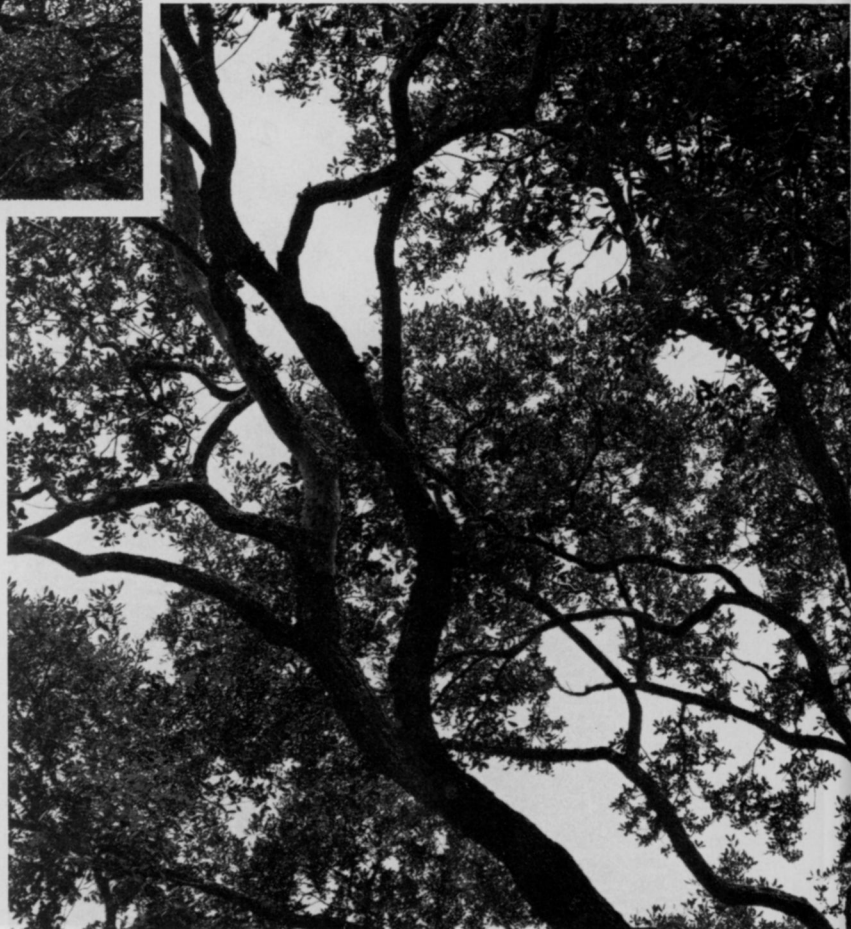
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Heavy tree trimming can be an effective way to reduce pest bird populations according to biologists at Rice University in Houston, Tx., and Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tn.

Heidi Good of Rice and Dan Johnson of Tennessee State found that trimming approximately one third of the tree canopy in areas where birds reach pest proportions caused birds to seek other roosting sites. This type of bird control is termed habitat modification.

Good and Johnson studied numerous blackbird species including grackles, cowbirds, and starlings. The birds roost in dense, bushy trees because they offer the most protection from weather and predators. Roosting (the term implies large numbers of birds) is thought to occur as a way for the birds to protect themselves from predators, to gain warmth and reduce exposure to weather, and to es-

**Trimming** about one third of the canopy of trees favored by birds for roosting causes them to seek other trees to roost in.





Tree before trimming.



Same tree after heavy trimming.

establish an information center. Any modification to these benefits of dense trees and the birds will seek better roosting sites.

Blackbirds are migratory songbirds and usually are protected by state wildlife regulations. However, losses to agricultural crops at winter roost sites as well as nuisance and health problems caused by their large numbers along migratory pathways make control necessary. Other methods of non-chemical control tried are loud explosive noises and recorded distress calls. In certain emergency situations, detergent-based products to cause overexposure were sprayed on birds at roost sites.

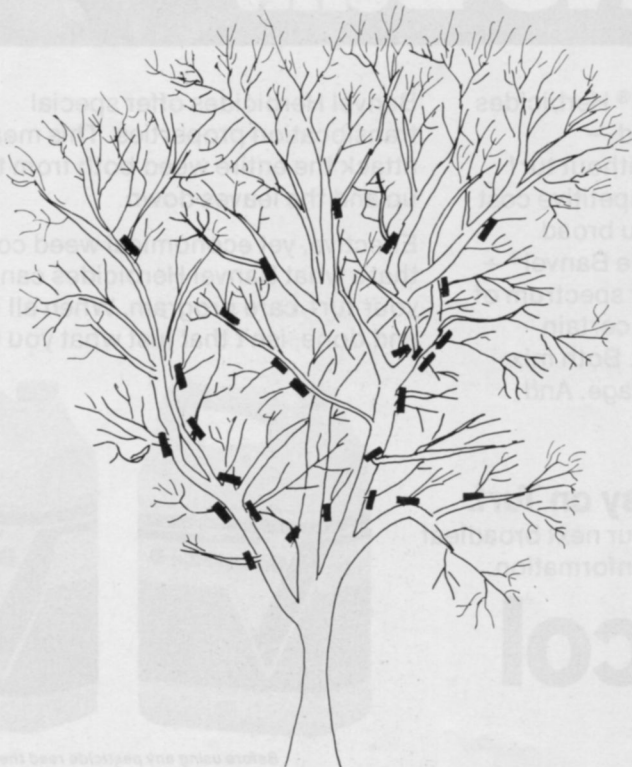
The biggest concern is in urban areas near agricultural croplands where the birds gather in huge numbers.

Good and Johnson noticed that the birds have favorite trees in a grove. Apparently, leader birds select favorites upon arrival. Directing pruning efforts at these trees is the object.

Pruning, or removal in some cases, of these favorite trees should be completed prior to arrival of the birds. Trimming was needed each year for the favorite trees. But, according to Good and Johnson, only enough trees should be removed or pruned to create an open space within the favored site. "Elimination or heavy trimming of favorite trees should discourage birds from roosting in nearby associated trees.

Good and Johnson mentioned one case where dense bushes near an apartment building were pruned back to eliminate a sparrow roost.

The key to control by habitat modification is to find the favorite trees and bushes and prune or remove them. Trimming all trees and bushes should be unnecessary if attention is paid to the favorite trees each year. **WTT**



Favorite roost trees should be trimmed as shown.

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