



(From left) Bell Bird Control's Executive Director Dan Brady with employees Andrew Fletcher, Omar Cordoba and Charles Aquino. The company uses environmentally friendly ways to prevent birds from roosting on buildings, bridges and other structures.

# A FEATHER IN HIS CAP

## Dan Brady and *Bell Bird Control* outwit our feathered friends

by T.D. Christensen

If someone called you a “bird brain,” you’d probably be insulted. But not Dan Brady.

As the Executive Director of the Fairfield, New Jersey-based *Bell Bird Control*, Brady uses his own brand of bird intuition, anticipating where the feathered creatures will land and meticulously figuring out how to convince them to fly elsewhere.

“You have to think like a bird,” Brady says, “and birds are actually pretty clever.”

The company, which is a division of Bell Environmental Services, is one of the biggest bird deterrent companies in the New York metro area. Its main focus is using environmentally friendly ways to prevent pigeons, starlings, sparrows and seagulls from roosting and pooping on buildings, bridges and other structures.

In 2000, the New York State Legislature outlawed the use of bird poison in cities with more than one million people. As a result, Brady and his team of workers at Bell Bird Control use a series of other methods to outfox flocks of birds.

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"We're not in the business of hurting or killing birds. We're in the business of relocating birds and preventing all the health and safety issues that come with bird debris," Brady says.

Brady, 59, didn't take a straight flight path to the world of bird control. The son of a stay-at-home mom and a dad who was a plant manager for a wall-paper company, he started his career managing shoe stores in New York City.

He joined Bell Bird Control in 1992, working first as a technician, transitioning into sales, and then taking over operations three years ago. Brady says the company tackles every type of project, from small residential buildings to Air Force airplane hangars to the football stadium where the Miami Dolphins play. The company's largest job was installing anti-bird netting over 600,000 square feet of property at the Staten Island transportation gateway.

## OUTWITTING STEALTHY FEATHERED CREATURES

No matter how big or small the job is, the goal is the same: find out why birds are coming and figure out the best way to make them leave.

"There are basically three reasons the birds are there: to find their next food source, to sun themselves and/or for shelter. If they're there for shelter, that's the worst-case scenario for a building owner when it comes to pigeons," Brady explains.

"Pigeons don't fly at night, so as soon as the sun goes down, they go to their roosting spot, and for eight or 10 hours, they're pooping as they're sleeping."



(From left) Bell Bird Control's Charles Aquino, Omar Cordoba, Dan Brady and Andrew Fletcher review plans for a netting installation.

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Dan Brady, Executive Director, Bell Bird Control

Depending on the situation, Brady and his crew install nets, spikes or wires to keep the birds away. Sometimes they use a mild electrical shock system similar to an invisible dog fence.

Newer bird-deterrent devices, such as fragrance-misting devices, are not comprehensive, Brady says. He also isn't a big believer in noise-making bird deterrents—especially in urban areas.

"Pigeons in New York City hear all kinds of noises, so audio deterrents rarely work for very long," he says. "I've seen birds sitting on top of the speakers that are supposed to chase them away."

## SEAGULLS, SPARROWS AND PIGEONS

While pigeons account for about 75 percent of Bell Bird Control's work, Brady and his team also must outwit sparrows—who are especially small and stealthy—and seagulls, who drop clam and oyster shells everywhere and damage buildings with their long, sharp beaks.

One of Brady's biggest challenges, however, comes whenever birds sneak into buildings and stay there for long periods. He recounts inspecting the inside of a dimly lit church steeple in the Bronx and thinking he was standing on a wooden floor—only to realize when



(From left) Bell Bird Control technicians Omar Cordoba and Charles Aquino on scaffolding, preparing to install a bird exclusion system in a New Jersey warehouse.



the lighting improved that he was standing on a foot of accumulated bird poop.

“It’s amazing how much can pile up if it’s left unattended,” he says.

Brady works closely with his tight-knit team of technicians to come up with a game plan for deterring birds, but he also has to cut through a thicket of permits, regulations and logistical challenges that come with working in big cities.

“There’s no drama with Dan,” says Glenn Waldorf, a director of Bell Environmental Services. “He’s extremely calm, exceptionally detail-oriented, and he’s always anticipating challenges. He’s flexible and patient, which you have to be in this business—both with clients and because you’re dealing with living animals.”

## BIG PROBLEM WITH LITTLE FLYING CREATURES

Bird lovers—especially those who regularly feed pigeons—don’t always understand the role of a company like Bell Bird Control. Brady says bystanders often approach him and ask: “Why are you bothering the birds? Why don’t you leave the birds alone?”

Brady calmly points out birds aren’t the enemy—it’s their droppings, which cover buildings and sidewalks and create a health hazard as the feces dry and blow through the air and into buildings’ ventilation systems. According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, pigeon droppings are associated with three diseases in humans: histoplasmosis, cryptococcosis and psittacosis.

So when it comes to densely populated urban jungles like New York City, our feathered friends sometimes have to take a backseat to our own needs—not the other way around.

“The way I look at it, birds were made to be in the parks along with the rest of the animals, not sitting on a building ledge crapping all over the place,” Brady says. “Again, we’re not here to hurt the birds. We’re here to relocate the birds and keep people safe.” 🦉

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