

Monk Parakeet Nest Removal

On Saturday, April 23, 2005, there was an electrical interruption of service to customers on the Marine Park Loop Feeder 10B65 caused by a Monk parakeet nest. The investigation revealed that this was a "starter nest" meaning it was relatively new and had no chambers to house other occupants including baby chicks or eggs. Our last survey conducted in this area (January, 2005) confirmed the existence of nine (9) nests previously documented in the Marine Park section, and this particular nest was not built at that time. This fact was later confirmed by a local resident who estimated that the nest in question had only been built within the last 6-7 weeks. It appears that we may have an expanding population of monk parakeets in the Marine Park section which can be attributed to the increased availability of food supply (backyard feeders). Some of our customers are avid bird lovers and will attract the Monks with a constant food supply. In view of this increasing concern, we will initiate changes in our monitoring procedures. It should be noted that current monitoring field procedures are based on specific sightings reports generated monthly by our field crews and customer complaints. In addition, quarterly field inspections are completed by B/Q EH&S.

The following strategy elements have been implemented since 2002 for the monk parakeet management control plan developed by B/Q EH&S.

RESEARCH & DATA GATHERING

- Evaluation of Bird Controls, deterrents/spray repellants including product called "Rejectacide" a food grade chemical repellant. It should be noted that non-toxic spray deterrents such as the one recently used by the Board of Education at Brooklyn's Public School 225 have the advantage of being easy to apply. The big disadvantage lies in their short-term effectiveness as the Monk parakeets (like most birds) have a poorly developed sense of smell.
- Communication with environmental and operational organizations to share experiences:
 - Florida Power & Light (FP&L) and Commonwealth Edison (Chicago).
 - Brooklyn Center for Urban Environment.
 - EDM International, Inc. - Extensive experience on removing monk parakeets in Colorado and Texas.
- Close working relations and key monthly updates established with the foremost authorities in controlling wildlife and providing ecological services to the utility industry. We have maintained a close working relationship with these experts in this field.
 - Dr. James R. Newman of Pandion Systems with over 30 years experience in providing wildlife services to the utility industry and is principal scientist to the multiyear monk parakeet research project being supported by FP&L.
 - Dr. Michael L. Avery of the USDA's (United State Department of Agriculture) National Wildlife Research Center in Gainesville, Florida, with over 20 years of applied avian ecology and wildlife management.

CONTROL HISTORY

- 2002 - B/Q EH&S developed a control program to capture adult birds during the winter season to facilitate declines in population and deter future nest building in the Con Edison service areas. This program was cancelled primarily due to potential negative media attention.
- 2003 - Corporate Media Relations initiated statement governing our removal of nests. **"We will remove nests as needed to protect our employees, and to ensure continued reliability for our customers. Our focus will be on those nests which have the greatest potential for causing fires and power outages."**

- 2003 - Initiated monitoring surveys based on monthly sightings generated from reports by field crews and customer complaints.
- Research (year to date) indicates the most effective control measure is to impact the Monk's rate of nest-building by periodic nest removals.
- 2004 to present, approximately **20 nests have been removed** in areas of greatest concern.
- The largest nest recorded (17 chambers with 2 birds per chamber) was observed at Avenue I and East 26th Street, Brooklyn. The bird's instinctive mechanism will allow them to return and re-build a nest that has been removed. A large nest can be rebuilt typically within 10-12 days.

PRESENT CONTROL STRATEGY

- Field surveys document nest locations, pole numbers, and nest openings (chambers) and includes the **type of electrical equipment** associated with that pole.
- Population density maps provide convenient overview of nest locations in B/Q area.
- Sighting report investigations require one mile of concentric circle travel from the original reported sight to determine if other nests have been built in the vicinity.
- Nests that pose primary fault potential are reported to the overhead for evaluation and removal if necessary.
- Fact Sheets and Talking Points for B/Q Public Affairs use provide effective tools in handling negative public reactions and media attention.
- OJT guidelines provide definitive procedures for Monk nest removals.
- B/Q Overhead performs RIFI/IR feeder patrols annually of 27 kV loops. The next patrol for the Marine Park Loop was scheduled for May 2005. It is being completed now.
- We will continue to investigate latest deterrent techniques.

SIZE & EXTENT OF NEST PROBLEM

- The first sightings of the Monk parakeets were around 1996-97 in the Marine Park area in Brooklyn.
- 2002 - Completed four-month Monk parakeet nest survey. Documented 65 nests. Heaviest population located in Brooklyn's Midwood section. Other areas include Bayridge, Canarsie, and Marine Park, all in the Brooklyn region. As for Queens, very few sightings have been reported.
- 48% of nests are multi-chambered (more than one chamber) and house at least 2 parakeets per chamber.
- Estimated population is now approximately 130 nests based on sighting reports and surveys as of April 2005.
- Brooklyn College is a Monk colony source with many large nests and contributes to the growing population. The nighttime lighting platforms at the College's athletic field provides an undisturbed breeding location.

ACTION PLAN AND INCREASED CONTROL INITIATIVES

- Establish locations where our high risks overhead equipment resides and where the nests poses the most significant threat to our electrical equipment. Nests found in these high risk areas will be targeted for immediate removal.
- Continue our current strategy of reviewing what others are doing, surveying areas by sightings and complaints, and maintaining our population density maps.
- In addition, we will patrol all 27kV loops known to harbor bird's nests on a quarterly basis and remove nests that poses a risk to our equipment.