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Starling hazing on I-5 Bridges to begin Jan. 11

Starting **Monday, Jan. 11**, and continuing through **Friday, March 2**, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) bridge crews plan to use propane orchard cannons to scare starlings from the Interstate Bridges.

Each fall, tens of thousands of starlings migrate to the Portland/Vancouver area. Many of the flocks roost on the Interstate Bridges—particularly the lift spans—in the fall and winter. Bird droppings coat the bridges, the catwalks, the roadway, vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. The mess is unhealthy, unsafe and unsightly. This year the cannons will operate a total of **34 days** for about two hours each day in the late afternoon and early evening.

Orchard cannons

Propane powered orchard cannons were originally designed to disturb birds in fruit orchards. They create a loud noise—the boom of an air cannon—to startle the birds.

This year, five cannons will be used. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will move about the bridge using handheld devices that create noise to distract the starlings. Motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians crossing the bridges will hear the blasts, which could occur as often as once every 15 seconds.

What is the schedule for cannon use?

ODOT crews will not use the cannons every day, but instead will vary the days of cannon use between Jan. 11 and March 2 based on the reaction of the birds. Employing this random schedule will not allow the birds to become accustomed to a regular pattern.

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Combination of tools to be used against birds

This year, the orchard cannons will be one of two tools ODOT crews will utilize in the effort to chase the starlings away. In addition to the cannons, workers will use the low-tech method of banging on the steel bridge beams with hammers. This year the USDA will move about the bridge using handheld devices that create noise to distract the starlings. This combination of techniques was suggested by a bird expert ODOT hired to consult on this project.

While the preference would be for the birds to move off the bridges completely, significantly reduced numbers on the lift spans is the goal. The lift spans play a crucial role for both Interstate 5 traffic and marine traffic. Ensuring the bridges operate smoothly and that ODOT personnel are able to work in a safe and healthy environment is our paramount concern.

Editor's Note

News media is welcome to conduct interviews and set up cameras at 3 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 11 in the parking lot of Joe's Crab Shack located at 101 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA. Cannon use will begin at 3:30 p.m. **For safety reasons, all media members must be escorted by ODOT personnel when visiting the operational areas of the bridges.**

##ODOT##