

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTION TO PIGEON DROPPINGS

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Pigeons continue to nest near gym entrance even though new spikes attempt to combat issue

By Sydnee Bartruff Antelope Staff

Some students at UNK might say that the campus feels like their second home.

They're not the only ones.

Pigeons have long gathered on campus, as it provides them shelter, warmth and essentially space to hide.

“It’s hard for predators to get to them, so they are pretty well protected, not just from the weather but from other things in the environment,” said Lee McQueen, UNK director of facilities management and planning.

The west entrance of the Health and Sports Center has attracted more pigeons than other areas on campus because of its layered overhang and, of course, better shelter.

Enticing as the building is to the birds, the droppings they leave behind are not. Students, faculty members and administration at UNK have brought up concerns about the smell, health and distasteful appearance of the bird’s droppings.

“We’ve engaged a falconer to work with us a little bit for an opportunity for a natural solution,” McQueen said. “That worked for a bit, but we didn’t continue on a longer-term basis. That was an experiment last winter that seemed to reduce the numbers for a time. We are just trying to find a natural solution.”

While McQueen said the university’s bird issue is “all about environment,” he added staff is trying to be conscientious about the university’s resources.

UNK has proposed a design for a new entry into Health and Sports Center that might solve the problem, McQueen said, but it’s a “big six-digit fix” McQueen said. The college is not anxious on spending that kind of money.

The only cost-effective tactic may be to focus on cleanliness, one administrator emphasized.

“Our custodial services do a really good job at trying to maintain and keep that area clean,” said Marc Bauer, UNK interim athletic director. “I don’t know how often they clean, but I know they’re out here with high-pressure sprayers spraying (the droppings) off almost every other day.”

Bauer has been with UNK for 22 years and said the birds have been a problem for at least that long.

“Obviously, you want an inviting area for people to walk in,” he said. “We have tried to keep it as nice as we possibly can. It’s on both sides of the building and it’s just a constant, constant battle.”

Part of that battle comes from not having full control over the situation.

“You can’t tell a bird where to build its nest,” Bauer said with a laugh.

Over the years, UNK has tried various vendors who sell spikes that make it hard for the birds to gain footing. UNK staff has tried metal spikes that McQueen said only worked for so long. Newer generation spikes, made of plastic, have been effective as they have somewhat deterred the birds.

UNK maintenance staff also experimented with different paints, which seemed to work.

“We appreciate that the campus considers it a nuisance; we aren’t fond of it, either,” McQueen said.