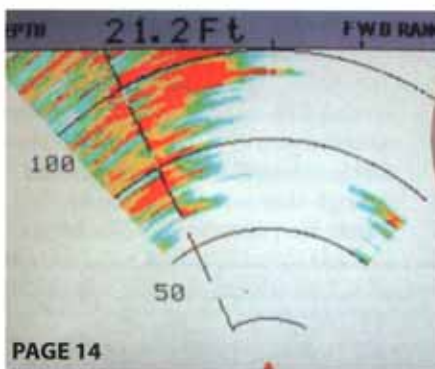


# Practical Sailor



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*The Whirly Bird is designed to protect a 12-by-12-foot area. It comes with everything needed to mount it on a flat surface. Devices for mounting it on a boom, rail, or hatch are in the works.*



## Whirly Bird Anti-fowlant

*Device uses well-rounded approach to keep birds at bay.*

Every boat owner sooner or later becomes familiar with the degrading effects of the marine environment. Whether they're barnacles along the waterline, metal fittings rusting on deck, or galvanic corrosion beneath the water, ultimately, we all learn to contend with such realities. But one damaging element in the marine environment often overlooked is the destructive power of bird feces.

Guano, bird poop, white death—whatever you call it—is a strong corrosive. Bird feces naturally contain some of the most acidic substances: ammonia, uric, phosphoric, oxalic, and carbonic acids, as well as salt. Fecal matter from birds can cause crazing in Lexan hatches, accelerate the degradation of stitching in awnings, and break down the protective properties of wax. And yes, it's also unsightly and unhealthy.

The good news is that there are numerous devices on the market

intended to dissuade birds from roosting on and fouling your decks or spars. This group comprises a broad range of sizes and styles from the ubiquitous plastic owl to the antenna-like, spider-style Daddy Long Legs.

In our most recent review of bird repellents, which appeared in the May 15, 1999 and Feb. 1, 2000 issues, *Practical Sailor* testers concluded that "there is no magic solution for getting rid of birds..." but "for effective, long-term deterrents, think mechanical barriers." Among the best mechanical barriers were the Shoo in a Sock (a series of brightly colored flags strung together) and the Gull Sweep (still on the market).

We're revisiting the realm of bird deterrents and amassing a collection of such devices for a long-term test. In the interim, we wanted to introduce readers to a new product that merits attention because it claims to repel birds through a constantly changing combination of motion, reflections, sound, and vibrations, which, according to its inventors, prevent birds from becoming acclimated to its presence.

### THE WHIRLY BIRD

The Whirly Bird Repeller was conceived by two boating enthusiasts primarily to keep avian invaders off their home docks. The two inventors—Rob Turkewitz and Bud Doty—both live on the water in Charleston, S.C. After a lack of success in protecting their docks, they developed the Whirly Bird Repeller. This device evolved from a series

of prototypes that began with an inverted plastic juice bottle with "wings" cut out of the sides so that the least bit of wind would cause the bottle—or what Turkewitz calls the "turbine"—to rotate.

The 18-ounce Whirly Bird, which sells for \$40, comes assembled in a compact box (12 by 6 by 6 inches).

The "turbine" is made of clear, ultraviolet light-resistant plastic, but the axle/post and extension are made of PVC, which is subject to UV-degradation. The turbine is mounted to a PVC cap with bushings that allow it to spin and wobble with ease. The product comes with a mounting base made of King Starboard. Reflective tape is adhered to the post inside the bottle, and small "eyes" are fastened near the top of the Whirly Bird to give it the impression of a bird of prey. When wind propels the bottle, it rotates off axis, thereby creating sounds and vibrations as the neck of the bottle knocks against the post.

Does it work? We'll be able to answer that question more definitively after testing the product (along with several others) for a period of months, but Turkewitz told us that the Whirly Bird endured a 14-month test conducted in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard's National Aids to Navigation School. The school placed Whirly Bird Repellers on several of its solar-powered aids to navigation along the Intracoastal Waterway. Before this test, excessive amounts of bird guano accumulated on the solar panels, causing frequent outages, but the Whirly Bird kept birds away and the lights working. The device, Turkewitz said, has also been used successfully by a South Carolina winery to increase crop yield by 20 percent. ▲

### CONTACT

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