

Trained hawks scare off smaller birds, draw stares in LA

November 10 2017, by Amanda Lee Myers



In this April 7, 2017 photo Dany a Harris's hawk keeps an eye out for any pesky birds during a day of work at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles. Known as "The Hawk Pros." husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower, the second-tallest building west of the Mississippi River. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

A hawk named Riley soars between high-rises in downtown Los Angeles. Smaller birds take notice. And take flight.

Riley lands on a branch, surveys the concrete jungle below and swoops down to land on the gloved hand of her owner.

Blazer-clad professionals on their way to lunch do double-takes.

Husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro are "The Hawk Pros," just one of a number of Southern California bird-abatement businesses. They and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes.

Their clients include the agricultural city of Oxnard, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower, the second-tallest building west of the Mississippi River.

Most of the places they work are outdoor eating areas.

"What seagulls do in their aftermath when they eat, it's pretty messy," says Mike, 35.

Alyssa, 30, says pest birds are able to thrive in metropolitan areas because they feel safe there.

"They need shelter, food and water, and they're finding it in these false environments basically that have sprinklers and fountains and food 24/7, but they're also using the humans as a shield against the predators who are too scared to come in," she says. "So by bringing in a predator that's not afraid of people, it just ruins everything for the pigeons."



This March 16, 2017 photo shows falconer Mike Bordonaro releases Riley, his Harris's hawk, outside the U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. Known as "The Hawk Pros" husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

Alyssa got the idea for the business while in college, when she spent time working with someone else's [hawk](#) scaring off seagulls at a landfill.

Occasionally people criticize the use of hawks for bird abatement, saying they should be free.

For one, the [birds](#) are born in captivity and can't be released to the wild, Alyssa says.

"I say, 'Look, she's totally free.' I fly them free and they come back, and it instantly changes their mind," she says. "All she's doing is flying, which she loves, and coming back for treats, which she loves."



In this March 16, 2017 photo a Harris's hawk named Riley is released by his owner Mike Bordonaro outside the Los Angeles Public Library in downtown Los Angeles. Riley soars between high rises in downtown Los Angeles. Smaller birds take notice and take flight. Riley lands on a branch, surveys the concrete jungle below and swoops down to land on the gloved hand of her owner. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this March 16, 2017 photo a Harris's hawk named Riley, takes off from a street lamp outside of the U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. Riley soars between high rises in downtown Los Angeles. Smaller birds take notice and take flight. Riley lands on a branch, surveys the concrete jungle below and swoops down to land on the gloved hand of her owner. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this March 16, 2017 photo falconer Mike Bordonaro keeps his Harris's Hawk named Riley, covered in a hood to keep him calm in downtown Los Angeles. Known as "The Hawk Pros" husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this March 16, 2017 photo falconer Mike Bordonaro walks along a downtown street with his Harris's hawk named Riley, in Los Angeles. Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro are used to double-takes when they use trained hawks to scare off pest birds like pigeons and seagulls in downtown Los Angeles and other Southern California locations. The Hawk Pros are among a number of bird-abatement businesses in Southern California. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this April 7, 2017 photo, Dany a Harris's Hawk perches on a statue during her day of work scaring away pesky birds around the grounds at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles. Alyssa and Mike Bordona are "The Hawk Pros." They and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to chase away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this April 7, 2017 photo falconer Alyssa Bordonaro gives a kiss to Dany her Harris's Hawk during a day at work at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles. Known as "The Hawk Pros" husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



This April 7, 2017 photo shows falconer Alyssa Bordonaro releasing her Harris's hawk named Dany at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles. Alyssa, 30, says pest birds are able to thrive in metropolitan areas because they feel safe there. "They need shelter, food and water, and they're finding it in these false environments basically that have sprinklers and fountains and food 24/7, but they're also using the humans as a shield against the predators who are too scared to come in," she says. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this June 30, 2017 photo falconer's Mike Bordonaro and his wife Alyssa pose for a photo with their children Hunter and Ayla in the families backyard in Oxnard, Calif. Known as "The Hawk Pros." husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this March 16, 2017 photo falconer Mike Bordonaro gives his Harris's hawk, Riley, a treat during a scheduled abating session outside the U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. Known as "The Hawk Pros." husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. The Bordonaros have about a dozen clients, from a recycling center in the agricultural city of Oxnard to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and downtown Los Angeles' U.S. Bank Tower. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)



In this April 7, 2017 photo falconer Alyssa Bordonaro walks with her Harris's Hawk named Dany as schoolchildren ask questions at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles. Husband-and-wife falconers Alyssa and Mike Bordonaro are "The Hawk Pros." and they and their birds of prey are hired guns, brought in to scare away seagulls, pigeons and other "pest birds" that create nuisances and leave behind messes. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

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