



AS IT IS

South Florida Has a Peacock Problem

February 04, 2022

The large, colorful birds called peacocks have spent the last 20 years walking through cities in South Florida with nothing to worry about. They are protected under the law.

However, local leaders voted recently to permit individual cities to remove the birds from unwanted areas. *The Miami Herald* newspaper reported that cities just need to have a plan to remove the birds without killing them.

Raquel Regalado is a local government leader. She represents parts of the cities of Miami and Coral Gables where people want permission to remove the birds.

“Mating season is when we get the most complaints. They get very aggressive,” said Regalado. She added the birds would do things like damage cars with their **beaks**.

Neighbors often disagree over what to do with the peacocks.

About two years ago, people who live in the Miami neighborhood of Coconut Grove asked city leaders to remove a large group of peacocks. The birds caused damage and left piles of waste in the streets. They called the birds “**filthy** and dirty.”

But others liked seeing the unusual birds and thought it made their neighborhood look different, in a good way.

Danielle Cohen Higgins represents the Palmetto Bay area. She said her neighbors do not want to see the birds harmed. They see the birds as part of the community. “We learn to live with these peacocks,” she said.

Peacocks are not native to South Florida. They originally come from Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia as well as Africa. They can be seen in **zoos** and places that **display** foreign animals.

The birds have been protected from killing or capturing in South Florida for about 20 years. The rule was put in place because people in the area wanted to save a group of peacocks.

But now the birds live freely in parts of Florida and they are not uncommon. It is hard to find zoos that want them while state laws prevent non-native **species** like peacocks from being released in the wild.

Kathy Labrada works with Miami-Dade Animal Services. She said she has not yet found a zoo that wants to take the peacocks. If no zoo will accept the birds, Labrada added, they might have to be killed in a process known as euthanasia.

The Miami Herald newspaper reported that Regalado first wanted to remove the protection for the birds completely, but other local leaders resisted. Oliver Gilbert, another local leader, asked, “Are we talking about sentencing peacocks to death now?”

In a close vote, the local leaders finally agreed to let cities come up with a plan to deal with the birds. Regalado said the problem now will be to decide where to put the peacocks.

“This really is not about killing,” she said. “This is about moving.”

I’m Ashley Thompson.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

What do you think will happen to the peacocks in south Florida? Write to us in the Comments Section and visit our Facebook page.

Words in This Story

beak *-n.* the hard usually pointed parts that cover a bird's mouth

filthy *- adj.* very dirty

species -*n.* a group of animals that are similar and can produce babies

display - *v.* to put (something) where people can see it
