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RESOLVING BIRD/AIRCRAFT HAZARDS AT NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH ISLAND, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

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RESOLVING BIRD/AIRCRAFT HAZARDS AT NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH ISLAND, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA (Poster)

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Birds present a direct hazard to aviation safety at Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, California. We monitored the bird hazards at NASNI between April 1996 and April 1997, made recommendations to resolve the bird hazard to aircraft and evaluated WS Operational program at NASNI. We documented 27 bird/aircraft strikes on NASNI from April 1991 to April 1997. Of these, western gulls represented 77%, mallards 9%, American coots 4.5% and great blue herons 4.5%. Most strikes that occurred between March and September were attributed to western gulls, where as waterfowl were struck most often between October and February. The command Navy Safety Center in Norfolk, Virginia reported 102 bird strikes to aircraft at NASNI between 1980-1996. We observed 33 species of birds on the airfield, with the greatest activity occurring during May. During May, an average of 1,600 birds, mostly western gulls used the airfield daily. The peak period of bird runway crossings occurred in May and August, averaging 120 birds daily. Of 650 gulls colored marked on NASNI with blue tags, only 23 were observed at any one time on the Station. Only 2 of 12 radioed western gulls consistently used NASNI. The greatest distance gulls dispersed from NASNI was 800 km. Following the monitoring program, WS Operations used various control tools to reduce the bird/aircraft hazard at NASNI. The number of birds using the airfield was reduced by 90% and the number of aircraft strikes was reduced by 92%.