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A Population of Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallapavo sylvestris*) in Relation to Air Traffic Hazards at Pease International Airport

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In 2003 a wild turkey (*Meleagris gallapavo sylvestris*) was ingested into the engine of a KC-135E military refueling tanker at Pease International Airport causing more than \$3M in damages. USDA Wildlife Services initiated emergency harassment and removal of wild turkeys inside the airport fence. This incident prompted a 2-year research project to better understand the local wild turkey population, concentrating on size and status as well as seasonal use of the airport. A total of 72 turkeys was radio-collared and tracked from 2006 to 2008. Results suggest that there are between 125-185 birds using the study area, which encompasses 1,376 hectares and includes the airport, Great Bay Wildlife Refuge, rural landscapes, and developed industrial areas. We also found that the airport is used by females during the summer months for poult rearing, by males during the spring for mating, and by males during the fall for bachelor regrouping. Based on the results of the study, with input from the community, airport management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we can provide preliminary recommendations for management of this particular wild turkey population to New Hampshire Fish and Game to further airport safety. These recommendations include: the possibility of a limited hunt on the Great Bay Wildlife Refuge, increasing the harvest of hen turkeys, habitat management, and continuation of both lethal and non-lethal control methods on airport property.

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