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Strike One—You're Out! Wildlife Services Helps Reduce Wildlife Conflicts at Airports

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The Problem

Collisions between aircraft and wildlife at airports have risen dramatically in recent years as a result of large population increases in many wildlife species, faster airplanes, and the increase in air transportation traffic. Every year between 1991 and 1997, wildlife strikes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$300 million and 500,000 hours of aircraft downtime. About 2,400 bird strikes to civil aircraft are reported each year, and more than 2,500 are reported by the U.S. Air Force. Since 1990, more than 300 deer collisions with aircraft have been reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

FAA regulations (Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 139) prescribe rules governing the certification and operation of certain commercial airports. These regulations require certificated airports to conduct a wildlife hazard assessment when an aircraft experiences a multiple-bird strike or engine ingestion or a damaging collision with wildlife other than birds or when wildlife capable of causing such events are observed to have access to any airport flight pattern or movement area. Depending on the results of the wildlife hazard assessment, a wildlife hazard management plan may also be required.

Wildlife management at airports can eliminate or greatly reduce collisions between aircraft and birds or other wildlife. However, Wildlife Services (WS) researchers and the FAA believe that about 80 percent of wildlife strikes to aircraft go unreported. These unreported strikes make detection and management of wildlife hazards at airports much more challenging. The purpose of this leaflet is to explain to the aviation community how the Federal Government can help with these life-threatening problems.



Help Is Available

The Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service offers consultation and management services to assess wildlife conflicts at airports and improve safety by reducing hazards associated with wildlife.

Wildlife Services has a nationwide network of biologists trained and certified in wildlife hazard management at airports. These professional biologists are ready to provide airport site visits and wildlife consultations, develop wildlife hazard assessments and wildlife hazard management plans, and conduct operational wildlife management programs.

These services may include assistance in complying with Federal and State environmental laws, endangered species and wildlife permit requirements, and conservation and ecology issues. Wildlife Services also has a major research and development program that provides a solid scientific foundation for its services.

Wildlife Services personnel provide airport site visits and wildlife consultations as resources permit. These site visits and consultations are designed to help airport managers maintain a safe environment and meet FAA regulatory requirements.

Wildlife Services can conduct wildlife hazard assessments and develop wildlife hazard management plans that meet FAA Part 139 criteria through airport-funded agreements. WS can also conduct wildlife management programs.

Certified biologists from WS can train airport personnel to recognize hazardous wildlife conditions and to implement appropriate actions.

Who Is Wildlife Services?

Wildlife Services provides assistance to people experiencing problems caused by wildlife. The mission of WS is to protect agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from wildlife damage. WS works closely with the FAA, U.S. military, and the aviation industry to research wildlife hazards at airports and to reduce the economic impacts and hazards to aviation caused by wildlife.

Wildlife Services' experienced biologists are skilled and certified in managing wildlife hazards at airports. These biologists have a unique understanding of wildlife behavior and interaction with human activities in airport environments.

The methods used by Wildlife Services to reduce the risk of wildlife strikes to aircraft are based on environmentally sound research conducted at WS' National Wildlife Research Center, the world's only scientific research center devoted entirely to the development of methods and technology for wildlife damage management.

What Does WS Provide in an Airport Consultation?

- A site visit and overview of wildlife attractants on and around the airport.
- A review of wildlife hazards.
- Identification of wildlife species observed and their legal status.
- Strike data analysis.
- A verbal debriefing and written summary report containing appropriate wildlife hazard management recommendations.



How Can Airport and Aviation Managers Get Assistance?

Airport representatives can call their nearest Wildlife Services Regional Office, the WS Operational Support Staff, or their FAA Regional Coordinator. These offices will direct airport managers to the appropriate WS State Director, who is prepared to work with industry managers to determine their appropriate wildlife hazard management needs. WS also has a Website with a directory of all WS State and Regional Offices. The address is www.aphis.usda.gov/ws



Wildlife Services' Office Phone Numbers

- Eastern Regional Office: (919) 716-5632
- Western Regional Office: (303) 969-6560
- Operational Support Staff: (301) 734-7921
- National Wildlife Research Center: (970) 266-6000

To continue the baseball analogy begun with the title of this leaflet, just one wildlife strike can put a whole airport and its air carriers temporarily out of service. Reporting wildlife strikes to the FAA and working with Wildlife Services to manage local wildlife populations are the two most important steps the aviation industry can take to address the problem of wildlife hazards at airports.



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