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# Edwards Air Force Base Migratory Bird Report for the Replace Main Base Runway Project

## **Amber Hoehn**

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In 2006, the United States Air Force, in cooperation with several government agencies, began preparing for the Replace Main Base Runway Project at Edwards Air Force Base. The project would involve construction of a fully functional new runway, located near the main runway area, in desert scrub (*Atriplex* sp.) habitat. Bird air strike incidents are normally low at Edwards AFB; desert scrub habitat around the airfield area minimizes the attraction of migratory birds, including horned larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), which are the primary bird air strike hazard. In order to minimize attraction and nesting of migratory birds, as well as maintain compliance with federal law without impacting the project schedule, methods were developed to discourage migratory birds from the project areas. Surveys of the project site revealed the presence of burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), a bird protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and a California Fish and Game species of special concern. Burrowing owls adapt abandon mammal burrows to roost and nest in. To discourage nesting in or near the project area, over 400 potential nesting burrows and cover sites were removed prior to nesting season and construction activities, 58 of which showed recent use. Ground disturbance activities were scheduled to reduce the attraction of birds. Approximately 2,200 acres were surveyed and resurveyed to ensure migratory birds did not move back into the project area. Over 200 trees, bushes, and cacti were also removed from the area prior to nesting season. The collaboration of multiple agencies was instrumental in not only helping maintain the safety of flight operations during construction activities, but also compliance with federal law and conservation of a sensitive species, benefiting both the Air Force and the native species.

*Abstract of paper presented at Bird Strike Committee USA/Canada Meeting, Lake Mary and Sanford, Florida, August 18-21, 2008.*