

DoD Bird Conservation Focus Area: Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard

Bird Conservation on Military Lands



Mission

To conserve migratory and resident birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.

DoD Bird Conservation — “Partners in Flight”

The Department of Defense (DoD) engages in a wide array of bird and habitat conservation activities. Collectively, these activities are known as Partners in Flight, to mirror related activities being implemented at the national and international levels. Through these efforts, DoD identifies strategies, goals, and priorities for key areas that support and enhance the military mission: stewardship, partnerships/cooperation, communication and education, habitat and species management, **bird/animal aircraft strike hazard**, monitoring, research, encroachment minimization, and quality of life. These goals and priorities outline DoD’s vision for developing and implementing conservation actions that support the mission while minimizing impacts to bird species and their habitats. These key focus areas enable DoD to better integrate programs for migratory and resident birds into existing natural resources and land management programs.

Goal: Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard

Help Air Station Commanders manage birds and habitats in ways that reduce the incidence of bird-aircraft strikes.

Background

Ever since humans took to the air, we have shared the skies with birds. When planes and birds occupy the same airspace, the results can be deadly. Supporting air safety remains a top priority for DoD.

The primary role of every military aviation facility is to provide the safest flying environment possible. Managing habitats on or near military airfields is a key factor in providing this safety margin. While it is impossible to keep all birds away from the airfield environment, it is important to determine which species present the greatest risk to aviators, and to specifically manage those species in ways that keep them away from airfields and flight paths.

By identifying problem species, military airfield managers can target resources to help decrease problem wildlife by enhancing habitats away from the active airfield area.

Although much has been learned in recent years, more research is needed to better understand the dynamics and interactions of managing certain vegetation types and bird species on and around airfields. For example, airfield managers can collect the remains of birds involved in aircraft strikes to send to the Smithsonian Institution, which then identifies remains, feathers, and even blood smears.

Priorities

DoD developed the following priorities to help achieve its BASH goals:

- Provide technical assistance to airfield managers and safety personnel, as requested, to minimize the attractiveness of airfield environments to problem bird species.
- Provide technical assistance to natural resource managers so INRMPs enhance off-airfield habitats in ways that increase mission safety.
- Inform installation BASH Plans to keep avian species away from areas in which they may pose a hazard.
- Investigate and encourage the use of technologies that reduce BASH risks (e.g., radar, acoustics, falconers and their birds).
- Encourage reporting of BASH incidents (bird strikes) to Safety Centers and other appropriate entities.
- Promote research to develop BASH guidelines for specific habitats and species.
- Help ensure INRMPs are designed to support and enhance the installation’s BASH Plan to decrease the risk of wildlife strikes.



*Turkey Vultures pose a BASH risk to all pilots because of their large size.
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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Enabling the Mission, Defending the Resources
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