

Book Review

Bird Strike: The Crash of the Boston Electra

by Michael Kalafatas (Brandeis University Press, 2010)

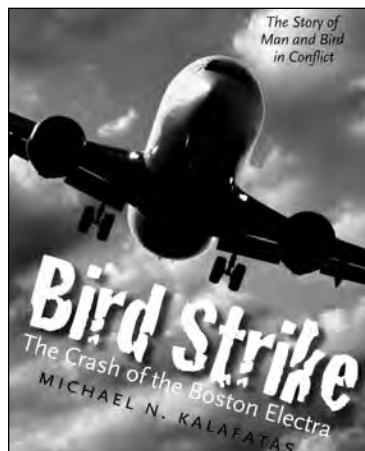
Review by JENNIFER LYNCH

ON A WARM FALL DAY, 18-year-old Marine recruit, Freddie Abate, boarded a South Carolina-bound turboprop jet for boot camp at Parris Island. His family watched from the observation deck at Boston's Logan Airport as Freddie's plane took off from Runway 9; a ball of fire flashed from between 2 wheels, the jet tipped to the left, and then plummeted into Winthrop Harbor.

Michael Kalafatas' recent book, *Bird Strike: The Crash of the Boston Electra*, details the doomful day in 1960 when 62 lives were lost as a result of an aircraft engine ingestion of a flock of starlings just after takeoff. Kalafatas' well-researched book begins with the story of the horrific Eastern Airlines crash that was survived by only 10 of the 72 on board. The details of the crash are told novel-style in the second chapter, and, while readers know what the outcome of the flight will be, they will anxiously turn pages to learn how the chilling events of the 47-second flight unfold. The chapter is peppered with excerpts, such as the actual tower communications and both survivor and witness accounts of the crash.

The aftermath and recovery efforts are recounted in the third chapter. Men and young boys on a nearby pleasure craft were the first rescuers on the scene in Winthrop Harbor, followed by hundreds of police and firefighters from towns near and far.

The second half of *Bird Strike* focuses on the modern-day bird-aircraft problem. It reports on what is currently being done to address strike hazards, and discusses some solutions on how to reduce this ever-increasing problem. While the Eastern Airlines Electra crash holds the record for the worst air crash caused by a bird strike, Kalafatas suggests that that the record will not last much longer. He predicts a catastrophe that will soon dwarf the loss of life that occurred in Boston in 1960 "unless urgently needed actions are taken." He references the 2009 U.S. Air "Miracle on the Hudson" crash where an Airbus A320 flying out of



LaGuardia struck a flock of Canada geese and emergency-landed in the Hudson River. While the incident did not result in any loss of life, "such an event is not likely to happen again with so positive an outcome," Kalafatas writes.

Touched on are some of the current bird-control methods used at airports, such as habitat modifications, and the use of propane cannons, falconry, dogs, pyrotechnics, and live rounds. Kalafatas recognizes that there is no "silver-bullet" solution that can eliminate wildlife hazards at airports, but he outlines Transport Canada's 3-tiered plan to reduce the problem: reduce exposure to bird and other wildlife hazards; reduce the probability of strikes; and reduce the severity of strikes when they occur.

Kalafatas provides a unique look at the inevitable conflicts that occur, and will continue to occur, in the skies. The 176-page book is for those involved in the field of bird-aircraft hazards, aviation enthusiasts, history buffs, and those drawn to human drama.

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