

In the News

JOE N. CAUDELL, USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, 901 W. State Street, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2089, USA Joe.N.Caudell@aphis.usda.gov

Bird strikes: an international issue

Bird-strike risks both in the United States and internationally continue to present challenges to aviators (Figure 1), as the sampling of incidents below attest.

In July 2011, an American Airlines flight from Memphis, Tennessee, to Dallas, Texas, struck a bird during takeoff, the *AV Herald* (July 25, 2011) reported. After the crew detected an electrical odor and vibrations, they were able to safely return to Memphis with only minor damage to the aircraft and no human injuries.



Figure 1. Starlings taking off near airport runway pose a bird-strike hazards to aviation. (Photo courtesy Chris Loftis)



Kuenselonline.com (July 30, 2011) reported that a Drukair flight departing from the Paro airport, Bhutan, for Bangkok, Thailand, with 108 passengers aboard struck a flock of birds during takeoff. The crew was able to return the plane to the airport safely with just 1 engine operating. Airport officials are working to limit human settlements and garbage disposal around the airport in addition to using pyrotechnics to scare birds.



In Manila, a lagoon near the Ninov Aquino International Airport is home to at least 80 species of migratory birds, making landings

at this airport problematic, *GMA News* (July 10, 2011) reported. In May, a bird collided into the body of a Phillipine Airlines plane. The lagoon was proclaimed a bird sanctuary by the former president and, therefore, is protected by law. It is also considered a major ecotourism destination as a favorite stop for bird watchers. During the past few months, the number of bird strikes has increased, causing officials to be more concerned about airline safety. Airport officials would like to pave over the lagoon, but due to the lagoon's protected status, this is unlikely to happen.

Bear attacks increase

Several black bear (*Ursus americanus*) attacks have been reported across the United States during the summer of 2011. According to the *Pueblo* [Colorado] *Chieftain* (July 30, 2011), the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife warned residents in the southern part of the state that bears are causing problems, primarily due to the dry conditions that have caused a lack of food for the bears. A rancher in Wetmore, Colorado, reported losing a llama due to a bear attack in late July, the third this summer. In Leadville, Colorado, a teenager who was camping was bitten on the leg by a bear.

In Gilbert, Arizona, a 61-year old woman died from a bear attack in late June, according to the *East Valley Tribune* (July 29, 2011). The woman was walking her dog near her family's vacation home in Pinetop when a bear foraging in a trash bin attacked her. She suffered multiple lacerations on her head and arms and was infected with bacteria from the bear's claws. She eventually died in the hospital after multiple surgeries.

The *Alaska Dispatch* (August 1, 2011) reported that National Outdoor Leadership School students in Alaska were attacked by a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) on July 23, 2011. After investigation, wildlife officials concluded that the victims stumbled across the bear's food cache.

People on the east coast of the United States



Figure 2. Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) in the wild. (Photo courtesy Lynn Rogers)

were not immune to bear attacks this summer. According to the *Gothamist.com* (August 4, 2011), 2 boys, one (age 11) from Brooklyn, New York, and one (age 12) from Jersey City, New Jersey, were attacked by a black bear near the Appalachian Trail in northern New Jersey. The bear attempted to grab the children from their separate tents. Both boys received superficial injuries and were treated at a local hospital.

“Flying” deer blamed for power outage

Local power company investigators in the town of East Missoula, Montana, traced a power outage to a flying deer early this summer (MailOnline 2011). The incident left many residents without power and in disbelief. According to a witness, a bald eagle was perched in a nearby tree, leading to the conclusion that the bird must have dropped the fawn mid-air onto a power line. A power company lineman removed the deer carcass with a long pole.

Feral swine continue to be both a problem and an opportunity

Reuters (July 27, 2011) reported that feral swine populations appear to be increasing in New York state, and, in Michigan, feral swine may have been given new life. An order from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (July 17, 2011) designated wild hogs that are enclosed in fences at game ranches as “sporting

swine.” Their cousins that are outside the fence are designated as feral hogs and may still be shot on sight. This differs from the approach for the management of feral swine in the neighboring state of Indiana, where a recent rule from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources made it illegal to possess a live wild hog. Officials from Indiana hope this will slow the spread of feral swine in the state. Most of the swine expansion in Indiana is believed to be caused by the illegal movement of hogs inside the state (when live hogs are trapped and moved to new areas), illegal interstate transportation of feral hogs, and hogs escaping from game enclosures. The new rule will make it illegal and, thus, easier to prosecute individuals who hope to expand the feral swine population in the state. This will leave natural breeding and movements as the primary method of expansion for feral swine in Indiana.

Cougar believed to have migrated from South Dakota to Connecticut

CNN (July 27, 2011) reported that a cougar (*Puma concolor*) from the Black Hills of South Dakota migrated to Connecticut where it was struck by an SUV and killed. DNA evidence confirmed that the cougar was from South Dakota, which is >1,500 miles away. This is double the known distance for a cougar to have traveled. The cougar is believed to have traveled through Minnesota and Wisconsin where additional DNA from scat, blood, and hair were recovered. The animal showed no signs of having been a captive animal, such as being declawed or neutered. There were several cougar sightings in Connecticut prior to this instance. The National Wildlife Federation believed that this could be the start of a new trend leading to a new cougar population in the Northeast, the report stated.

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