

## “The Importance of Reporting Bird Strikes”

By Becky Gomez, Airport Wildlife Biologist



The Fort Collins-Loveland Municipal Airport (FNL) has recently contracted with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services (WS) program to conduct a Wildlife Hazard Assessment. This assessment is scheduled for completion in early 2009. WS provides wildlife hazard management assistance to 565 airports and military air bases nationwide.

Throughout 2008, bird and mammal surveys are being conducted at FNL to determine possible wildlife hazards for aircraft. Many different types of surveys are being conducted, including point count surveys, flyway surveys, spotlight surveys, small mammal surveys and other general observations within a 5-mile radius of the airport. Once completed, WS will assemble and publish a Wildlife Hazard Management Plan for FNL that will be incorporated into Airport Operations. In addition to the surveys, bird strike history is valuable information that can be incorporated into the Wildlife Hazard Management Plan.

Although reporting bird/wildlife strikes through the FAA is currently voluntary for civil aircraft, I urge you to report all strikes, whether or not they cause damage to the aircraft and regardless of the wildlife species involved. Wildlife hazard management programs must be monitored to see if they are working effectively and whether they need to be adjusted, extended, or improved. The only effective way to do this is by combining wildlife strike data and other measures, such as surveys, for the airport concerned.



**What qualifies as a bird strike?** A bird/wildlife strike has occurred when:

1. A pilot reports striking 1 or more birds or other wildlife;
2. Aircraft maintenance personnel identify aircraft damage as having been caused by a wildlife strike;
3. Personnel on the ground report seeing an aircraft strike 1 or more birds or other wildlife;
4. Bird or other wildlife remains, whether in whole or in part, are found within 200 feet of a runway centerline, unless another reason for the animal's death is identified; and
5. An animal's presence on the airport had a significant negative effect on a flight (i.e., aborted takeoff, aborted landing, high-speed emergency stop, aircraft left pavement area to avoid collision with animal).

**What do I do if I have a bird/wildlife strike?** *REPORT IT!* The FAA has a streamlined website with an on-line submittal form available, including much more information regarding wildlife hazards at airports (<http://wildlife-mitigation.tc.faa.gov>), otherwise you can complete the paper-based version and mail it in (FAA 5200-7 Form – also available at the website).

**Who can report bird/wildlife strikes?** Pilots, airport operations, aircraft maintenance personnel, or anyone else who has knowledge of a strike is encouraged to report it to the FAA.

**What if I don't know what type of bird I hit?** Bird Identification Field Guides are located at the Jet Center and with Airport Operations/Maintenance. You can also contact FNL Maintenance or me directly to identify the bird species for you (whole or in part). If these options are not available, you can contact the Feather Identification Lab for assistance (mentioned below).

**What if the only evidence I have left on the aircraft is a smear of blood and maybe a couple of feathers?** *NO PROBLEM!* The Feather Identification Lab at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History can help! Each year, the Feather Lab receives more than 3,500 samples from bird/aircraft collisions for identification. Whole feathers, or feather fragments with diagnostic colors, patterns or textures are used to identify nearly half of the birdstrike samples. DNA analysis can also be used to match unknown sequences to a DNA library to determine species. It's Bird CSI at its best! Feather identification and DNA analysis is *FREE* and I highly recommend using their services. For more information on the Feather Lab and instructions on how to submit samples please visit:

<http://wildlife.pr.erau.edu/BirdIdentification.htm>



Matching an unknown tail feather with a museum specimen of a Killdeer.

**Where can I get more information on how to report bird strikes?** The FAA Advisory Circular, 150/5200-32A, entitled “Reporting Wildlife Aircraft Strikes” contains detailed procedures for reporting bird & other wildlife strikes to aircraft. Click here to access: [http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/resources/advisory\\_circulars/media/150-5200-32a/150\\_5200\\_32a.pdf](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/resources/advisory_circulars/media/150-5200-32a/150_5200_32a.pdf)

**For more information on WS work at airports, please visit:**

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/protecting\\_health\\_safety.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/protecting_health_safety.shtml)

As always, feel free to contact me with any airport-wildlife related questions. I have many brochures and goodies to share. I look forward to working with you to help make the skies around FNL safer and the Wildlife Hazard Assessment more valuable and accurate.

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