Bird/Animal Strike Hazard

By Ted Wirginis

For many of us, spring is the time to depart the confines of our home after a cold and blustery winter and enjoy outdoor activities. We are more active, energetic and mobile. Our fine-feathered and four-legged friends behave the same way. Unfortunately, this fauna activity creates more hazards for aviators.

A 150-pound deer can total an SUV going 55 mph—something I recently experienced. The deer-in-the-headlights look still is imbedded in my memory. What damage could a deer, moose, turkey vulture, or seagull do to a 150-knot aircraft, or worse, a 450-knot aircraft? Damage can be extensive, or even catastrophic.

Bird and animal aircraft strikes cost lives and millions of dollars a year. Since 1990, the Navy and Marine Corps have had two fatalities because of bird or animal strikes. In this same time, the Naval Safety Center has recorded 13 Class A, nine Class B, and 83 Class C mishaps.

Although wildlife poses a hazard year round, the risk increases from April through October. In this issue, we hope to raise your Bird/Animal Strike Hazard (BASH) awareness and encourage you to use our wildlife reporting and management tools.

As defined in OPNAVINST 3750.R, paragraph 417, a Bird/Animal Strike Hazard is the term for incidents involving collision between any of nature's creatures and a naval aircraft, although "bird strike" is the category into which most of these reports fall. An animal strike occurs anytime a naval aircraft collides with a wild or domesticated beast, and the damage is below the threshold of a naval-aviation mishap (currently set at $20,000), alpha damage to the critter notwithstanding. The Naval Safety Center has expanded BASH reporting to include all military and civilian aircraft and airfields. The OPNAV instruction is the guide for ASOs to report hazards and mishaps.

This issue opens with an article by Matt Klope, the Navy and Marine Corps BASH program manager, who gives an overview of the program, management tools, technology, policy and local initiatives. Then, Derek Nelson updates you on the Naval Safety Center's new reporting system and its increased capabilities. Petty Officer Joaquin Juatai's article describes the NAS Whidbey Island BASH program from conception to implementation. We've added several "There I was" articles to round out our BASH segment.

We urge you to review your BASH program, to mitigate the risk associated with the increased wildlife activity, and to brief hazard areas to your aircrews. Using the Naval Safety Center's BASH reporting system will enable near real-time BASH updates, but it's only as good as the data input. Your timely inputs and information updates will enhance its effectiveness.

For those safety officers and petty officers who do not have a BASH or Web Enabled Safety System (WESS) account, apply for your username and password at: **https://simsweb.safetycenter.navy.mil/.**

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Other links of interest:

- The University of Puget Sound bird identification resources site: http://www.ups.edu/biology/museum/wingphotos.html
- The Air Force BASH site: http://safety.kirtland.af.mil/AFSC/Bash/home.html)
- The Bird Avoidance Model (BAM) site: http://www-afsc.saia.af.mil/magazine/htdocs/marmag98.htm
- The Bird Strike Committee USA site: http://www.birdstrike.org/commlink/links.htm