



Image black kite: Paul Williams

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Don't miss the AAWHG July workshop—book now!

Bird strike at Avalon

On Saturday 2 March, show goes at the 2019 Australian International Airshow at Avalon had an up-close-and-personal view of a bird strike and its aftermath.

A USAF C-17A Globemaster ingested what is believed to be a black kite in engine no. 4, and subsequently had to execute a rejected take-off. The C-17 did not fly again for the remainder of the show.

The incident was captured on video by several spectators, who posted it on YouTube. According to one aviation photographer, Mitchell Getson: 'Throughout the day there had been birds congregating around the end of the active runway. An RNZAF C-130 almost had a strike with a large flock of birds early in the day's displays. The USAF C-17A lined up for departure, commenced its take-off roll and ingested a large bird in the fourth engine (two flew across, only one was ingested). The crew immediately rejected the take-off roll and returned to the apron.'



Screenshot showing the outcome of the bird strike suffered by a C-17 (Screenshot from YouTube video by HD Melbourne Aviation)

Black kites

Considered one of the most abundant raptors in the world (Australian Museum, 2019), black kites occupy most of mainland Australia. The ATSB ranks black kites as Australia's seventh most struck bird species (ATSB, 2017). Their large body mass, and aerially hunting and thermalling behaviour make them a high strike risk at airports, particularly when they congregate in large flocks.

Black kites are opportunistic scavengers which forage on carrion and refuse, but will also hunt for insects, reptiles, small mammals and even other birds. Airports are particularly attractive to black kites because of food availability and the unobstructed view of prey in the short grass and on sealed areas.

Black kites are the most common raptors (birds of prey) in the world

Airports should monitor black kite activity on and around the airfield and remove carrion immediately, including from roads surrounding the airport. Dispersing black kites using tools such as long-range pyrotechnics will help manage immediate strike hazards.

However, airports need to identify and minimise sources of attraction to help reduce black kite activity. This includes off-airport land uses such as landfills. For more information about managing raptors see the AAA's 'Airport Practice Note 6' (Managing Bird Strike Risk: Species Information Sheets) available on the AAA and ATSB web sites.

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, National Airports Safeguarding Framework, Guideline C: 'Managing the Risk of Wildlife Strikes in the Vicinity of Airports' also provides information for assessing land use within a 13 km radius of airports.

Should pilots notice birds they should report them immediately to air traffic control, or the aerodrome reporting officer, and wait until the birds are dispersed.

For more information

ATSB *Australian aviation wildlife strike statistics 2008-2017* www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2018/ar-2018-035/

Australian Museum

australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/birds/black-kite/

Menkhorst, P. Roggers, D. Clarke, R. Davies, J. Marsack, P. Franklin, K. (2017) *The Australian Bird Guide*, CSIRO Publishing

Is it a black kite or a whistling kite?

That's a common question many aerodrome reporting officers (ARO) ask themselves when doing their regular bird counts, or completing aerodrome patrols to check for wildlife hazards. And that's when their bird identification skills are good! To many, with an untrained eye, that bird would simply be a 'hawk'.

At many airports, wildlife hazard management takes up a large share of the ARO's time—often a lot more time than the one line in the ARO position description would suggest. When you're starting out as an ARO, it's often a surprise to find you have to be able to learn about, and identify, the various birds around your airport in order to manage wildlife hazards. Often the training available for this is limited.

With recent additions to their operations team, Ballina Byron Gateway Airport (BBGA) engaged Avisure to deliver a two-day customised wildlife hazard management training course. But they didn't just offer it to their own staff—they invited other regional airports to come along. Kempsey Council's John McGowan, who has joined the Kempsey Airport team; and Armidale Airport who recognised that even their most experienced ARO, Paul Eichorn, could benefit from the training, joined the BBGA operations team of Kylie Hardy, Tim Weeks, Patrick Writer, Paul Slattery and Wayne Ruck, for two days in February 2019.



Front row: Paul Slattery and Kylie Hardy (BBGA), Elspeth Thorpe (Avisure).

Back row: Paul Eichorn (Armidale Airport), Pat Writer and Tim Weeks (BBGA), John McGowan (Kempsey Airport), Wayne Ruck (BBGA) and Jill Brix (Avisure).

Jill Brix, Avisure’s Principal Aviation Consultant, who works with the BBGA operations team on a range of operational issues, delivered the training with help from Elspeth Thorpe, Avisure’s Project Support Officer, who recently joined the team and has been conducting wildlife surveys for BBGA.

Managing wildlife hazards can be complex, requiring not only aviation expertise, but also an understanding of wildlife and how to manage it. The 10-module training delivered to the group covered many aspects of wildlife hazard management from legislative requirements to monitoring, active and passive management, and even how to collect strike remains for DNA analysis.



Kylie Hardy (BBGA) practising DNA collection.

Wildlife identification was a well-discussed topic—each bird species has its own reason for frequenting the airport, and behaves and responds differently

when dispersed. Participants from the three airports swapped stories, shared experiences, and the more experienced AROs imparted valuable knowledge on what has worked well for them.

For Ballina Byron Gateway Airport, the training also provided a rare opportunity to have the team, who work on different shifts, together, and dedicate two days discussing this important safety risk. It also provided an opportunity for the airports to compare notes and develop connections for future discussions about wildlife hazard management. Changes in the region’s environment affect wildlife behaviour, so now Paul at Ballina can ring John at Kempsey and ask the question: ‘Are you seeing more black kites in your airspace?’.

by Jill Brix, Principal Aviation Consultant, Avisure

Wildlife Hazard Management Training

7–8 May 2019 and 5-6 Nov 2019

Burleigh Heads

Gold Coast

For the training program, and to register, go to the Avisure web page:

<https://www.avisure.com/services/wildlife-management-training/>

Did you know?

Nearly 40 per cent of all bird strikes from the [2008–2017 ATSB wildlife strike report](#) involved a bird of an unknown species?

New ATSB database

In March, the ATSB released a new interactive database to assist in wildlife hazard management. Searches are easy: you can drill down by location, species (bird or animal), state/city, phase of flight and by aircraft type. The data is presented as infographics, as well as in Excel spreadsheets, and allows access to more recent data. However, the new database is only as good as the data industry provides, so please report, and report accurately!

The AAWHG committee

The AAWHG is fortunate to have a very active committee of volunteers, who between them offer some amazing expertise, and represent a broad spectrum of industry.



Jackson Ring, AAWHG chair

The committee chair is Jackson Ring, who has a very busy day job with the Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC), as their Wildlife Management & Planning Coordinator in the operations group. In 2018, Jackson took over the reins of AAWHG chair from Aaron Pond, also of the BAC.

When he's not taking care of Brisbane Airport business, Jackson leads an active outdoor life being a keen free diver and spearfisherman, as well as enjoying scuba diving and stand-up paddle-boarding. Formerly a competitive shooter, he regularly indulges his passion for long range shooting (it's a lot like golf). Being a bit of an adrenalin junkie, Jackson has been admitted to hospital for shark, spider and snake bites. While unable to get private health insurance, he is hopeful the superpowers from these attacks will kick in soon.

On a serious note, Jackson says working in the aviation industry in his current position allows him to put his life skills and passions to good use. He loves the challenge of finding new and better ways of managing the wildlife risk at aerodromes.

Jackson is ably supported by the committee:

- **Secretariat**
Donna Kerr Airport Safeguarding Aviation Environment | Dept of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
- **Treasurer**
David Anderson BARS Managing Director | Flight Safety Foundation

- **Communication Officer**
Margo Marchbank Director | Koru Communication
- **Event Manager**
Jill Brix Principal Aviation Consultant | Avisure
- **Event Management Assistance**
Erin Marsh Project Support Officer | Avisure
- **Australian Airports Association representative**
Chris Fox Airside Operations Manager | Perth Airport Representative
- **Civil Aviation Safety Authority representative**
Matt Bolin Safety Performance Specialist | CASA
- **Virgin Australia representative**
John Pizzino Safety Assurance Specialist | Virgin Australia
- **Jetstar Airways representative**
David Barnes Manager Safety Integration | Jetstar Airways
- David Wiman, Institute of Australian Business & Technology—remote pilot training, formerly of Airservices Australia
- **Biodiversity Australia representative**
Andrew Williams Operations Manager, Vertebrate Pest and Aviation | Biodiversity Australia
- **Australian Transport Safety Bureau representative**
Thomas Lenne Senior Transport Safety Investigator | ATSB
- **Defence Flight Safety Bureau representative**
SQNLDR Alexander White Policy | Defence Flight Safety Bureau
- **Australian and International Pilots Association representative**
Captain Brian Greeves Pilot Australian Airline Pilots Association/Australian and International Pilots Association
- **Australian Museum representative**
Dr Matthew Lott AMRI-USYD Postdoctoral Fellow, Australian Centre for Wildlife Genomics | Australian Museum
- **Regional Airline Association of Australia representative**
Mike Higgins, CEO | RAAA

The AAWHG is still waiting for confirmation of committee representatives from Qantas Airways and Airservices Australia.

Jill Brix is an executive member of the committee and the AAWHG's events manager, responsible for the coordination and facilitation of this year's workshop. Historically she has also held the executive positions of acting chair, deputy chair and the Australian Airports Association's representative. She was also the Australian representative for the World Bird Strike Association. Jill has more than 28 years of aviation experience working in a variety of operational roles at Queensland and Northern Territory airports.

She joined the wildlife risk management company, Avisure, in 2016. Since joining them, she has worked on over 40 projects for both civil and military airports in Australia and New Zealand to assist them in building a strategic approach to managing aviation safety risks. She is passionate about wildlife hazard management and was instrumental in the development of the original AAWHG wildlife hazard management plan template and a key driver in developing the recommended practices.

Brian Greeves is the longest serving member on the current AAWHG committee, and brings his over 40 years of experience as a military and civil pilot to wildlife hazard management.

He is the founding director of Aviation Solutions (AVSOLS) and his experience as a pilot includes flying over 30 aircraft types and accumulating nearly 15,000 flying hours, including 10,000 in command. He began his aviation career as an 18-year-old with the Royal Air Force and before forming AVSOLS, he was a senior captain with Cathay Pacific Airways, as well as flying with other airlines.



Captain Brian Greeves speaking at the Australian Airports Association conference

In 2015, the Australian Aviation Wildlife Hazard Group (AAWHG) released a recommended practice focusing on the training and competency of flight crew.

Greeves, as a former airline pilot, is passionate about the need for pilots to understand and manage wildlife hazards as intimately as they know about the weather and cloud types, for example.

‘Most pilots would not fly through a large thunderstorm, so why would you fly through a flock of birds?’

Greeves, who worked on the practice, says that ‘civil pilots receive very little, if any, formal education and training in either identifying or dealing with wildlife hazards. This contrasts, he says, ‘with training received for assessing and avoiding other airspace hazards, such as wind shear, weather or a mid-air collision with other aircraft’.

He says it is not difficult for a pilot to learn about wildlife, to understand it, and to avoid or mitigate it. In an interview for CASA's *Flight Safety Australia* magazine on [YouTube](#), he says ‘whether it's a large number of flocking birds (such as seagulls or galahs), or even a single large bird, it's going to cause a serious hazard. The average encounter with a bird that grounds an aeroplane in Australia costs \$45,000.’

He will be moderating a session at the July AAWHG workshop on the ‘Training and competency for flight crew’ recommended practice (5.2).

Did you know?

According to the [2008–2017 ATSB wildlife strike report](#), over the ten years between 2008 and 2017, 16,626 bird strikes were reported to the ATSB.

The number of reported bird strikes has increased in recent years, with 2017 having 1,921 reported bird strikes, the highest number in the ten-year period.

Strikes with aeroplanes represented 89.61 per cent of the total, with landing the most common phase of flight for strikes, 34.23 per cent, followed by take-off, 23.45 per cent.

AAWHG workshop

Save the date and register!

Registrations are now open for the Australian Aviation Wildlife Hazard Group (AAWHG) workshop to be held in Sydney, 23-24 July 2019. The workshop venue, the Kingsford Smith Suite at Sydney International Airport, is kindly provided by Sydney Airport Corporation.

It's very easy to register online for the workshop; simply go to the AAWHG website www.aawhg.org/ and follow the registration link on the homepage. You can also download the preliminary agenda on the website homepage.

Who should attend?

All industry stakeholders, including airlines, pilots, air traffic control, government agencies, airport operators, airside safety officers, or anyone else involved in management or policy issues related to the intersection of wildlife, aircraft, and airports—in fact, anyone with an interest in wildlife and the aviation industry. We hope to bring together both government and industry to support a national approach to this important aviation safety issue.

The interactive workshop will include sessions on:

- The National Airport Safeguarding Framework
- Passive management of wildlife hazards
- Wildlife strike investigation
- Training and competency of aerodrome safety personnel.

For some time now, the AAWHG has been developing a comprehensive and safety-focused set of wildlife hazard management recommended practices (RPs). These have been developed in consultation with industry to ensure they represent both best-practice *and* practical strategies for managing wildlife hazards.

The RPs so far include wildlife hazard management plan data collection and management; wildlife monitoring and risk assessment methods; and training and competency for flight crew, ATC and aerodromes, among others. New RPs covering off-airport monitoring, the role of drones, and significant strike investigation are proposed and will also be on the workshop agenda.

The workshop will focus on discussion of existing and proposed recommended practices in a series of facilitated workshops which will allow industry attendees to provide feedback on the draft RPs. To maximise the RPs' effectiveness, the AAWHG would love to see a good representation across the aviation sector at the workshop, from large airports to smaller regional aerodromes, from smaller regional operators to RPT airlines, as well as Defence, air traffic control, wildlife experts and consultants.

The two days conclude with a visit to the Australian Museum (AM), where Dr Matthew Lott, AAWHG executive member and a post-doctoral fellow at the AM, will facilitate tours of the Museum's DNA labs. Dr Lott specialises in genetics and molecular biology, and uses them to inform evidence-based management of Australian wildlife.

