

## Why this sheet?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant decrease in passenger activity and aircraft movements at airports across Australia, and globally. This has led to substantial financial challenges for the industry: airline operators, airports, maintenance organisations, ground handling, air traffic control and government agencies. Airports and operators, faced with a sudden and considerable loss of income, have therefore been forced to reduce the services provided at airports, and airlines to ground and store aircraft as part of their business continuity planning.



**Image:** Grounded Philippines Airline fleet March 2020

The Australian Aviation Wildlife Hazard Group (AAWHG) is working with industry to promote continuing wildlife hazard management during these challenging times, fielding questions from industry about the likely impact of the downturn in aviation operations on wildlife activity. We have therefore produced this information sheet to recommend key wildlife hazard management measures for consideration and discussion. This information is designed to be relevant for aerodromes, airline operators and others involved in wildlife hazard management.

## The need to remain vigilant

Aviation activity continues in Australia—with some emergency and non-emergency flight services, freight, general aviation flight training and general aviation still operating. And, despite the downturn, airports and aerodrome operators still have a

<b>Title</b>	Wildlife hazard management during a global aviation shutdown
<b>Location</b>	Australasia (and globally)
<b>Date</b>	April 2020
<b>Budget</b>	Constrained, because of aviation shutdown
<b>Wildlife</b>	All species

regulatory and due diligence requirement to provide safe operating conditions for these activities.

That includes ensuring wildlife hazards continue to be monitored, especially at this time when the decrease in aircraft movements and fewer AROs active on the airport can create ideal conditions for opportunistic wildlife. Wildlife have already adapted, and will continue to adapt, to the changed situation, taking advantage of the foraging opportunities and roosting sites that become available as a result of fewer aircraft movements and fewer humans to harass them.

Some New Zealand airports, for example, are reporting increased numbers of Canada geese following the coronavirus lockdown.

Consequently, the AAWHG recommends the following activities be undertaken or maintained during the COVID-19 downturn.

### Monitoring the risk

**We recommend** you maintain wildlife population counts during the COVID-19 downturn to fully understand the wildlife hazard risk. This will enable you to do ongoing analysis of any trends. Despite reduced levels of aircraft activity, these trends may change, and when the recovery commences, may alter what strategies you need to have in place to mitigate wildlife strikes. Furthermore, an increase or

change in wildlife activity may affect even the reduced levels of aircraft traffic i.e. increase the risk and/or severity of a wildlife strike.

### Passive management

**We recommend** you consider what increased risks may be present during the COVID-19 downturn.

- › For example, large numbers of aircraft stored for a long time on aerodromes may provide opportunities for various species to nest. Insects may become lodged in critical flight instruments, and nesting may occur in the engine cowlings of smaller aircraft.



**Image:** Australian resin bee collecting resin for its nest. Flickr—Jean and Fred.

There may be opportunities for aerodrome operators and airlines to work together in developing and carrying out a routine inspection regime for aircraft storage areas.

- › Operators may also consider rotating the aircraft they use around where possible to prevent any one airframe from sitting idle for longer than necessary.

### Active management

**We recommend** you ensure that wildlife hazard management remains a continual focus during the COVID-19 downturn. For aerodrome operators this may mean a regular wildlife hazard management meeting maintains a focus on all core activities. As businesses seek to reduce activities to those that are considered essential, it's important to remain

focused on these. Deferring works considered non-essential could have impacts when a recovery commences (e.g. dropping a spraying program or reducing mowing levels).

**We recommend** continued active harassment to deter wildlife from settling in areas of high risk and potentially creating a long-term management issue.

### Training

**We recommend** you make every endeavour to maintain wildlife hazard management skills, experience, knowledge, and qualifications during the COVID-19 downturn. This includes ensuring that all training is kept up to date. Having teams of skilled people available when a recovery commences will be critical to ensuring that the likely increased hazards can be addressed effectively.

#### For further information, please see the following:

- › The **World Birdstrike Association** website contains a lot of useful resources, including a detailed manual recommending best practices in wildlife hazard management, with [guidance on active management practices](#).
- › The international **Flight Safety Foundation** has developed resources—[a series of check or 'punch' lists in response to the COVID-19 impact on aviation safety](#). They include flight, airport and ground operations, covering off on the safety aspects of continued operations, of reduced/ceased operations, and of re-establishing operations.