



Photo: Feral camel Northern Australia

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Beer cans, camels and an outback airport's simple solution

It's often the simple things that are the most effective. Ayers Rock Airport, aka Connellan Airport, has implemented an ingenious approach to what could have been a very large issue.

With an increasing camel population in Central Australia and a set breeding season that had camels wanting to traverse airport land, it would take 'out of the box' thinking to manage the problem ... in this case, an 'out-of-the-beer-can box'.

The first camel in Australia was imported from the Canary Islands in 1840, and between 1860 and 1907, an estimated 10 to 12, 000 animals were imported for use as draft and riding animals in pioneering the dry interior. With the introduction of motorised vehicles in the 1920s, herds of camels were released,

and while estimates vary, a population of some 150,000 to 200,000 camels now roams the central parts of Australia.

A camel herd made the area around Uluru and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) their roaming ground. The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory fitted individual camels with tracking collars and found they roam an area of 60,000 square kilometres and travel 50 km a day.

Camels have long since been an issue at Ayers Rock Airport. Around April, the camels transit from Kata Tjuta to Lake Amadeus, a large salt lake in the southwest corner of Australia's Northern Territory, about 40 km north of the Ayers Rock Airport. While en route to their breeding grounds, the camels would regularly break through the stock fence that surrounded the airfield.

John Cebalo has been at Connellan Airport for over 20 years, working with both the Northern Territory government and Voyages, who took over the management of the airport in 1997.



Photo: John Cebalo on patrol in Northern Australia

John's observation of the male camels' seasonal heat (like deer, called a 'rut') is that it is normally a two-month period, but can extend to four months. During the rut, the males' testosterone levels are elevated, they become unsettled and foam at the mouth. At this time, the males become extremely single-minded in their attempts to dominate other males, with the most successful male winning the prize: mating with the females in the harem.

With this powerful mating drive, the fence line that surrounds the airport provided little or no barrier for the camels in getting to where they wanted to be. In the searing heat, the fence line is also hard enough for humans to see, let alone a concupiscent* camel.

[Ed: *concupiscent=lustful, 'randy']

In 2000, the airport electrified the fence line, but to no avail—it was no deterrent to the testosterone-driven rutting camels, which continued charging through the fence. Undertaking research in the local area, John found that Kings Creek Station had successfully deterred camels by installing empty beer cans on their fence line. A long-term member of the Yulara Ayers Rock Lions Club, John was able to rally its members to drink for a good cause. Hanging the empty beer cans at five-metre intervals not only provided a visual identifier at the top of the fence, but also an audio deterrent, because of the noise whistling through the can opening.

To date, the beer cans have been an effective, if somewhat unusual, wildlife hazard mitigation tool.

Did you know?

A number of Australian insects have been known to use inactive aircraft as nesting sites, among them mud dauber and keyhole wasps, and native resin bees.

This is especially relevant given the number of aircraft grounded during the current pandemic. In November 2013, according to [a 2018 Flight Safety Australia article](#), an Airbus A330 suffered a rejected take-off in Brisbane due to an airspeed indication failure which was only detected during the take-off roll. During the subsequent inspection, it was found that the aircraft's pitot probe had been almost totally obstructed by an insect nest. You can also find more information in an earlier 2015 article in [Flight Safety Australia](#).



Photo: Australian mud dauber wasp

Second AAWHG information sheet released

COVID-19 and the continuing need for wildlife hazard management

The AAWHG has just added a new resource to the website—[information sheet 2](#)—which focuses on wildlife hazard management in a time of coronavirus.

This new information sheet provides AAWHG recommendations for industry to follow during, and following, the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photo: Aircraft at Perth Airport showing anti-wildlife storage protection - supplied

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 significant 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 significant loss in 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.

Aviation activity continues in Australia and, despite the downturn, airports and aerodrome operators still have a 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 airport/aerodrome reporting officers 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.



Photos: Aircraft at Perth Airport showing anti-wildlife storage protection - supplied

If your organisation has developed an innovative solution to a wildlife management issue, we would love to hear about it, so we can share it via our web resources page. Email info@aawhg.org with the details, and any photographs, and we can create an information sheet to post on the website, as well as highlighting it in a forthcoming issue of *Plane Wild*.

AAWHG forum now 2021

Date TBC



The AAWHG committee was well underway planning a stimulating and valuable forum in 2020.

However, as with many organisations, we have, after much deliberation, and with considerable regret, decided to delay our biennial forum until 2021.

There are simply too many COVID-19 unknowns for our team of volunteer organisers to proceed with the forum in 2020. Primarily, the safety of presenters and delegates, along with the hit that global aviation has taken, the resulting impact of the pandemic on funds in the industry for sponsorship and travel, and the timing of recovery, make organising such an event this year problematic.

However, we are still planning on holding the forum in South Australia, and will announce further details about the 2021 event later this year, with a call for papers early in 2021. If your organisation has implemented some innovative wildlife management strategies, and heaven knows, the current pandemic is likely to require these in spades, record them, and submit your paper proposal for consideration.

We hope by the latter end of 2021, the aviation industry will be well on its way to recovery. We are still hoping for a truly international attendance, such as our colleagues across the Tasman, as well as wildlife hazard management practitioners in Singapore, the United States and Europe.

International visitors will enjoy not only a stimulating forum program, but can discover the best of what spring in the state of South Australia has to offer; wine from the state's famous wine-growing regions, the regional cuisine with its German pioneer influence, not to mention stunning scenery, such as Kangaroo Island and the Flinders Ranges.

Follow the forum updates in *Plane Wild*, and on the website: aawhg.org

Don't forget! AAWHG now has a [Linked In page](#)

Click on the link above, or search for 'AAWHG' on the LinkedIn page to find it, and please like and follow us to keep up to date with the latest wildlife hazard management news and innovations.

Did you know?

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



Photo: Canada Geese family near the airport—Murray Foubister WikimediaCommons

We can only assume that an increase in wildlife numbers at airports with reduced operations following the coronavirus lockdowns is also happening in Australia. If your wildlife monitoring is showing an increase in wildlife activity on your airport, we would love to hear from you. Please email info@aawhg.org with the details, and any photographs, so that we can alert the industry via LinkedIn, our website and of course, *Plane Wild*.

COVID-19 and wildlife management postscript

'The standing order which should be the wildlife management mantra for all airports during COVID-19 is: "Always vary what you do. Sometimes more. Sometimes less ... but always different".'

Marty (Martin) Ziviani, senior wildlife biologist, Avisure