

Read the following article about ways of keeping wildlife away from airports, and then answer the questions on the opposite page.

WILDLIFE AT AIRPORTS

The number of reported collisions between aircraft and wildlife is increasing throughout the world. Airport authorities and governments in many countries are worried, and are trying to reduce the risk to aircraft when they are landing or taking off.

Nowadays, statistics show that there is a steady rise in incidents involving aircraft and wildlife. This could be because aircraft are more powerful, but what is certain is that the problem has increased because more people are flying. To improve safety, a range of new measures is being tested at airports around the world.

Birds are the biggest threat. There have been incidents of birds smashing into the pilot's windscreen on take-off. Airport officials have introduced a variety of measures which are designed to deter birds and animals from living near the runways. For example, a number of airports are experimenting with planting grasses that birds do not like to eat. This is particularly effective for geese, but other birds can be discouraged by removing ponds and lakes from the area surrounding the airport, and cutting down trees that bear fruits or seeds. "If you don't have the attraction of food, then the birds won't come here," says one airport manager. In addition, certain airports have replaced the grass alongside the runways with stones or concrete. This means that small rodents have nowhere to live and so the large birds that feed on them are not attracted to the area.

Another method is to use the noise from loud guns to scare away birds. The problem with this approach is that a member of the airport staff has to go out and check the guns that create the noise. In addition, birds can very soon get used to the regularity of the sound. Controlling birds such as hawks is even more difficult because they hover in the sky and cause problems for aircraft in the air. There have been incidents where these birds have been sucked into aircraft's engines.

An alternative way of solving the problem of birds is to trap and relocate them to new homes. Traps are shaped like A-frame houses. The top of the roof is held open with a stick. The bird lands on the stick, which collapses and the bird falls inside. The roof shuts quickly, trapping the bird, which can then be transported to a safe area far away.

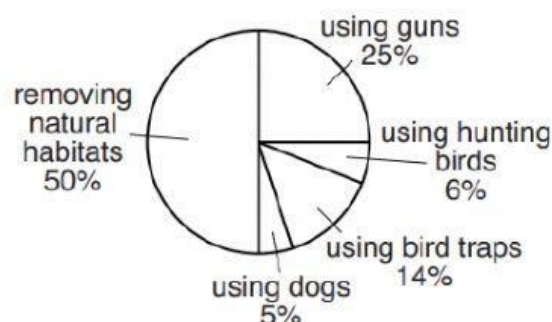
Then there is Meg. Meg is a border collie dog who patrols an airport in southwest Florida. Rainwater pools at the edges of the runways attract groups of water birds, which often delay the departure of aircraft. Meg works seven days a week, running into bushes that are too dense for vehicles, and crossing wetlands that are too difficult for people to walk through. Meg's job is not to catch the birds but to scare them away from the runways, and she is very effective because the birds cannot predict her movements.

A less common method is to use certain species of hunting birds to chase other birds in the air. Birds, such as falcons, are released just before flight departures and arrivals. The falcons scare the other birds, which make warning calls and then fly away.

Animals on the ground also pose problems. Deer, for example, have jumped over a fence three metres high and have run across the runway in front of aircraft. Foxes can dig tunnels under airport security barriers and cause damage to the electrical systems.

It seems that no one way is totally successful in preventing incidents with wildlife at airports. Airport authorities are continuing to work with experts to try and reduce the risk of these wildlife problems.

METHODS USED TO REDUCE WILDLIFE AT AIRPORTS



- (a) Why are governments concerned about wildlife at airports?
.....[1]
- (b) What has definitely caused more wildlife incidents at airports?
.....[1]
- (c) What is being done to stop geese from living at airports?
.....[1]
- (d) How do concrete areas at airports affect birds?
.....[1]
- (e) What disadvantages are there to using guns? Give two details.
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.....[1]
- (f) What happens to birds after they are trapped?
.....[1]
- (g) How is Meg more effective than humans on difficult ground? Give two details.
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.....[2]
- (h) Why is Meg particularly good at frightening birds?
.....[1]
- (i) How do birds react to the falcons? Give two details.
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.....[1]
- (j) According to the chart, which is the most common way to reduce wildlife at airports and which is the least common?

most common
least common[1]
- (k) Give four examples of problems caused by specific types of wildlife at airports.
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.....[4]