**Bird Strike Mitigation in Base Housing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Current as of Feb. 10, 2023

* Why are bird strikes a problem?
	+ Randolph has been in a constant battle with a variety of bird species for over 20 years. They are the #1 threat to our aircrew, aircraft, and mission.
	+ In the 1920s, thousands of trees were planted at JBSA-Randolph to create “Tree City USA.” This makes JBSA-Randolph a wonderful place to live and work, but unfortunately it also makes it a very attractive habitat to a huge number of birds that live, eat, and fly in extremely close proximity to our runways and aircraft.
	+ Last year (2022), bird strikes resulted in more than $2.2 million dollars in damage to our aircraft just at JBSA-Randolph. In addition to being a threat to the safety of our aircrew, bird strikes also require a huge amount of manpower and resources for our maintenance professionals to repair the aircraft damage. One of our aircraft was so badly damaged in 2022 that it has been permanently grounded. We were very lucky none of our aircrew were injured last year!
* What is the solution to reducing the bird strike risk?
	+ The solution is Integrated Wildlife Management, focusing on the USAF’s Bird/wildlife-Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program. The BASH program consists of four pillars: Habitat Management, Operational Avoidance, Dispersal, and Removal.
	+ Habitat Management: In the base housing areas, the massive live oak and pecan trees, along with various other tree species, provide an almost complete canopy. This environment provides ample cover and protection where birds can roost and breed between March and September, particularly Mourning Doves and White-winged Doves. Reducing the habitat that attracts hazardous birds is the most effective way to minimize the bird strike threat. At most other Air Force bases and airports, the solution would be to remove the trees that attract the birds. However, the live oak trees are part of JBSA-Randolph’s cultural heritage, so we focus on the other pillars of BASH program management to reduce the bird strike threat. We do; however, manage the habit via tree trimming, which breaks up the canopy and reduces the environment in which the birds can roost. Additional efforts include removal of dead, diseased, and dying trees that present a fall hazard to our families, houses, and cars.
	+ Operational Avoidance: Our pilots, air traffic controllers, Supervisors of Flying, and our USDA wildlife biologist constantly search the skies during flying operations to spot birds and help our aircraft avoid them. JBSA-Randolph also employs an advanced bird detection radar that assists our pilots with avoiding birds in the vicinity of JBSA-Randolph. Additionally, in our efforts to mitigate the threat from doves and various other bird species that live in base housing, our Operations Group diverts morning aircraft takeoffs from the east runway to the west runway during peak bird season (July until mid-to-late September).
	+ Dispersal: We take an integrated approach to our bird dispersal program. Bird Dispersal Teams (BDTs) are utilized within the base housing area. These teams are comprised of flying training students that are waiting to start formal flying courses at JBSA-Randolph; and they are trained and supervised in bird dispersal methods by the 12thth FTW Safety Office and our USDA Wildlife Biologist. We have morning (0630-0900) and evening (1830-2000) bird dispersal operations. In the morning, the objective is to flush the birds from their roosts so they will fly off base to feed before we begin flying operations; while the evening operations deter the birds from returning to Randolph base housing to roost for the night. The Bird Dispersal Teams utilize pyrotechnics, paintballing, and tree canopy fogging in order to shape the flight and roosting habits of the bird threat.
	+ Removal: Removal of hazardous birds is our last resort in dealing with our bird strike threat. Traps and air rifles are used to remove hazardous birds from base housing. These removal operations will be focused between March and April 2023 in an effort to control the population that establishes a seasonal roost in Randolph base housing during the spring migration.
* What are the specific dispersal and removal methods that will be used in Randolph base housing?
	+ Dispersal
		- Pyrotechnics: Similar to firecrackers, these pyrotechnic devices produce light and loud sounds to disperse birds from their tree roosts in base housing. They are launched from flare guns or shotguns.
		- Paintballing: We utilize clear, non-toxic, biodegradable, water-soluble paintballs to disperse the birds from their tree roosts in base housing.
		- Methyl anthranilate tree canopy fogging: This is a safe bird dispersal method that is in use across the country, but hasn’t been used at JBSA-Randolph in approximately 20 years. Methyl anthranilate is a grape flavoring agent that is used in soft drinks, candy, gum, and many other food products. Unlike humans, for whom methyl anthranilate provides a pleasant grape flavor and odor; birds are repulsed by contact with methyl anthranilate. Our bird dispersal teams will use specially formulated methyl anthranilate solutions that are approved by the USDA, EPA, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. This solution will be spread from hand-held foggers that will be used to fog the tree canopies in base housing. Base residents may detect a mild grape odor during fogging operations, but the methyl anthranilate fog is safe for humans and will disperse rapidly.
	+ Removal. All personnel involved in removal operations are highly trained and fully permitted to ensure the safest removal operations possible. Traps are monitored throughout the day, and base residents who see or encounter traps should not disturb them. If base residents observe non-targeted birds (Raptors or owls), or other wildlife (cats, squirrels, raccoons, etc.), in the traps, they should notify the 12thth FTW Safety Office immediately at (210) 241-4099.
* What is needed from base residents?
	+ What we ask from our on base residents is that you bear with us during the execution of the different phases of our Integrated Wildlife Management Plan in order to reduce the bird strike threat to our aircrew, aircraft, and mission. This unfortunately will not be a quick process.
	+ Tree trimming, and removal of hazardous trees, will be a year-round process. Please be patient with the contractors.
	+ Our bird dispersal and removal operations in base housing will begin on March 1, 2023, and continue through September. We ask that if you see anything questionable or unsafe that your give our office a call. We want to ensure that both you and your family feel safe while we work hard to ensure a safe environment for our aircrews to conduct their mission.
	+ If you have questions or concerns, we ask that you contact the 12thth FTW Safety Office at (210) 241-4099; or the 12thth FTW Chief of Safety, Lt Col Tim Young, at timothy.young.5@us.af.mil or (210) 850-5672.
* How can base residents help reduce the bird strike threat to our aircrew?
	+ Be patient with our bird strike mitigation operations in base housing.
	+ Don’t set up bird feeders or bird baths around your house.
	+ Don’t plant or maintain fruiting or seeding plants and flowers that attract birds.
	+ If you see large numbers of birds congregating on base or within base housing, report the location and description to the 12th FTW Safety Office at (210) 241-4099.
	+ Vultures are a large species that present a particularly significant threat to our aircrew and aircraft. Vultures are attracted to carrion, frequently in the form of road kill. If base residents spot dead animals along any roads within a five-mile radius of JBSA-Randolph, please call in the location to the 12th FTW Safety Office at (210) 241-4099. The 12th FTW Safety Office will work with local animal control agencies to expedite removal of road kill in order to reduce the attractant for vultures.