

EVALUATION OF SHOTGUN SHOOTING TO REDUCE AIRCRAFT STRIKES BY
LAUGHING GULLS AT
JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 1991

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Abstract

The collision of birds with aircraft is a serious problem at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFKIA), New York City. Laughing Gulls (*Larus articilla*) from an 8,000-nest colony next to the airport in Jamaica Bay on National Park Service (NPS) property, are the most frequently struck bird, averaging 169 birds struck (by 156 aircraft) per year from 1988 to 1990. An experimental program was undertaken in 1991 in which 2 to 5 people stationed on airport boundaries shot gulls with shotguns on 62 days from 20 May to 8 August. In all, 14,191 Laughing Gulls and 695 other gulls [(herring - *Larus argentatus*, Great Black-backed - *Larus marinus*, and Ring-billed - *Larus delawarensis*)] were killed in 896 person-hours of shooting. Over 93 percent of the Laughing Gulls killed were adults and 95 percent of these had brood patches, indicating they were nesting birds. Bands recovered from shot gulls indicated many of the adult gulls were hatched in colonies along the New Jersey coast at least 100 km away. The number of Laughing Gull strikes with aircraft was reduced by 60 percent compared with the mean level for the previous three years. The reduction in strikes appeared more closely related to a direct reduction in the population rather than to a change in flight patterns of gulls caused by shooting. The shooting program will continue in 1992. A detailed report of the shooting experiment will be prepared after the work in 1992 is complete. The long term solution will be to relocate the colony from Jamaica Bay and JFKIA.