

# **Birds at Copenhagen Airport**

**(A. M. Glennung, Kastrup)**

## COPENHAGEN AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

Birds at Copenhagen Airport, Kastrup

Copenhagen Airport is situated on an island in an area very rich of birds. The seasonal migrations of the birds pass this area and important breeding-, feeding and resting areas surround the airport. In addition to that the area of the airport itself is very attractive to the many birds, as the greater part of the airport is covered with fertile top soil.

So a lot of birds have always been at the airport but here as well as in other places the problem was not considered until the start of jet planes in civil traffic.

The first preventive effort was made by sending a man out in the airport area in order to scare away the birds by using a sporting gun and pyrotechnics. This resulted in the establishment of a specially trained patrol equipped with both sporting gun, pyrotechnics and birds distress call. The members of the patrol are trained to be hunters and are picked among the best qualified of the airport guards, as a wide knowledge of the infrastructure of the airport is essential.

To reduce the number of herring gulls in the airport area a combat was started in 1969 against the herring gulls on the island Saltholm 4 km east of the airport by spraying their eggs with oil emulsion. This form of combat has continued every year since then. But in order to accelerate the combat in 1976 also alfa chloralose was used. When the population of herring gulls on Saltholm culminated it was estimated to 44.000 pairs. The goal was to reduce the

population to 5.000 pairs.

It was a great help when a large dumping ground for domestic garbage situated 5 km NW of the airport was closed down in 1972.

In 1986 and 1987 the above goal was reached. Since only about 5,000 nests were found, the fact of which was found to be the lower limit for an intensive combat.

What effect has the combat of herring gulls on Saltholm had for the risk of bird strike at the airport ?

By counting the number of breeding herring gulls during the combat on Saltholm and counting both the number of birds and the time they were observed at the airport - during which they cause a risk of strikes, some correlation can be found. - All set of numbers decreased during the years 1976 - 1981.

But the number of breeding herring gulls show a steady decrease since the beginning of the combat and up to now, whereas the number of birds in the airport and the time they are observed start to increase from 1982. A closer investigation shows that now the birds at the airport are not mainly herring gulls as they were previously but other species of birds especially black-headed and common gulls are seen in increasing numbers.

For many years the herring gulls have dominated the bird life both on Saltholm and at the airport, but as a consequence of the combat the other species of gulls have had an opportunity to get into the area around the airport and on Saltholm. The combat of the gulls on Saltholm has therefore to include the combat of black-headed and common gulls, if a reduction of the bird strike risk on the airport shall be achieved.

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The wish for a permission to combat these gulls has therefore resulted in an application to the wild life administration, but a permission for an extended combat has not yet been granted.

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