

## What is being done to reduce this hazard?

Airports are required by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to manage the bird hazard. The most effective means of doing so is to manage the environment in the vicinity of an airport so that it does not attract birds. Typically airports object to planning applications for landfill sites close to the airport, adopt a long grass policy and ensure that areas of standing water within the airfield are eliminated. Many other measures are taken on a daily basis to manage the hazard such as playing audio tapes of distress calls, driving along the runway firing shots from a Verrey pistol and suspending aircraft movements if bird activity warrants such action.

A register of all bird strikes is maintained by the State and annual statistics are reported to ICAO. All bird strikes are investigated in order to determine the species of bird involved and the circumstance of the incident. This work is done so that action can be taken to prevent a similar incident occurring at some future date.

## Action required by Racing Pigeon Clubs and Pigeon Owners to minimise this hazard.

- a A calendar of planned races should be supplied to the Irish Aviation Authority and to all airport authorities listed overleaf prior to the start of the racing season.
- b A list, with accompanying telephone numbers and email addresses, if available, of reliable and available contact persons from the pigeon clubs, updated where necessary, should be sent to the Irish Aviation Authority and to the airport authorities with the racing calendar.
- c In the event that the date of a scheduled race is changed a nominated person should complete a "Notification of Mass Liberation of Racing Pigeons" form, see overleaf, at least 10 days before a planned liberation and return to:

**Aerodrome and Airspace Standards Department**

**Irish Aviation Authority**

**Aviation House**

**Hawkins Street      Tel: 01 603 8655**

**Dublin 2              Fax: 01 677 4460**

Cont. ⇨

- d It is recommended that releases involving large numbers of birds should be avoided within 50km of the east coast of Ireland so as to prevent large numbers of birds crossing the approaches to Dublin Airport.

However, liberations of birds may be undertaken

- i south of the Dublin Mountains where the intended route of the birds is to the south
  - ii north of Lusk where the intended route is to the north
- e If liberating large numbers of birds within 10 km of an airport, please phone the relevant airport 1 hour in advance with the precise liberation time (telephone numbers overleaf).
  - f If there are any changes to the times of the race programme then a nominated person should contact each relevant airport as early as possible where the anticipated route of the birds is likely to bring them close to the airport.
  - g A nominated person should contact the relevant ATC Station Manager when birds have been released; see contact numbers for airports and ATC Centres overleaf.

## Summary

Racing pigeons are a significant hazard for the safety of aircraft. In order to reduce the risk of a bird strike it is essential that these guidelines are complied with and that communication is established and maintained with the relevant airports.



These guidelines should not be taken as a guarantee that an accident due to a bird strike with racing pigeons will not occur. They are merely the **minimum safety standards** that should be followed in order to try to prevent such an occurrence



## Guidelines for the release of Racing Pigeons

*Issued by the  
Safety Regulation Division  
of the Irish Aviation Authority*

*www.iaa.ie*

## Notification of Mass Liberation of Racing Pigeons

(Please tear off and return form to the Irish Aviation  
Authority Fax: 01 6774460)

Liberation Point: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time of Liberation: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Number of Birds in the Liberation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone No. on Race Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Numbers Airports and ATC Centres

The contact numbers for relevant airport Air Traffic Control  
Services are as follows:

**Dublin Apt: 01 8445962**      **Donegal Apt: 074 9548604**

**Shannon Apt: 061 472284**      **Galway Apt: 091 770730**

**Cork Apt: 021 4329668**      **Sligo Apt: 071 9168461**

**Kerry Apt: 066 9764794**      **Waterford Apt: 051 875589**

**Knock Apt: 094 9367055**

The contact numbers for Aer Rianta airports are as follows:

**Dublin – Airside Duty Manager: Tel: 01 814 4724**

**Mobile: 087 289 2222**

**Shannon – Duty Manager: Tel: 061 712312**

**Mobile: 087 8885023**

**Cork – Duty Manager: Tel: 021 4329659**

**Mobile: 087 4194332**

## Introduction

The Irish Aviation Authority have issued the following guidelines for the release of racing pigeons for the purpose of ensuring the safety of aircraft and the passengers and crew traveling therein. These are available to all Racing Pigeon Clubs and all owners of racing pigeons on request.

### Why are racing pigeons a hazard for aircraft?

Racing pigeons are a predictable hazard to both civil and military aviation. There are four main reasons why they are hazardous to aircraft. Firstly they are heavy birds – weighing at least 450g i.e. almost half a kilo.



Secondly they fly in flocks, which, in the case of pigeon races may involve 30,000 birds. Flocks cause multiple bird strikes i.e. where several or many birds strike an aircraft. This in turn increases the risk of a bird or birds entering a jet engine. Modern commercial jet transporters (e.g. Boeing 737, 767, 777, A321 and A330) have 2 very large diameter engine intakes, so the risk of birds entering both engines increases when a flock strikes the aircraft.

Thirdly, racing pigeons travel at speeds of up to 70 mph, which means that there may be insufficient time for pilots and or birds to take evasive action thus increasing the risk of collision.

Fourthly, racing pigeons fly at low altitudes of the order of 300ft and therefore if a collision occurs it happens as the aircraft is at a critical phase of flight having either just taken off or when it is about to land.

In addition, racing pigeons do not usually respond to conventional bird control measures at airports and as they are wild animals, their behaviour is predictable only to a limited extent.

Military aircraft have been lost due to bird strikes with racing pigeons and, in 2003, an executive jet crashed (and all on board were killed) near Milan (Linate) airport following a collision

with racing pigeons. There are numerous cases of serious damage to aircraft at Dublin Airport caused by strikes with racing pigeons.

It is recommended therefore that the actions set out overleaf concerning the release of racing pigeons and related matters are adhered to.

The following photographs show the damage which bird strikes have caused to aircraft.

*Example 1*



*Example 2*

