An Introduction to the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s, Urban Wildlife Refuge Program, an Airport Perspective

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- US Air Force Reservist
  - 23+ Years as an Air Traffic Controller, Airfield Operations Experience
  - 16+ Years as a DoD/FAA Military to Civilian Aviation Liaison

- Here Today Presenting My Personal and Professional Thoughts and Opinions, Lessons Learned

- I am NOT...Voicing the Opinions of the Air Force nor DoD

- Official Air Force Written Guidance and Recommendations Pertaining to This Situation Will Follow at a Later Date
Here’s a Famous Lieutenant Colonel...

Remember as a Lt Col, You’re Old Enough to Know Better, and Absolutely Expendable!
And a Famous “BASH” Movie
Where Is He Going With This???

- Sadly, the Stage Is Set For a Really Bad Sequel

- But In Our (Hopefully Never Coming to Theater Near You) Sequel...

- Things Will Be a Bit Different

- In Our Sequel....
I’ll Be the Famous Lieutenant Colonel Testifying
My Co-Worker, Mr. Dan Sullivan Will Testify As Well:
But Our Sequel Will be Completely Different...Because It Has Already Taken Place

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-28224917, Crash Scene of USAF HH-60
Sadly, We Know How the Tragic Ending of Our Movie, and We Don’t Ever Want to Tell This Story Again

Staff Sgt Afton Ponce, Capt Christopher Stover, Technical Sgt Dale Matthews and Capt Sean Ruane, perished on 7 January 2014, when their HH-60 struck several geese, which penetrated the cockpit windscreen and struck both pilots.

-https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-28224917
We Have Been There, Seen That and NEVER AGAIN!

- The Safety World Has Seen All of These Movies, and Lived the Real Life Tragedies Before
  - Via the DoD Safety Centers and the NTSB

- There’s No Reason For Us to Sit before Congress or Testify For a Safety Board

- We Know How This All Can End, and to Misquote the Movie Line, “We Still Can’t Handle the Truth!!”
So Let’s Take a Look At How The Stage and Backdrop of Our Movie Sequel Came to Be.

Albuquerque Sunport International Airport/Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico
USFWS Urban Wildlife Refuge Program

- From the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s website:
  - “Urban areas present a strategic opportunity to reach new audiences that are currently not visiting nor aware of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. National Wildlife Refuges that in the heart of where the people are located provide the best opportunity to engage new audiences.” - www.fws.gov/urban/wildlifeRefuges.php, 13 July 2018

- Simple Concept…Bring the Nature Experience to the Urban setting

- BUT…The URBAN Setting Should Not Include Nor Impact the AIRFIELD
Valle d’Oro National Wildlife Refuge

- Approximately 570 Acres
- Former Alfalfa Fields
- Purchased the Land
- Purchased the Water Rights
- Environmental Assessment Process Allows for Seasonal Flooding
- Support From Local Neighbors
- “Friends of Valle d’Oro” Group Helps Fund Raise
Friends of Valle De Oro NWR

- Assist in Fund Raising
- Writing Grant Proposals
- Gala Events
- Corporate Sponsorship
- Key Local Partnerships
- They Help Provide Feel Good Community Outreach, Freeing Up USFWS to Focus on Development and Operations
Albuquerque International Sunport/Kirtland Air Force Base NM and the Valle d’Oro NWR

Flight path, Approach to Rwy 03
3.2 Miles from IFR intercept to Rwy 03. Intercept is at 1000 feet AGL.
Valle d’Oro’s Environmental Assessment

- Plan B Approved, Establishing the Go Ahead to Develop Seasonal Floodplains (Wetlands in a Dessert Environment)
- Request From the Air Force and Several Corporate Airlines for a Full Environmental Impact Statement Was Dismissed With the EA’s Findings Of No Significant Impact “FONSI”
- Promotion of the EA Process Was Not Well Conveyed to All KABQ Partners and Airliners
Birds at Valle d’Oro...Before Seasonal Wetland Flooding Program

Photos taken 25 Jan 2018
Pilot’s Perspective
Birds at Valle d’Oro…Before Seasonal Wetland Flooding Program

Photos taken 25 Jan 2018
How We Got Here

- Communication Was Apparently Lacking At Several Levels
  - How Much Did the ABQ Sunport Know and When
  - What Was the FAA Regional Office Response and Follow On Actions
  - USDA Was Largely Excluded From The Development Planning Phase
  - When and How Were the Airliners Made Aware of These Plans
  - Stakeholders, Such as the Air Traffic Controllers Were Completely Neglected
  - Federal Government Agencies Need to Be Open and Honest
  - Big Politics for a Small Town
    - City Owned/Operated Airport in Shadows of US Senate/Congressionally Supported Development

- This Type of Project Needed Input and Awareness at Multiple Levels

- Wouldn't It Be Nice If We All Had an Agreement...Oh Wait,
Memorandum of Agreement Between
the Federal Aviation Administration,
the U.S. Air Force,
the U.S. Army,
the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and
the U.S. Department of Agriculture
to Address Aircraft-Wildlife Strikes

PURPOSE
The signatory agencies know the risks that aircraft-wildlife strikes pose to safe aviation.

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) acknowledges each signatory agency’s respective missions. Through this MOA, the agencies establish procedures necessary to coordinate their missions to more effectively address existing and future environmental conditions contributing to aircraft-wildlife strikes throughout the United States. These efforts are intended to minimize wildlife risks to aviation and human safety, while protecting the Nation’s valuable environmental resources.

BACKGROUND
How to Ensure It Doesn’t Happen to Your Airport

- Communicate As Much As Possible, At All Levels, With All of Your Neighbors, Partners and Stakeholders
- Ignorance, and Ignoring Small Ideas Is NOT An Option
- Share Your Struggles, Build Your Team and Leverage What You Can
- Community Involvement is Absolutely Paramount
- Stay Abreast of Any and All Commercial Real Estate Transactions
- Above All Keep Your Federal Agencies and Their Lines of Communication Wide Open
Take-A-Ways and Homework

- Find Out What Is Going On With Your Airport
- Make Friends With Your Neighbors
- Public Affairs and Community Outreach is Absolutely Essential
- Fortify Your 5 Mile Radius With Knowledge, Insights and Friendly Relations
- Be Intently Aware of Real Estate Developments of Any Sorts
- Work and Partner With Your Federal and State Agencies, USDA, FAA, USFWS and DoD
"You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life."
- Winston Churchill