FROM THE CHAIR: BUILDING A FUTURE ON THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PAST

Dear BSC USA members and readers,

As the new Chair of Bird Strike Committee USA (BSC USA), I first want to say thank you for the support and kind words during the chairmanship transition that took place at the BSC USA Conference held in Chicago last August. I consider it a privilege to Chair this exceptional group of professionals that represents a wide spectrum of wildlife hazard management stakeholders.

The group has certainly grown and evolved since I joined the Steering Committee almost 10 years ago. The committee has taken great strides in providing education and outreach to the industry; developing technical comments and input related to FAA guidance, environmental regulations and rulings; and promoting the continual exchange of information at the annual meeting and through outreach materials such as this newsletter and the BSC USA website. These efforts have set us on a course to fulfill our principal objectives and build on these experiences to address the ever-changing environment in which we do our work. (The BSC USA principle objectives are listed on page 2, just in case the committee’s by-laws haven’t made your must-read shortlist!)

I believe that to effectively plan for the future, we should have a clear understanding of where we have been and what has been accomplished to date. I would be remiss if I didn’t take a moment to thank Mike Begier (Immediate Past-Chair), John Weller (Vice-Chair) and the Steering and Standing Committee Members (current and past) for their commitment to this volunteer organization. It has been through your efforts that we build the foundation of the committee and are now able to set our sights on the future. As we move forward with planning our efforts for 2017 and beyond, I hope we can build on the solid foundation in place and take steps to better document our activities and archives, increase our involvement in research initiatives, develop efficient processes to maximize the efforts of volunteers, promote our role as the national expert liaison group to FAA, and continue to grow our membership.

As a volunteer group, we are only as strong as our members. For members and new readers alike, please take a moment to read our principal objectives (see insert on next page). We welcome new ideas, strategies, and tools to fulfill these objectives and promote member participation on our Standing Committees:

- Membership
- Communications
- Operations/Policy
- Annual Conference
- Research and Development
- Education and Outreach

The work of the committee is completed primarily through the Standing Committees. If you are interested in providing support to any of these focus areas, please contact us at bscusa@gmail.com. I look forward to working with the membership to continue the great work that has been accomplished and encourage a path forward that focuses our efforts in promoting our principal objectives.

Sarah Brammell
Chair, Bird Strike Committee USA
BSC USA Principal Objectives:

1. Facilitate the exchange of information regarding the characteristics and management of wildlife hazards and risk to aviation safety among airport operators; military and civilian governmental agencies involved in aviation or wildlife management; government, university and private research agencies; the air transport/general aviation industry; and the general public.

2. Promote the collection and analysis of accurate wildlife strike data for military and civil aviation in the USA to better a) understand strike hazards and risk, b) promote and develop effective and appropriate management programs and c) evaluate the efficacy of management programs.

3. Promote research and development of effective procedures, methods, and technologies for reducing aviation wildlife hazards and risk to aviation safety.

4. Promote professionalism in wildlife management programs on and near airports through training and advocacy of high standards of conduct for airport biologists and wildlife patrol personnel.

5. Serve as the national expert body and liaison to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), national/international Bird Strike Committees and to other professional aviation and wildlife organizations on aviation wildlife hazards.

BSC BOOTH – THE DC TOUR!

By Marcy Heacker

The promotional booth for the BSC USA is becoming an important tool for education and outreach. The booth got a good workout in August with two events in Washington, DC. It was part of the exhibitor’s hall for the 6th North American Ornithological Conference (NAOC). This event, with about 2,000 participants, was the largest-ever North American conference for the ornithology profession. We had a good turnout of people wanting to learn more about the bird strike world, and it was a great opportunity to reach out to the ornithology community. Thanks to the team of folks that gave their time to man the booth!

The week after the NAOC conference, the BSC booth was part of the exhibitor’s hall for the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) International, 62nd Air Safety Forum. Thanks to Steve Jangelis (Chairman, Airport & Ground Environment Group, ALPA) for arranging to have the BSC booth included in this conference for aviation safety and security experts. The mounted Canada goose, provided by the Smithsonian Feather ID Lab, was a popular selfie-spot. Again, the booth had a good turnout and provided a popular place for bird strike discussion and story-telling.
Bird Strike Buzz – News from Bird Strike Committee USA

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:

Richard A. Dolbeer, Past Chair (1997-2008)

Sandra (Sandy) E. Wright, a native of Chicago, received her bachelor’s degree in education from Northern Illinois University and her master’s degree in education from Chicago State University. With a true love of nature and aviation, she has been a member of the local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association in Ohio and has co-piloted on countless trips in a Piper Cherokee.

Sandy was hired by the Department of Agriculture in Sandusky, Ohio in 1995 to manage the National Wildlife Strike Database (NWSD) through an interagency agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). With her knowledge of birds and aviation combined with adept computer and editing skills and a keen attention to detail, she was able to organize all wildlife strikes reported to the FAA starting in 1990 and accurately enter them into a database. Each report has over 90 data fields. She built the database from 1,800 reports in 1990 to 14,000 reports entered in 2015 when she retired (170,000 reports total for 1990-2015).

The number of strikes entered into the database is indeed impressive, but the most important accomplishment during Sandy’s 20-year tenure was her ability to manage the quality and consistency of the data. Because of these efforts and accomplishments, this public database now provides a scientific foundation for 1) FAA regulatory policies and guidance to manage the risks of bird strikes within the aviation industry, 2) designing improvements by engine and aircraft manufacturers to minimize damage and risk by bird strikes, and 3) species-specific wildlife risk mitigation plans developed by airports and air carriers to enhance aviation safety. Additionally, the NWSD contains a wealth of information of use to many fields of basic and applied ornithological research, as well as other areas of aviation safety.

In addition to managing the database, Sandy worked closely with personnel from a broad spectrum of the aviation industry, including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), to reduce the wildlife threat at airports. She wrote numerous articles and made presentations to promote an awareness of the need for accurately reporting wildlife strikes and to demonstrate how the database was tangibly improving aviation safety.

During her tenure, Sandy made significant contributions to aviation safety and science-based wildlife management at airports that will continue for future generations. Bird Strike Committee USA recognized these accomplishments by presenting Sandy with the James E. Forbes Lifetime Achievement Award during the annual conference in Chicago last August. May Sandy and her husband, Gene, have long, productive retirements with their nature-based photography business!
LATEST FROM THE LAB...THE “SULLY” EFFECT

By Marcy Heacker and Carla Dove, Smithsonian Feather Lab

Like many in the bird strike community, the recent release of the movie “Sully” prompted the Smithsonian Feather ID Lab to reflect on how things have changed since US Airways flight 1549 landed on the Hudson River. Since this high profile case in 2009, the Feather ID Lab has seen a steady increase in the number of civil bird strikes submitted for identifications through the Lab’s interagency agreement with the FAA (see Figure 1). In FY2008 (pre-Hudson River), about 20% of the total identifications completed for both the military and FAA agreements were conducted for civil aviation. For FY2016, we are predicting the number of civil IDs to double to over 40% of the total workload. Additionally, the number of different airfields that submitted cases for identification has more than doubled since the Hudson River event. Currently, approximately 270 different airfields from 50 different US states/territories send bird strike remains for identification under the FAA’s Birdstrike Identification Program.

Many aspects of aviation safety have seen a change since flight 1549. The greater awareness of bird strikes after such a dynamic event has undoubtedly had an effect on civil bird strike reporting. Also, the efforts of the FAA, BSC USA and others in the bird strike community have been important in providing education and guidance for the civil aviation community. These past 7 years of steadily increasing workload for civil identification cases has resulted in big changes for the Smithsonian’s Feather Lab involving the number of cases processed. The addition of contract workers to assist with the workload, continuation of streamlining DNA analysis, and working with the FAA on more efficient online notification of IDs are a few of these changes.

For the Feather ID Lab, the flight 1549 event stands as a turning point for positive changes in the bird strike community. Let’s all continue to use this “Sully Effect” to keep moving forward in improving overall flight safety and to strive for the most comprehensive and accurate bird strike data possible.

Figure 1: Number of civil identifications since 2008

Mike Begier (USDA, Wildlife Services) examines feather remains from the engine of US Airways Flight 1549. The Feather ID Lab determined not only the species involved in the strike, but also that the Canada geese were from a migratory, rather than resident, population. Photo courtesy of smithsonianscience.ei.edu
Migratory birds do not recognize geo-political boundaries during their annual cycle of reproduction, foraging, and migration. Thus, successful conservation efforts to protect birds must be carried out at the international level. In 1916, the United States and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada) signed a convention to protect migratory birds in North America, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). This landmark treaty was implemented in an era when many bird species were threatened by the commercial trade in birds and bird feathers. As a notable example, the last passenger pigeon died in 1914 in the Cincinnati Zoo. This was a species whose numbers reached into the billions in the mid-19th century and often darkened the skies of eastern North America during migration. The clearing of vast tracts of hardwood forests, combined with market hunting, doomed them to extinction.

The MBTA has been hailed by biologists and politicians alike as the most influential legislation ever enacted to protect wildlife, and it has served as a model for nations worldwide. The MBTA now also includes Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and the Soviet Union (1978, now Russia) as signatories and protects over 800 species of birds that migrate among the five countries.

BSC-USA is committed to providing leadership in managing bird and other wildlife hazards to aviation within the frameworks of the MBTA and other environmental laws. Our goal:

**Safer skies for all who fly—birds and people!**

*Migratory geese flying in V formation
Photo: beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu*
2016 Poster Contest Winners

The Bird Strike Committee USA was pleased to announce this year’s award winners for the annual poster and photo contests. The theme for this year’s contest to promote education and awareness was, “One Community – No Boundaries”.

1st Place
John Ostrom
Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport

2nd Place
Samantha Whitworth
USDA Wildlife Services

3rd Place
John Weller
Federal Aviation Administration

4th Place
John Weller
Federal Aviation Administration

2016 Photo Contest Winners

1st Place
Michael Gregg
Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport

2nd Place
Nicholas Carter
Pharovision

3rd Place
Nicholas Carter
Pharovision

4th Place
Cathy Boyles
Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport

Just Announced:
BSC USA Conference 2017 in Dallas Fort Worth, August 22-24!
Check our website in the coming months for updates.