

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF BIRD STRIKES CAUSED BY PIGEONS AT AN IRISH AIRPORT

Thomas C. Kelly Dr^{1*} & Ray Bolger²

¹Department of Zoology and Animal Ecology, National University of Ireland Cork, Ireland

²Aer Rianta, Dublin Airport, Dublin, Ireland

* Corresponding Author: Tel: +353214904188, Fax: +353214270562

Email: t.kelly@ucc.ie

Abstract

Four species of pigeon (*Columbiformes*; *Columbidae*) have been recorded at Dublin Airport, Ireland namely, the Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Feral/Racing Pigeon (*Columba livia* var *domestica*), Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*) and the Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocta*). With the exception of the Collared Dove, aircraft have struck each of these species. Moreover, there is evidence of a sharp increase in the frequency of bird strikes involving pigeons at Dublin Airport since the mid-1990s. This trend is of concern because a) the columbid taxa involved are flocking species and b) are relatively heavy, in the 200g-600g range; internationally, in Belgium and Ethiopia respectively, two civil aviation transporters have been brought down following bird strikes involving pigeons. The pattern of pigeon-related bird strikes at Dublin Airport for the period 1990-2002 is analysed and the possible causes of the recent increase are discussed.

Key words: ambient light, avoidance behaviour, visual cues, interspecific differences