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Steve Ball

USDA Wildlife Services

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“Buzzard Be-Gone”: Suspending Vulture Effigies from Roost Structures to Reduce the Possibility of a Bird Strike

Steve Ball, USDA Wildlife Services, PSC Box 8006, BLDG 4223 Access Road, MCAS Cherry Point, NC 28533 USA

The turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) has a wingspan of 68–72 inches and an average weight of 3.1 pounds. It poses a severe hazard to aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. Feedback from pilots indicated these large birds were soaring within the aerodrome. This coupled with a vulture strike to a C-130J aircraft, induced Wildlife Services to bolster “traditional” efforts of vulture dispersal. Dispersal techniques involving pyrotechnics and lethal removal are effective, but migrant birds establish a “home roost” each autumn through spring on local tower structures. Our vultures like to roost on two 150 foot tall water towers that are within easy soaring range of Cherry Point. Flowing water to the north, east, and west of the air station boundaries makes hazing efforts less than adequate due to the abundance of carrion the tide provides each day. In addition to the threat to aircraft, roost structures become coated with feces, feathers and pellets, potentially causing a health threat to nearby residents and maintenance workers. Attempts by tower managers to disperse the birds in the past using noise makers, ultra sonic frequencies, and fake owls met with failure. The National Wildlife Research Center made recommendations for repelling vultures from structures where they pose a health and human safety hazard by using vulture effigies. USDA Wildlife Services at MCAS Cherry Point dispersed vultures from these towers within 2 days by suspending the effigies from the tops of the towers. Vulture sightings on the airfield are down and the tower managers are very pleased with the results. The Cherry Point BASH team continues monitoring of all towers within a 10 mile area and can install effigies when a roost is discovered, thereby dispersing the vultures within days of a roost sighting. Altogether a *win-win* situation for man and bird!

Abstract of poster presentation at Bird Strike Committee USA/Canada Meeting, Lake Mary and Sanford, Florida, August 18–21, 2008.