

2. PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE 6TH MEETING

2.1. EXPERIMENTAL USE OF LONG GRASS IN THE U.K.

MR. T. BROUGH, U.K.

"Experimental use of long grass in the U.K."

By Mr. T. Brough.

Summary.

On ten Royal Air Force airfields the height of the grass was maintained at 15-25 cm on both sides of and within 90 m of the main runway instead of being kept short (c. 5 cm). For a period of up to two years, report forms showing the distribution of birds on these airfields (see Annex 1) were completed four times a week. Analysis of the reports indicated that when birds present they occurred 2-4 times more frequently on the control areas of short grass than on the long grass.

Table I (attached) indicates some variation between airfields but in all but one case, where the grass was in a poor condition, there were significant differences between the number of occasions when birds occurred on the two lengths of grass. It will also be seen that long grass had a more pronounced effect on large numbers of birds than on small numbers.

Table II indicates that the ratio of 1:12 for the occurrence of birds on long and short grass applies to the five main categories of birds involved and that the increase in the ratio with the increase in the total of birds observed applies to all groups except starlings.

The collection of bird data for this exercise began in 1967 and ended in 1969 but since then the long grass has been retained while an assessment is made of longterm changes in the sward and while maintenance problems are being resolved. It is possible that the use of long grass will be extended to more airfields in the near future.

4th June, 1971.

PERCENTAGE OCCURRENCE OF BIRDS SEEN IN EACH OF LONG  
AND SHORT GRASS AREAS - ANALYSED BY STATIONS FOR  
ALL BIRDS

Station	Numbers of Observations	No birds		1 to 49 birds		50 to 99 birds		100 and over	
		Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short
A	908	92.0%	81.3%	7.4%	16.2%	0.6%	2.0%	0.1%	0.7%
B	710	97.9%	86.1%	1.7%	7.9%	0.4%	3.2%	-	2.8%
C	606	94.6%	91.1%	4.3%	7.3%	0.2%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%
D	1,387	89.9%	84.2%	7.7%	10.5%	1.3%	2.0%	1.0%	3.0%
E	1,712	87.9%	60.0%	8.8%	22.8%	2.0%	7.7%	1.3%	9.6%
F	874	93.6%	87.4%	5.1%	8.8%	0.7%	2.4%	0.6%	1.4%
G	905	99.6%	91.4%	0.4%	8.2%	-	0.3%	-	-
H	1,356	97.5%	82.0%	2.2%	13.5%	0.3%	3.4%	-	1.1%
I	907	95.5%	78.9%	4.2%	15.6%	0.2%	2.5%	0.1%	3.0%
J	893	77.8%	76.0%	17.2%	19.8%	2.7%	3.1%	2.2%	1.0%
All Stations	10,258	92.2%	79.9%	6.2%	14.0%	0.9%	3.2%	0.7%	2.9%

TABLE II. PERCENTAGE OCCURRENCE OF BIRDS SEEN IN LONG AND SHORT  
GRASS AREAS - ANALYSED BY TYPE OF BIRD FOR ALL  
STATIONS

Type of bird	Number of Observations	No birds		1 to 49 birds		50 to 99 birds		100 and over	
		Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short
Corvids	2,046	88.2%	69.1%	10.7% 1 : 2.5	25.5%	0.8% 1 : 4.5	3.6%	0.3% 1 : 6	1.8%
Gulls	2,058	94.4%	79.6%	4.3% 1 : 3	12.6%	0.8% 1 : 4	3.8%	0.4% 1 : 10	4.0%
Lapwings	2,065	92.6%	83.6%	5.9% 1 : 2	12.2%	1.0% 1 : 2	2.0%	0.5% 1 : 5	2.2%
Pigeons	2,062	94.7%	85.9%	3.9% 1 : 2	7.9%	0.7% 1 : 3	2.5%	0.7% 1 : 5	3.7%
Starlings	2,027	91.0%	81.1%	6.2% 1 : 2	12.0%	1.2% 1 : 3	4.0%	1.6% 1 : 1.8	2.9%
All birds	10,258	92.2%	79.9%	6.2% 1 : 2	14.0%	0.9% 1 : 3.6	3.2%	0.7% 1 : 4	2.9%

An example of an airfield long grass trial report formLong Grass Report

To:

From:

LONG GRASS TRIAL REPORT

Long Grass Area

a. Day \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time of \_\_\_\_\_

Inspection

b. Weather Conditions. Dry, Wet, Ground Conditions Frozen, Surface Pools of Water etc.WindGround Conditions

c. The number of aircraft movements (including Helicopters) in the hour before inspection.

d. The average height and condition of the grass in both the long and short grass areas.

Long GrassShort Grasse. Remarks. Farming activities on or near the airfield. Work in progress on the airfield. General bird activity on and near the airfield. To amplify the map.f. Map. Plot the approximate position, species and numbers of birds, noting their activity, feeding resting etc. If known, state what they are feeding on. Show any difference in the condition of the grass in the areas of long grass.