

**HUNTING OR SCARING
50 years of fruitful debate in the
Royal Netherlands Airforce**

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Abstract

Fifty years ago a Dutch airforce pilot said to his commander that something had to be done to the increasing numbers of partridges. These frequently crossed the runway, often during take-off and landings. He feared accidents in the near future. At that moment, due to the absence of bird-controllers then, the airforce hunting association was born.

During the next fifty years a lot of things changed. Flight-safety became an important issue and turned into a science. Bird-controllers were appointed and the social basis for hunting lowered. Everyone, except the hunting association, was looking for alternative approaches for bird strike prevention. Even the stock of other animals such as roes, pheasants, hares and even rabbits was thought ideally to be extremely low. Also a zero-tolerance option, came into view. Up until the mid-nineteeneighties there was hardly any understanding between bird controllers and hunters.

Due to an open and honest debate between the RNLAf's Nature Management and Ecotechnology Section, responsible, amongst else, for bird strike prevention, and the RNLAf Hunting Association we discovered that both parties could complement each other in reaching a healthy flora and fauna within the limits set by flight-safety.

This paper briefly describes the average RNLAf airbase, its wildlife and the general policy of the Hunting Association. Two examples are given in which the fruitful debate and mutual respect between hunters and bird controllers resulted in safeguarding the flight safety.

Key words: hunting, zero-tolerance