

WP/36

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON FALCONRY AS A BIRD DETERRMENT METHOD ON AIRPORTS

I am requested from the Spanish delegation to the Bird Strike Committee Europe to give my personal opinion on the matter in object.

They think I am entitled to give this opinion for my 3 years experience as field director of two quite successful bird control operation by falcons on Madrid Barajas and Madrid Torrejon Airports; and for my 30 Years experience as amateur falconer and field naturalist.

My opinion is that the use of falcons to scare bird flocks from airfield permanently is suitable only for some airport and under particular circumstances.

The most important point that I consider essential to obtain a result are the following:

- 1) The airport must be suitable for the falcons. That means that there is a field wide enough all around the fly-line (minimum 500 yds.) where the falcons can perform their task ; and that there is not in the immediate vicinity of the air field a wood or water extension where the birds chased can seek shelter .Aircraft frequency should be every not more than 3 minutes.
- 2) The birds to be scared away must belong to the species that the falcons can hunt with sufficient easiness (Medium to big size seagull, rook, crows, pigeons, little bustards ecc.) It is not advisable to try one falcon operation on possible but difficult species (small seagull, doves, jack-doves, starling, ecc.) or impossible birds (lap-wing plovers, ganga, great bustard, ecc); or against bird easy to kill but prone to seek cover on the same ground by mimetism (partridge, pheasants ,etc.).
- 3) The suitable falcons (Peregrine, sakers, Jers) must be available trough officially recognised Authority. Possibly from officially recognised reproduction in captivity organizations.
- 4) Must be available a really competent falconer that can follow and direct continuously on the field the operation. The falconer must before the beginning of the operations demonstrate practically on the same airfield his ability to hunt successfully and regularly (to kill) the birds that are the intended target.
- 5) The number of falcons normally needed can be between 4 and 6 , with the necessity of yearly replacement of two (average possible loss or death) .

If all the above conditions are present it is possible to obtain the requested result ,that we must again point out , is the permanent moving out of the air field area of the dangerous flock of birds. This result can be obtained only after a quite long period of time(4 to 6 months) of continuous and regular hunting and killing performed by the falcons in the same area. When this first result is obtained the frequency of the falcons hunting fly can be reduced but not suspended because without a daily control the flocks of birds will soon return in the area.

The last thing I like to recommend is that a falcon operation is organized only if there is a actual real danger, if all the above conditions are present and if all the other scaring devices (or ecological procedures) were allready tested without succes . In fact the falcons are endangered species and we all share the deep concern of the ecologist about this matter.

Fulco Testi di Valminuta