



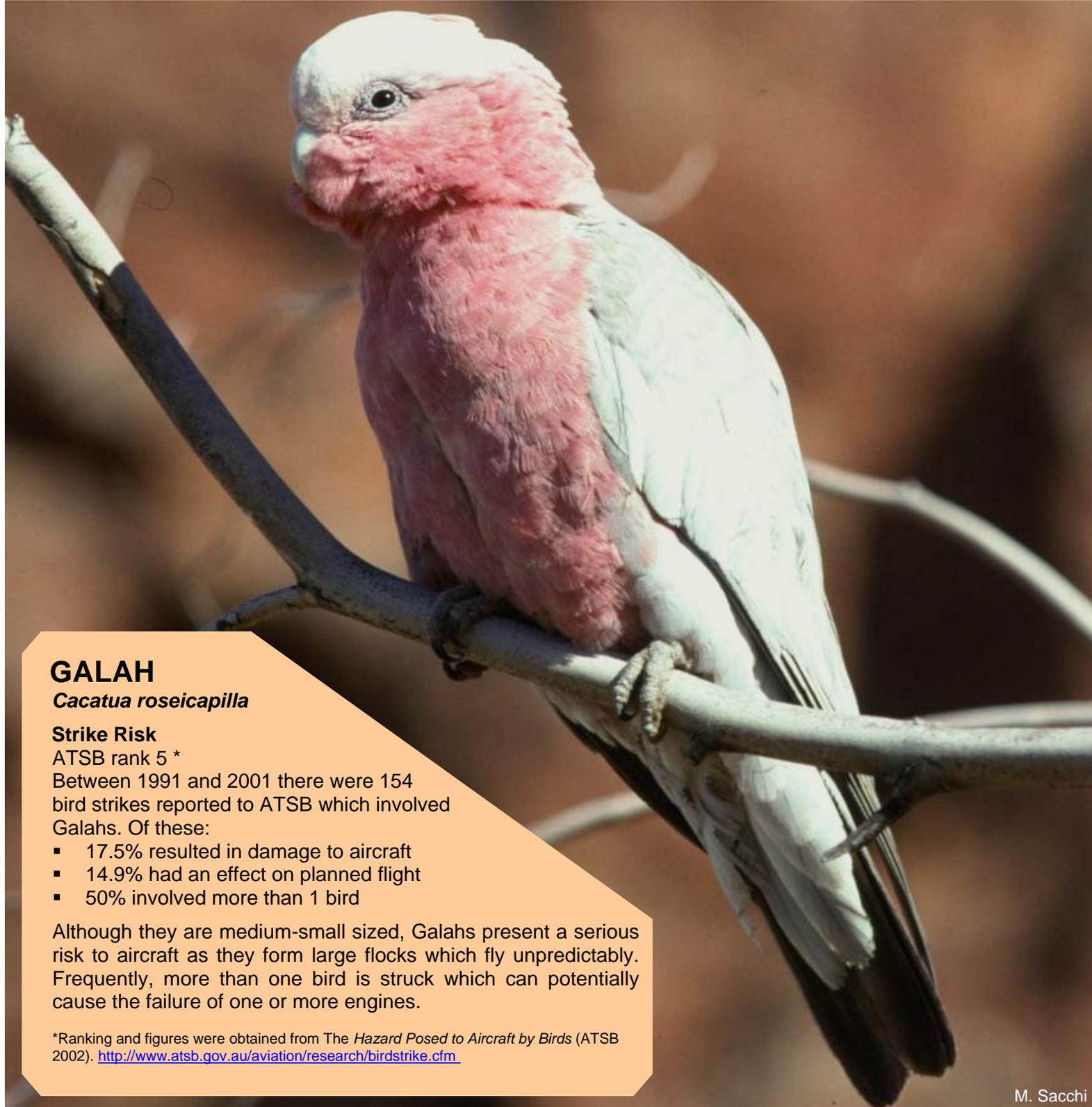
Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

ATSB Bird Information Sheet No.6

Galahs

Managing bird strike risk at Australian airports



GALAH

Cacatua roseicapilla

Strike Risk

ATSB rank 5 *

Between 1991 and 2001 there were 154 bird strikes reported to ATSB which involved Galahs. Of these:

- 17.5% resulted in damage to aircraft
- 14.9% had an effect on planned flight
- 50% involved more than 1 bird

Although they are medium-small sized, Galahs present a serious risk to aircraft as they form large flocks which fly unpredictably. Frequently, more than one bird is struck which can potentially cause the failure of one or more engines.

*Ranking and figures were obtained from *The Hazard Posed to Aircraft by Birds* (ATSB 2002). <http://www.atsb.gov.au/aviation/research/birdstrike.cfm>

About Galahs

Galah

Cacatua roseicapilla

Size

Length 34-38cm; wingspan 75cm; weight 330g.

Identification

Adult Galahs are a pink cockatoo with grey wings and tail; whitish crest. Males have a dark brown eye and females have a red eye.

Juveniles are similar to adults but have a grey eye-ring and a greyish colouration on the breast.

Distribution

Galahs are widespread throughout Australia excluding the most arid regions and dense forest environments.

Preferred Habitat

Galahs prefer open areas with suitable nesting trees, access to water and food. They are commonly observed along roadsides, rail yards, along watercourses, urban parks, and open grassed areas such as playing fields, golf courses and airports.

Food

They primarily forage on the ground for seeds, but will also eat a variety of organic matter. In many agricultural areas galahs have become a significant pest feeding on grain and other crops.

Behaviour

Adult Galahs will mostly remain within the same territory; however young individuals tend to roam.

Breeding

In southern Australia, breeding takes place from July to December, however, in northern Australia breeding occurs from February to June. The nest is comprised of a leaf-lined tree hollow, in either a dead or living tree. Up to 5 eggs are laid.



K. Murray

Galahs at Airports

The Galah is one of the most abundant and familiar cockatoos in Australia. Galahs are commonly observed foraging on the ground in short grasslands, or drinking from various water sources. The main attractions for Galahs at airports include:

Food

The airport environment provides Galahs with a consistent food source, mainly from an abundance of seeds released from poorly managed grasslands. Seeding weeds also provide Galahs with food.

Water

Permanent water bodies at airports provide Galahs with a reliable water source that may not be available in surrounding areas, attracting large numbers to airports to drink. Galahs may make visits to an airport part of their daily routine when they know that water is available.

Perching Sites

Perching sites such as fences, signs, trees and buildings are readily available at airports and adds to the appeal of the airport environment.

Transit Routes

Poorly managed areas immediately surrounding an airport can attract Galahs, increasing the number which transit over the runways between foraging sites. Such attractions could include weedy grasslands or grain silos. It is important that local grain authorities and adjacent landholders are encouraged to manage grasslands and grain storage areas to minimize the attraction of Galahs.

Managing the Galah Hazard at Airports



Habitat Modification

All bird management strategies should seek to initially make an airport as undesirable as possible to birds through habitat modification. An assessment of the airport should be completed by a person qualified and experienced in identifying bird attractions and recommending site-specific modifications.

Limiting Galah attraction at airports may require:

Limiting Food Supply

- ✓ Employ a tall grass policy in all non essential areas. Grass maintained at around 30cm makes it difficult for Galahs to see approaching predators.
- ✓ Manage grasslands to limit the production of seeds. This involves mowing at a height which only removes seed heads, whilst maintaining tall grass.
- ✓ Practice good weed management by removing weeds before they are able to seed.

Limiting Water Sources

- ✓ Water sources must be managed to ensure that no water is available to Galahs.

Perching Areas

- ✓ All non-essential signs and posts should be removed from airside areas.

Active Management

Active bird management involves scaring or removing birds from the airport. There are numerous options available for the task, some of which have limited effect in the long term as birds become used to them. Generally, a combination of techniques provides the best results. For Galahs, the following active management options can be considered:

- ✓ Disperse Galahs using pyrotechnics (such as cracker shells), portable distress callers, sirens, lights and/or vehicles.
- ✓ Occasional culling (shooting) may be required (under permit from the relevant state or territory authority) to reinforce the impact of equipment used for dispersal. It should not, however, be considered as the primary solution for airports.
- ✓ Using trained animals such as birds of prey and dogs to disperse birds from airports has been highly successful in North America and Europe. This can be a costly operation, requiring specially trained animals and experienced handlers. Permit requirements for such activities vary between states and territories in Australia.

Note: not all the suggested strategies have been trialed at Australian airports and it may be necessary for each airport to independently trial any particular method before incorporating it into their bird management plan.



Weed Management

The management of weeds at airports is vital for minimising the food source which attract seed-eating birds such as Galahs. An integrated weed management strategy which uses a wide range of control options should be adopted for greatest success. The four elements of an integrated strategy are:

1. Identification
 - Identify the weeds present on airport.
2. Plan
 - Develop a suitable plan which is aimed at managing weeds efficiently and effectively.
3. Control
 - Physical: mechanically removing weeds.
 - Biological: the use of biological organisms which forage on or inhibit growth of weeds.
 - Chemical: chemically killing weeds and preventing regrowth.
4. Follow up and monitoring
 - It is very important for all weed control work to be followed up with a monitoring program to ensure that no outbreaks occur.

Species and hazard rankings for the 20 most struck Australian birds (1991–2001).

<i>Species</i>	<i>Number of Strikes Recorded</i>	<i>% Resulting in Damage to Aircraft</i>	<i>% Having Effect on Planned Flight</i>	<i>Composite Hazard Ranking</i>
Eagle	38	55.3	13.2	1
Ibis	39	41.0	17.9	2
Duck	52	26.9	19.2	3
Bat	72	25.0	13.9	4
Galah	154	17.5	14.9	5
Gull	136	15.4	3.7	6
Kite	90	14.4	4.4	7
Hawk	156	12.8	5.1	8
Pigeon	53	16.9	0	9
Owl	19	5.3	10.5	10
Lark	16	12.5	0	11
Starling	17	11.8	0	12
Magpie	117	5.1	5.9	13
Plover	143	6.9	2.8	14
Curlew	31	9.7	0	15
Peewee	18	0	5.6	16
Falcon	18	0	5.6	17
Swallow	66	4.6	0	18
Kestrel	92	1.1	0	19
Sparrow	38	0	0	20

*Source: *The Hazard Posed to Aircraft by Birds* (ATSB 2002).

<http://www.atsb.gov.au/aviation/research/birdstrike.cfm>

Did you know?

- The name 'Galah' was derived from the word some Aboriginal groups use to describe the bird.
- After initially leaving the nest at around two months of age, still dependent young are placed in crèches with young from other breeding pairs for a further two months.
- Galahs are monogamous, a breeding pair will remain together for life.
- Galahs are considered a pest in grain growing areas because of the damage they can cause to crops. They are often observed eating grain awaiting transport which is stored in sacks or open air storage areas.
- Galahs have benefited from large scale habitat modification. Land clearing for agriculture, cultivation of cereal crops and creation of new and permanent water sources has allowed galahs to expand into otherwise uninhabitable areas.
- Galahs are a popular cagebird worldwide, advertised as Rose-breasted or Roseate Cockatoos in some areas.

For further information:

ATSB (02) 6274 7452

www.atsb.gov.au

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