

2013 BSCI report – Observations and comments (a brief summary in English)

As first the BSCI stated that the total number of bird strikes increased from 1050 (2012) to 1096 (2013). Furthermore the number of impacts occurred under 300 ft. increased from 961 to 982. The BSCI admits that this is due to the increase of bird population inside and around airports as well as to a better reporting activity. Another reason for that increase is the extraordinary and occasional massive presence of Common swifts (*Apus apus*) and Barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) in the spring-summer period, due to particular ecological and meteorological factors, that caused a great deal of impacts however with little or no consequences in terms of damage.

In the same time the collisions with gulls decreased by 11% while those with herons remained stable.

As for the consequences of the strikes the following table shows the main effects:

DAMAGING IMPACTS	MULTIPLE IMPACTS	IMPACTS WITH INGESTION	IMPACTS WITH EFFECTS ON FLIGHT
21	54	21	18

In the year 2011 a new criterion was adopted to measure the wildlife risk at airports, based on many more factors rather than the number of impacts and the aircraft movements: the Birdstrike Risk Index or BRI₂. Two Italian airport are now above the value of “acceptable risk” posed by BRI₂, (0.50) while three airports show values slightly lower than that threshold.

No average national datum of BRI₂ is however provided (but each airport has its own); using the old criterion (impacts out of 10k movements) we can see that the Italian average datum (commercial aviation) is now 8,50, being 5,00 the “threshold of attention” established by ENAC in the past. This datum is constantly higher than the threshold since 2008.

In general we may notice that some airport operators still do not inspect with an acceptable frequency their airport areas; some of these airports also present high BRI₂ values; we therefore think that the IBSC standard regarding runway inspections should be adopted as a national regulation.

As for the scaring and harassment devices the report shows a prevalence of distress calls (14%) and firearms with blank cartridges (13%) , but they are followed by a long list of heterogeneous devices from the simplest (car lights and sirens) to the most modern (LRAD).

We believe that the CAA should classify or even certificate in terms of effectiveness the scaring devices used by airports avoiding this sort of fragmentation.

Even considering favourably the BSCI conclusions, in our opinion there are five reasons for such an increase in the number of bird/wildlife strikes at Italian airports:

1. The objective increase of bird population in and in the vicinity of airports;
2. The inadequacy of many bird dispersal devices currently used at airports;
3. The poor control action on the airport surroundings, often due to the difficulties in employing the excellent legal tools in theory available;
4. The lack of a national policy on research and use of new technologies (read: mainly the avian radars);
5. The full involvement of all the aviation stakeholders in a common action (airlines, ATC, airports, industry etc...)