



# Press

# Release



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## For Immediate Release

May 13, 2020

### Threat to General, Commercial, and Military Aviation Dispersal – Cattle Egret Rookery

Wichita Falls, Texas - A cattle egret rookery/nesting site, located along Highway 79, and Stone Lake Drive, is currently negatively impacting general commercial, and military aviation and aircraft operations in the Wichita Falls area. The Federal Aviation Administration has estimated that the cost associated with bird strike damage to civil aircraft could be as high as \$957 million per year in the United States. Studies have also shown that 106 people have died worldwide over the last twenty years due to bird strikes. Over 14,600 wildlife-related hits with aircraft were reported in the United States in 2018.

Cattle egrets are a federally protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Once these birds begin their nesting activities, there is little a community can do to address these rookeries unless a federal permit is issued to remove the birds forcibly. Cattle egrets began nesting in the identified area in early spring of 2020. Subsequently, a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) has been issued to advise pilots in the area that the threat of a bird/aircraft strike is a potentially higher hazard to the aviation community in the area. The impact of birds on an aircraft can cause extensive damage to an airplane, with the potential for crashes and loss of life. Subsequently, this rookery is very hazardous for the local aviation community.

During the last month, the City of Wichita Falls staff worked with Sheppard AFB, and the Federal Fish & Wildlife officials to formulate a solution to the problem. It has been determined that the safest and most effective solution is to disperse and haze the egrets. This is also the most effective solution suggested by the Federal Fish and Wildlife to address the aviation safety problem. In other words, once the habitat is dispersed, the birds will fly elsewhere to find new nesting grounds. In conjunction with, Federal Fish and Wildlife, Sheppard AFB, City officials will monitor the movement of this rookery to a location that poses a reduced threat to aircraft, pilots, and passengers, while minimizing any physical harm to the egrets.

The City of Wichita Falls has worked with property owners in the area to obtain permission to disperse the habitat in this area. Subsequently, the public may see City workers and equipment working in the identified area. Habitat hazing will begin on May 13, 2020. It is anticipated that the project will last approximately 7 days. During this time there will be noise made with clappers, and propane cannons, to help relocate the egrets. The noise making equipment will be used from the time frame of sunrise to sunset, to help relocate the egrets. The cost of the rehabilitation will be paid for using funds generated from the City of Wichita Falls Airport activities. As a result, there will be no tax funds used to mitigate this problem.

For more information:

What: Dispersal of cattle egret rookery negatively impacting local aviation  
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