

## **Minimizing bird hits in flight**

Bird hits can be particularly nasty for an airplane, forcing it to land or send it crashing to the ground, often with devastating consequences. Now, fresh research has developed a digitized system with the ability to track migrating birds in real-time, minimizing the possibility of such collisions.

Bird hits have claimed more than 200 lives worldwide since 1988, according to Bird Strike Committee US. The US Air Force also reported more than 5,000 bird strikes in 2007 alone.

Researcher Yossi Leshem, zoologist at the Tel Aviv University, has developed a system to track migrating birds and minimize the possibility of collisions. Since the beginning of Leshem's programme, there has been a 76 percent drop in collisions – saving \$800 million and countless lives since 1984, according to a Tel Aviv statement.

Adapted from weather radar technology, Leshem's system has been implemented throughout Israel. It tracks birds' movements, then reports details of their coming and going, including the height at which they are flying, and which route they are taking.

Based on this information, the Israel Air Force (IAF), which funds the research along with Israel's Ministry of Defence, can alter flight plans accordingly. With the third and final radar installed in the north of Israel two years ago, a flock can be followed 40 miles into Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan, and the IAF gives a two-hour advanced warning of the arrival of a flock.

Israel, on a flight path between Europe and Africa, is a superhighway of bird migration. Approximately 500 million birds fly through the country's airspace twice a year. Before Leshem's project began, the Israeli Air Force lost 10 aircrafts after bird hits, and experienced about 75 collisions costing approximately \$1 million in damages each, which also resulted in the deaths of three pilots (India Current Affairs 12-2-12).