

The Pacific Bird Project-- Germ Warfare Research?

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Why has the United States Defense Department spent \$2.5 million on something called the Pacific Bird Project?

One answer the Pentagon gives bird watchers is that it wants to find out whether birds carry the Asian flu to the U.S. The answer given out by the Smithsonian Institution, which runs the program for the Pentagon, is that the Pentagon is honestly interested in knowing the migratory patterns of birds as they wander about the Pacific.

There is a third version. It is unofficial, and goes like this:

The Pentagon, so it is said, would like to move germ warfare testing to an island in the Pacific — but what island? Not only would it have to be remote and uninhabited, it would also have to be barren enough that birds would not want to use it as one of their regular homesteads.

The way the Pentagon has

chosen to find this island, goes this unofficial version, is through a vast and meticulous study of Pacific bird migrations.

Ostensibly, this is all that the Pacific Bird Project has been for the past six years. In that time, Smithsonian ornithologists have visited hundreds of islands, banded more than 2 million birds and written more than 40 reports on the migrations of the numerous bird species that flock one end of the Pacific to the other.

But there's more to the Pacific Bird Project than meets the eye.

For one, it's financed and directed by the U.S. Army Biological Center in Fort Detrick, Md., and a telephone call to the officer-in-charge of the project suggested it might be more than a bird study.

"I can't talk about that project," he said. "It's classified."

About all the Pentagon would say is that it is interested in finding out what diseases Pacific birds might

pick up in their migrations and what kinds of ticks and mites (notorious disease carriers) they might pick up as they wander from island to island.

Indeed, the Pentagon said, this is the reason the project is directed by Fort Detrick, which as everybody knows, is extremely interested in diseases carried and passed on by birds.

Which only confirms the fact that the Pentagon would like to set up germ warfare testing in the Pacific, goes the unofficial version. The reason is that birds could carry a disease brought on by "fallout" from a germ warfare test from one island to another, so naturally the Pentagon wants to know how the birds might carry disease.